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## EXPLORING CONSUMER PREFERENCE, PERCEPTION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE COSMETIC BRANDS

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the brand relationship of the consumers their perception and brand loyalty in the cosmetics segment. In today's market condition there are numerous variety of cosmetics product with different brand tags and prices are available to the consumers. In this tuff situation deciding a right brand is a very difficult task. The view of this article is, as a consumer what kind of perceptions they hold towards their favorite brand of cosmetics. Are they brand loyal? How consumers decide for themselves in choosing a product and what would be the determinants behind their decision. Drawing the overview of academic literature and the results of a quantitative consumer study, the paper delivers a thorough investigation of the concept. Most popular brand of cosmetics among the consumers was chosen for the research. The analysis revealed that a combination of brand personalities predict a positive brand attitude in cosmetic brands. Interesting similarities and differences, in brand perceptions were found with consumer types and brands. The results provide special insight into consumer perceptions and successful brand strategies.

**Keywords:** Brand, Brand Loyalty, Brand Perception, Consumer, Cosmetics.

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**Introduction:** Ever more firms and other organisations have come to the realization that one of their most valuable assests is the brand name associated with their products or services. In increasing complex world, all of us, as individuals and as business managers, face more choices with less time to make them. Thus a strong brand's ability to simply consumer decision making, reduce risk, and set expectations is invaluable. Creating strong brands that deliver over time is a challenge of the organization.

**Branding:** The role and importance of branding should be tied directly into the industrial marketer's business/ profit model and value-delivery strategy: The starting point for the business model should be the firm's distinctive competence, its target market and customers, its position in the value chain, and its strategy for delivering superior value to those chosen customers.

Understand the role of the brand in the organisational buying process: Marketing Research to identify the compostion of the buying center (decision –making unit) and decision criteria used by the organization members who occupy the key roles in the decision- making unit.

Be sure the basic value propostion has the relevance for all significant players in the decision making unit and decision making process: there will be many people involved in any buying decision and they all must find the brand promise both relevant and responsive to their needs and concerns.

Emphasize a corporate branding approach: it is important to remember the importance of the buyer-seller relationship and the central role played by the buyer's corporate credibility and reliability.

Build the corporate brand around brand intangibles: Maximize expertise; trust worthiness, ease of doing business, and likeability as a means to establish corporate credibility, reputation, and distinctiveness.

Avoid confusing corporate communication strategy and brand strategy and carefully manage the relationship between the two sets of activities to avoid potential conflict: the focus of the brand strategy should be on the brand as a strategic entity and what it means for the consumer, not on the broader issues of the corporate citizenship that may or maynot be relevant for buyers.

Apply detailed segmentation analysis within and across industry-defined segments, based on difference in the composition and functioning of buying centers within those segments: brands positioning within those sub-segments but, just as importantly, must build upon and be consistent with the overall corporate brand positioning.

**Objective:** The purpose of this paper is to explore the consumer preference, perception and relationship with the Brands in the cosmetics market.

**Methodology:** The nature of the research is Exploratory. Most popular brand of cosmetics among the consumers was selected for the analysis. Questionnaire was framed and the sample size was set to 120 as random sampling. Data analysis was done with the SPSS software.

**Review Of Literature:** A brand is defined as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers" (About Marketing, 2012-03-21) and as Haig (2003).

Companies live or die on their strength of their brands. For decades the value of a company was measured in terms of its buildings, land and tangible assets. It is only recently that we have realized that its value lies outside, more precisely in the minds of potential customers who decide if they will buy a product based on how they view the brand (Kapferer, 2008).

Communicating the brand to the customers is essential to a company’s success since it is through communication they explain and promote the value proposition their firm is offering (Lovelock &Wirtz, 2011)

Janonis et al. (2007) define Brand identity as everything that makes the brand meaningful and unique. It includes brand values, aim and moral image, which together constitute the essence of individuality that differentiate the brand (De Chernatony& Harris, 2001).

Bonoma and Johnston’s seminal work (1978) and on Dwyer, Schurr and Oh’s model of relationship development processes (1987). This model specifies trust as a necessary variable in the phase of exploration, which allows a relationship to grow from simple awareness to commitment.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) linked trust and commitment, calling them ‘key variables’ in the exchange network between a company and its various partners because the variables encourage corporate leaders to invest in a long-term relationship and not to give in to appealing, short-term alternatives.

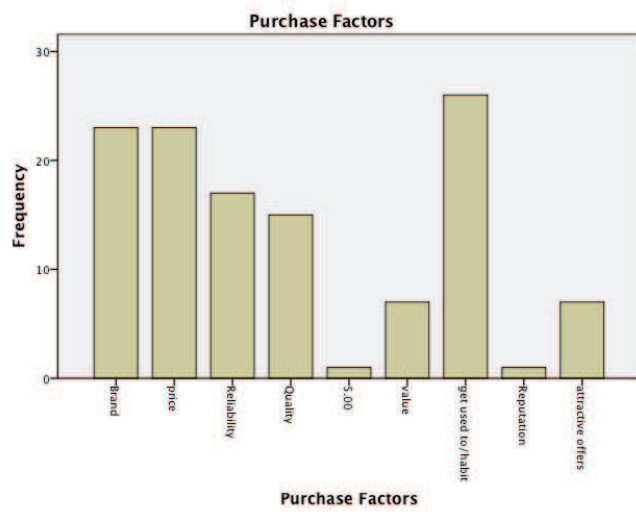
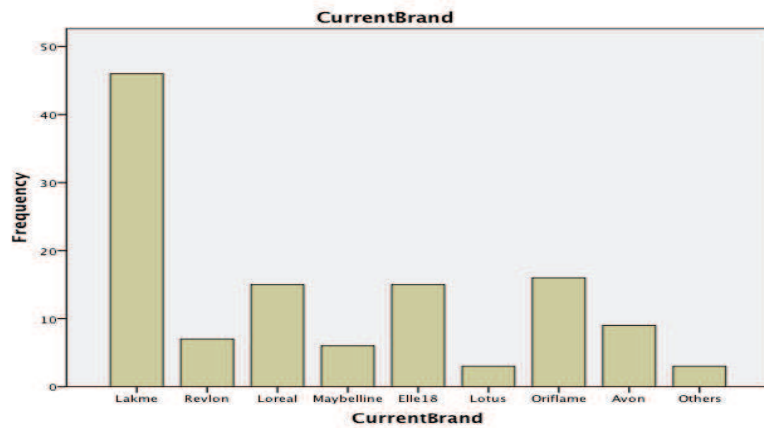
Commitment and trust were then used in the attempt to explain the mechanisms underlying stable preferences (Beatty et al., 1988)

Specifically, several research works have further examined the roles of trust, commitment, and satisfaction in the relationship that customers have built with service companies (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Sirieix and Dubois, 1999).

**Analysis Of Data:** Data analysis done with SPSS package.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lakme	46	37.7	38.3	38.3
	Revlon	7	5.7	5.8	44.2
	Loreal	15	12.3	12.5	56.7
	Maybelline	6	4.9	5.0	61.7
	Elle18	15	12.3	12.5	74.2
	Lotus	3	2.5	2.5	76.7
	Oriflame	16	13.1	13.3	90.0
	Avon	9	7.4	7.5	97.5
	Others	3	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	120	98.4	100.0		
Missing	System	2	1.6		
Total		122	100.0		

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Brand	23	18.9	19.2	19.2
	Price	23	18.9	19.2	38.3
	Reliability	17	13.9	14.2	52.5
	Quality	15	12.3	12.5	65.0
	Value	7	5.7	5.8	71.7
	get used to/habit	26	21.3	21.7	93.3
	Reputation	1	.8	.8	94.2
	attractive offers	7	5.7	5.8	100.0
	Total	120	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.6		
Total		122	100.0		



**Descriptive statistics**

Table 3 Purchase Factors

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Lakme	46		
Revlon	7	4.2857	2.49762	.94401	1.9758	6.5956	1.00	7.00
Loreal	15	4.0667	2.31352	.59735	2.7855	5.3479	1.00	7.00
maybelline	6	5.5000	2.07364	.84656	3.3238	7.6762	2.00	7.00
elle18	14	3.1429	2.17882	.58231	1.8848	4.4009	1.00	7.00
Lotus	3	2.0000	.00000	.00000	2.0000	2.0000	2.00	2.00
Oriflame	16	5.0000	2.85190	.71297	3.4803	6.5197	1.00	9.00
Avon	9	4.6667	2.73861	.91287	2.5616	6.7718	2.00	9.00
Others	4	4.5000	2.64575	1.32288	.2900	8.7100	1.00	7.00
Total	120	4.0000	2.54374	.23221	3.5402	4.4598	1.00	9.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Purchase Factors			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.692	8	111	.108

Table 4 ANOVA					
Purchase Factors					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	64.467	8	8.058	1.268	.268
Within Groups	705.533	111	6.356		
Total	770.000	119			

**Analysis:** The significance level is higher than .05 and hence it being accepted that the purchase factors have influence towards buying of particular brand of cosmetics.

It is being inferred that Lakme is the first preferred brand among the consumers. Oriflame is the next preferred brand, Loreal and Elle18 occupying the position next to Oriflame. Consumers prefer buying Lakme and other three preferred brands for its brand name and reasonable pricing being most important purchasing factor. First reason they quote is its their habit getting used to the same brand and satisfied with it.

Consumers feel reliability is one among the factor they prefer the brand and quality of the product comes the next. Today's consumers buy a particular brand based upon its quality and pricing apart from that a consumer don't hold much loyalty towards the

brand. They are very much open to try the new brands when similar products are introduced in the market.

**Conclusion:** Although brands may be as important ever to consumers, in reality brand management may be more difficult than ever. Significantly the current trends pose a challenge for the brands to be more popular among the consumers. The consumers became more demanding and choosy in deciding the right product for them. Consulting firm Brand keys conducts annual surveys and has found that consumer expectations of what they want from brands will deliver for them, and the gap is growing. To succeed in the Indian market, companies need to have a strong and relentless customer focus and vision. Only those companies that have displayed a consistent customer focus and vision has been able to endure brand leadership.

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