

A Conceptual Model for Factors Influencing Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products

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Abstract: This paper proposes a conceptual model for factors influencing intention to purchase cosmetic products. Globalization is increasing the intensity of rivalry among cosmetic sector participants. In these instances, business practitioners must devise the best strategies to increase market share. One of the elements that can be concentrated on is consumer behavior. Understanding consumer behavior is one of the most important factors to consider when developing strategies. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the factors that influence customers' purchasing intentions for cosmetic products in Malaysia. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) served as a basis for the study, with four additional variables added on. As a result, the study explores six independent variables that influence purchase intention for cosmetic products. The results of this research could contribute to the current body of literature and provide industry stakeholders with insights into how the factors examined in this study impact customer purchase intent. This knowledge empowers them to craft more impactful business strategies.

Keywords: *Conceptual Model, Purchase Intention, Cosmetic Products.*

1. Introduction and Background

Over the past few years, the cosmetics industry has grown significantly on a global scale. The cosmetics market is expanding quickly as a result of consumers being more aware of their personal care and beauty needs (Researchdive, 2023). The global cosmetics sector has proven to be durable throughout time. As of 2023, the global cosmetics market was estimated to be worth USD 426.4 billion (Spherical-insights, 2023). The women's segment of the worldwide cosmetics industry is predicted to develop at the highest rate, while the skincare category currently holds the largest market share. Given that older consumers are using anti-aging treatments more frequently, the cosmetics business is predicted to expand (Shanbhag et al., 2019). Malaysia's cosmetics exports in 2022 reached a total of USD 140.73 million, representing an almost ten million rise compared to the previous year (Statista, 2023). The primary exports consisted of cosmetics and makeup, which had a total value of RM513 million, accounting for 40.9 percent of the total exports (MATRADE, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic in Asia has exerted a substantial influence on the global cosmetic industry, particularly the cosmetics sector. Despite recent reports indicating a modest rebound in certain market categories such as personal care, hair care, body care, and skin care, the cosmetics sector continues to exhibit underwhelming performance, hence impeding the overall speed of recovery within the cosmetic market (Chow, 2020).

Building upon the aforementioned concepts, McKinsey conducted a study in May 2020 entitled "The Impact of Covid-19 on the Beauty Industry." According to Gerstell et al. (2020), it has been found that consumers in China, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America intend to reduce their expenditure on skincare and makeup products in the foreseeable future. This matter would be worrisome, especially for marketers, as it would pose a challenge in motivating customers to make purchases. One challenge that arises is the misalignment between corporate aims and customer objectives, which calls for a shift in viewpoint and a greater emphasis on consumer-oriented products (Tavares et al., 2021). The issue of how marketers may convert this challenge into product-specific characteristics remains unresolved, as this approach seems to be diminishing in its effectiveness or popularity in product design and marketing (Tavares et al., 2021). Tavares et al. (2021) emphasized the necessity for improved predictive models to comprehend the significant indicator of product features and forecast customers' purchasing intention and purchase decisions. Hence, the study aims to construct a conceptual model that identifies the key factors that significantly influence consumers' intention to purchase cosmetic items, particularly within the Malaysian context. Understanding these factors within the Malaysian context is crucial for the development of effective marketing strategies tailored to the unique preferences and behaviors of Malaysian consumers.

2. Literature Review

Purchase Intention: The concept of purchase intention remains a significant subject of investigation in the field of marketing research, owing to its adaptability (Alalwan, 2018; Sreen et al., 2018) and its expansive nature, encompassing diverse definitions and conceptualizations (Morwitz, 2007). The concept of purchase intention pertains to the inclination of customers to actively seek out pertinent information and make choices regarding their preferred products or services (Wang et al., 2015). Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that an individual will engage in a particular behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). The current investigation has defined purchase intention as the potential for a consumer to engage in future purchases and advocate a particular cosmetics brand to others (Chen, Chen and Lin, 2011). According to Greggianin et al. (2018), marketers engage in the development of products that effectively cater to consumer wants and preferences by including elements of style and visual appeal, while also enhancing utility. While scholars investigate the impact of cosmetic product design and features on consumer purchasing behavior, the available empirical evidence is limited, suggesting that the study may be superficial (Sung, 2021). When customers are shopping for a product, they not only analyze the product's qualities but also consider other indications (Landwehr, Wentzel and Herrmann, 2012).

Customers often depend on brand information to distinguish a product from its competitors when making purchasing choices (Keller, 2003). Research in marketing has undergone a paradigm change, shifting its focus from tangible resources to intangible resources. This movement emphasizes the importance of intangible resource aspects that enhance value, the collaborative generation of value, and connections (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Typically, consumers consider a range of external factors or extrinsic indicators when assessing a product or brand (Yan et al., 2019). To attain a competitive edge, marketers endeavor to offer clients a novel experience that distinctly captivates them. One prevalent marketing method in modern times entails the creation of brands that incorporate actual individuals, a concept commonly known as human branding. Human branding is classified by scholars into three distinct dimensions: personal branding, internal branding, and celebrity branding. Personal branding refers to individuals, while internal branding pertains to employees. Celebrity branding, on the other hand, involves celebrities, public figures, or businessmen as brands (Eagar and Dann, 2018). The concept of personal branding is commonly employed to enhance one's prospects of securing employment (Zamudio et al., 2013) and to explore avenues for professional progression (Speed et al., 2015).

Specifically, there is a growing focus on celebrity CEOs in the field of management and marketing research. Numerous words and conceptualizations pertaining to famous CEOs have been presented by scholars, including CEO brands, personal brands, and the CEO's image. CEO brand image refers to the distinct notion that is inherent in CEO brands, with human brands serving as the foundation of this concept (Fetscherin, Veloutsou, and Guzman, 2021). According to Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2013), there exists a close association between CEO brands and CEO brand image, as it is challenging to disentangle the brand image from the individual responsible for its creation. Hence, this study adopts a CEO brand image framework, akin to the one proposed by Andreini, Fetscherin, and Zarantonello (2021), which encompasses personality, leadership, and performance. This approach aligns more closely with Thomson's (2006) definition of celebrity branding, making it a more suitable fit for the study's setting. The significance of CEOs' branding in establishing corporate branding, reputation, and overall business performance has been emphasized in several academic and industrial studies, particularly in a saturated marketplace with limitless choices (Le, 2023). According to Thomson (2006), marketing literature supports the notion that human brands have the ability to cultivate strong emotional connections and improve the overall quality of consumer relationships.

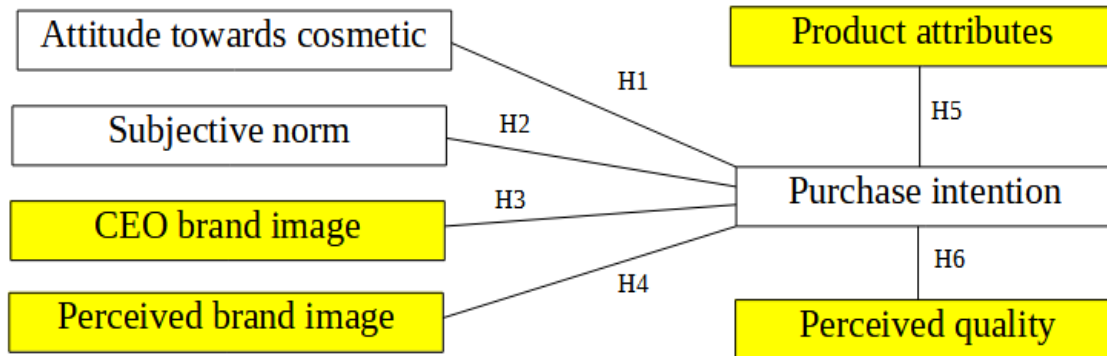
In the beginning, chief executive officers (CEOs) are acknowledged as prominent figures within their respective businesses and are therefore seen as brands due to their ability to shape consumers' impressions of the products and services promoted by the company (Keller, 2003). According to Fleck, Michel, and Zeitoun (2013), CEOs are frequently regarded as spokespersons and endorsers, with a credibility edge in advertising due to their comprehensive understanding of their products and organization. Nevertheless, customers' viewpoints give rise to biases and mistrust due to the uncertain impartiality, integrity, and honesty of CEOs. The CEO's brand image and customers' purchase intention are impacted by this situation (Mao et al., 2020). The absence of adequate information is a challenge for chief executive officers (CEOs) in their efforts to convince customers and establish confidence. Although the CEO brand phenomenon has been extensively studied and is highly

relevant, marketers and managers remain uncertain about whether CEO brand image positively influences the purchase intention of beauty businesses due to a lack of research in this area. The examination of these interactions holds significant importance for both academia and practitioners, including marketers and managers, since it provides valuable insights into the purchasing intentions of customers towards makeup brands. This study will yield excellent insights for research purposes and hold significant implications for the development of brand strategies and positioning. The primary objective of this study is to examine the correlation between product features, CEO brand image, and purchase intention.

3. Conceptual Model of Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products

This section is dedicated to establishing the foundational framework for this study, utilizing the TRA model tailored to Malaysian consumers. This model sets the stage for testing six empirically verifiable hypotheses pertinent to the study. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework, outlining the interplay between exogenous (independent) variables and endogenous (dependent) variables. In this study, product attributes and CEO brand image serve as the key determinants of purchase intention for makeup brands.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products



Hypotheses Development

Attitude Towards Cosmetic and Purchase Intention: Several previous studies have explored the link between attitude and purchase intention across a range of products. In the Malaysian context, several studies have specifically focused on purchase intentions regarding cosmetic products. Meng (2014) conducted research among female students at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and affirmed that attitude is a factor influencing purchase intention toward halal cosmetic products. Al Mamun et al. (2020), in their study on cosmetic products, also concluded that attitude is related to consumer purchase intention, particularly among Malaysian consumers. Consistent with other research findings, Zhang et al. (2018) and Rachbini (2018) both support the positive influence of attitude on consumers' purchase intentions across various product categories based on the evidence in the literature, it is fair to conclude the following hypothesis:

H1: Attitude towards cosmetics has a significant relationship with purchase intention.

Subjective Norm and Purchase Intention: Festinger (1954) described subjective norms defined as interactions with others that significantly shape and alter an individual's thoughts and emotions regarding certain behaviors. This assertion is corroborated by Kim and Chung (2011), who conducted a survey on organic personal care products. They highlight that consumers' subjective norms positively impact their intention to purchase organic products. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2018) support this notion, concluding that subjective norms positively influence consumers' intention to purchase greenhouses in China. Rachbini (2018) echoes these findings in the context of halal food purchasing behavior in Jakarta, emphasizing the importance of subjective norms in influencing consumers' purchase intentions, particularly within the Indonesian context based on the evidence in the literature, it is fair to conclude the following hypothesis:

H2: Subjective norm has a significant relationship with purchase intention.

CEO Brand Image and Purchase Intention: Compared to traditional advertisements, human branding for product advertisements has a higher chance of customer purchase intentions. The purchase intention may decrease if a human brand has low image appeal (Seo, Chae and Lee, 2012), and negative information about a CEO will unfavorably affect a public's behavioral intentions (employment, word-of-mouth, and purchase intentions) (Sohn, Weaver Lariscy and Tinkham, 2009). For instance, Chae and Lee (2013) conclude that "human brand appears to influence customers' decision-making process by reducing their cognitive effort as they depend on heuristics that will lead to a satisfying decision rather than applying an analytical decision rule to optimize their decisions. In an airline setting, Kim and Jang (2021) reveal that quality, personality, and outward characteristics of CEO image significantly affect behavioral intention. In a more general context, Seo, Chae and Lee (2012) discover a significant effect between human brand image appeal. Based on the evidence in the literature, it is fair to conclude the following hypothesis:

H3: CEO brand image has a significant relationship with purchase intention.

Perceived Brand Image and Purchase Intention: Previous studies have demonstrated that customer perception of the brand image they conceive in their memory is an antecedent of their intentions (Kim and Ko, 2012). Several studies in the past discovered that perceived brand image has a positive correlation with purchase intention. For instance, Sultan and Wong (2019) examine how perceived service quality affects university brand performance, university brand image and behavioral intention in a higher education context. Similarly, in a different setting, Mehra, Rajput and Paul (2022) explore how smartphone addicts decide to adopt a smartphone brand with the related variables of product attributes, brand image, customer perceived value, and purchase intention. The result indicates a positive correlation between brand image and purchase intention. Therefore, based on the justifications above, the following hypothesis is derived: H4: Perceived brand image has a significant relationship with purchase intention.

Product Attributes and Purchase Intention: Scholars have proven that product attributes have positive effects on purchase intention. More recent research assessed customer liking and purchase intention as fundamentally based on attributes (Delgado et al., 2013). For instance, Sung (2021) examines cosmetic container design and customer purchasing intention, particularly product design, shapes, and materials. Packaging design elements are one of the most essential for the customers' purchase intention. Also, Kobayashi and de Benassi (2015) analyze the impact of packaging characteristics on purchase intention. Similarly, attributes like breathable, quick-dry, lightweight, waterproof, and durable cosmetics or makeup products are essential (Chan and Mansori, 2016). Specifically, based on literature reviews, clear indications suggested the relationship between product attributes and purchase intention. Therefore, such a conclusion seems acceptable, and the present study assumes the following hypotheses: H5: Product attributes have a significant relationship with purchase intention.

Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention: Scholars have reported that purchase intention is a critical consequence of brand-perceived quality. For instance, Yan et al. (2019) investigate both direct and mediating effects of perceived quality on the relationships between category characteristics and purchase intention for private labels. The correlation result of perceived quality on purchase intention is significant. The scholars suggest that retailers need to put as much objective information about product ingredients as possible on the package label and induce the perception of quality they will experience on consumption. There is a positive correlation between perceived quality and purchase intention (Colamatteo, Cassia, and Sansone, 2022). In addition, Horng et al. (2012) also validate that perceived quality is positively related to behavioral intention in culinary tourism. Thus, the present study deduces that perceived quality has a significant influence on purchase intention and postulates the following hypothesis: H6: Perceived quality has a significant relationship with purchase intention.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this study presents a conceptual framework designed to comprehend the determinants that impact the inclination to acquire cosmetic products, notably within the context of Malaysia's market dynamics. Given the increasing rivalry in the cosmetic industry due to globalization, businesses must develop efficient tactics to increase their market share. At the core of this undertaking lies the understanding of consumer behavior, which plays a fundamental role in the development of strategic plans. This study builds upon the

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as a theoretical framework and broadens its focus by incorporating four supplementary variables. Consequently, it investigates six distinct factors that influence individuals' intentions to purchase cosmetic items. By examining these aspects, the research not only adds to the current body of knowledge but also provides industry professionals with a useful understanding of the factors that influence customer buying patterns. Furthermore, this study has significant contributions beyond academic conversation, providing practical advice for organizations aiming to customize their strategies to the specific preferences of consumers in the Malaysian cosmetic sector. In doing so, it helps bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application in the industry.

Policy Implications: The findings of this study hold important policy implications for businesses operating in the Malaysian cosmetic sector. Understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior can inform the development of targeted marketing strategies tailored to Malaysian consumers' preferences. This can lead to more effective resource allocation and investment decisions within the industry. Moreover, policymakers can utilize the insights from this study to formulate regulations and policies that promote consumer welfare and fair competition within the cosmetic market. For instance, regulations related to product labeling, advertising standards, and consumer protection can be designed based on an understanding of consumer behavior and preferences as revealed by the study. In a nutshell, through a comprehensive comprehension and strategic utilization of these variables, enterprises can develop more efficient marketing strategies, consequently augmenting their competitiveness and placement within the dynamic global cosmetic industry while policymakers can create an enabling environment for consumer welfare and fair competition within the Malaysian cosmetic market.

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