

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIETY-SEEKING, STATUS CONSUMPTION, MEDIA INFLUENCE AND FEMALE GENERATION Y STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS BEAUTY PRODUCTS

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—Abstract—

Beauty products, or cosmetics, form part of the fashion industry, which, with an estimated annual value of 1.2 trillion USD, represents a significant portion of the global economy. Beauty products consist of any product used to care for, clean and enhance the beauty of the human body and include skin-care, lotions, creams, perfumes, nail polish, eye and facial makeup, lipsticks, hair colours, permanent waves, deodorants, mouthwashes and bath oils. The cosmetic industry is also highly lucrative in South Africa, estimated to be worth R27.35 billion at the retail level and R19.69 billion at the manufacturing level in 2017. The Youth, currently classified as members of the Generation Y cohort (individuals born between 1986 and 2005), represent an important current and future market segment for a variety of industries, including the cosmetic industry, and understanding their attitude towards beauty products is likely to be crucial in ensuring the sustained success and growth of this industry. As such, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between variety-seeking, status consumption, media influence and female Generation Y students' attitude towards beauty products.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data from a convenience sample of 610 students registered at the campuses of three higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Gauteng province. The data were analysed using principle component factor analysis, descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis.

The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between variety-seeking, status consumption, media influence and South African female Generation Y students' attitude towards beauty products.

These findings suggest that mass media advertising remains an important avenue for influencing this generation of female consumers and that cosmetic brands need to focus on their status appeal. Furthermore, product lines need to be wide enough to accommodate variety-seeking behaviour and mitigate brand-switching behaviour.

Keywords: Fashion, beauty products, attitude, female Generation Y, South Africa

JEL Classification: M, M3, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Beauty products are integral to the presentation of an individual (The Shaz World, 2017) and consist of any product used to care for, clean and enhance the beauty of the human body (Ergin, Özdemir & Parıltı, 2005), including skin-care, lotions, creams, perfumes, nail polish, eye and facial makeup, lipsticks, hair colours, permanent waves, deodorants, mouthwashes and bath oils (Britannica, 2016). Owing to continuous consumer interest, the cosmetic market is evolving both globally and in South Africa. In 2017, the value of the global cosmetic products market was esteemed at \$532.43 billion, with an expected growth of \$805.61 billion by 2023 (Mordor intelligence, 2018). The South African cosmetic industry is highly lucrative, estimated to be worth R27.35 billion at the retail level and R19.69 billion at the manufacturing level in 2017 (Reportlinker, 2017). In order to market beauty products effectively, there is a need to understand the factors that influence consumers' attitude concerning beauty products, as the size of this industry proves to be salient (Chen, Chen & Lin, 2011).

The Youth, currently classified as the Generation Y cohort (individuals born between 1986 and 2005), represent an important current and future market segment for a variety of industries, including the cosmetic industry. Generation Y, Millenials or Echo-boomers (Joubert, 2013) comprises individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Markert, 2004) and accounts for 36 percent

of the total South African population in 2017 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The university student segment of this generational cohort is deemed important due to tertiary educated individuals being likely to receive higher future income, resulting in greater spending power and social status (Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016). The concept of dividing society into generational cohorts is based on the notion that individuals from each generation share experiences determined by distinct environmental forces throughout their formative years, which shape their behaviour and differentiate them from other generations (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Twenge & Cambell, 2008).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Y individuals have grown up in a media- and information-saturated world contributing to them being more informed and connected than all the preceding generations (Bevan-Dye & Surujlal, 2011). According to Eastman and Liu (2012), shoppers forming part of the Generation Y cohort are perceived as being sophisticated and consumption-orientated, and marketers deem this segment as consumers with a significant level of spending power, especially female Generation Y members. Newman (2015) concur that they have well-paid jobs and desirable lifestyles. Bevan-Dye, Garnett and de Klerk (2012) reiterate that this generation is more concerned with consuming products with status appeal than previous generations. In addition, they also have a tendency to respond differently to marketing communication than previous generations, as these individuals have been exposed to a vast array of marketing efforts for several years (Branigan & Mitsis, 2014). As a result, traditional mass-marketing approaches do not capture the attention of Generation Y consumers and prove to be ineffective (Schawbel, 2015). Therefore, marketers and retailers should think out of the box when designing media and promotional messages to capture the attention of this cohort (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013; Joubert, 2013), especially when targeting the female segment of this cohort as they respond better to a more personal approach (Rieke, 2014). According to Pudaruth, Juwaheer and Seewoo (2015), the influence of female consumers has been prevailing in the beauty product industry over the years. Furthermore, Nezakati, Yen and Akhondi (2013) posit that young females have a significant interest in cosmetics and are therefore deemed important to marketers and retailers in this industry. Furthermore, females are experiencing a significant amount of pressure to conform to ideal beauty standards set out by media when compared to their male counterparts (Burton,

Netemeyer & Lichtenstein 1995; Jung & Lee, 2009). As such, an understanding of young females' attitude towards beauty products is likely to be crucial in ensuring the sustained success and growth of the beauty industry.

An attitude is demarcated as the favourable or unfavourable evaluations, feelings or tendencies an individual has towards a behaviour, product or service (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2013) and is a learned inclination that is influenced by the value system, including the personal standards and norms of an individual (McDaniel, Lamb & Hair, 2013). Zikmund and Babin (2013) concur, stating that an attitude is a continuous, unchanging and responsive process ingrained within an individual. This process determines the level of favourable or unfavourable feelings individuals have towards emotional, rational and behavioural components. Although an attitude is relatively consistent, it can change, and is therefore not permanent (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). By experiencing and evaluating a product, service or behaviour, an individual formulates a specific attitude. This is established by the individual's own perception or experience, or it might be influenced by word-of-mouth communication, mass-media advertising and direct marketing efforts (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014), an attitude can be described as an individual's evaluation summary of a specific behaviour, product or service. Attitudes determine the reaction of individuals towards objects, people and events, and are therefore deemed to be important in everyday life (Joubert, 2013).

In addition to consumer attitudes, several studies indicate the importance of variety-seeking (Hou & Elliot, 2016; Lim & Cham, 2015; Song, You, Risinger, Lee & Lee, 2018; Tang & Chin, 2007), status consumption (Flynn & Goldsmith, 2016; Goldsmith, Flynn & Kim, 2010; Sandhu & Paim, 2016) and media influence (Trivedi, Patel & Acharya, 2018; Wen, Chia & Xiaoming, 2017) and its relationship towards attitude formation. Variety-seeking can be described as the inclination to switch among different products or brands just to try something new or different (Hou & Elliot, 2016; Koschate-Fischer, Hoyer, Stockburger-Sauer & Englin, 2018). Kahn (1995) found that consumers' tendency to seek variety can be motivated by various factors, including the internal need for stimulation or novelty, external situations such as price promotions and retail environment changes, and preference uncertainty, for example consumers wanting a diverse investment portfolio. Furthermore, consumers tend to exert variety-seeking

behaviour towards product categories with an ample number of brand alternatives (Tang & Chin, 2007).

Status consumption is the process consumers use to gain status or social prestige by acquiring and consuming products deemed high in status by the consumer and their significant others, especially regarding observable products, such as beauty products (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2010). According to Dubois and Ordabayeva (2015), status consumption can fulfil various important roles, namely an associative role, enabling individuals to associate with desirable groups, a dissociative role, when consumers want to dissociate themselves from undesirable groups, a compensatory role, to compensate for psychological threats, as well as to reduce the ambiguity in social and economic interactions. In order to fulfil these roles, consumers that are motivated by status, are willing to spend a substantial amount of money on status related products (Sandhu & Paim, 2016).

Pertaining to media influence, the majority of people around the world are exposed to media at some stage of their life, as the world is saturated with mass media (Sundarapandiyan *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, consumers spend a significant amount of their free time listening to the radio, watching television, browsing the internet and reading magazines and newspapers (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2005). The term media refers to mass communication channels comprising all broadcasting and narrowcasting mediums, such as print media (books, magazines, newspapers, direct mail), cell phones, television, movies, video games, music, several kinds of software and the internet (BusinessDictionary.com, 2018). Often utilised to deliver vital information to consumers (Trivedi *et al.*, 2018) the media is deemed as a reliable source of information (Ata, Ludden & Lally, 2007; Tesfom, Birch & Culver, 2018), especially product related and brand information regarding beauty products (Coulter *et al.*, 2002). Owing to the influence of the media on consumers' behaviour, a substantial amount of businesses' advertising expenditures is spent on media advertisement (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2005) as it is a powerful marketing instrument (Sundarapandiyan, Duraiarasi, Babu & Prabakaran, 2015).

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although a large body of research on attitudes, variety-seeking, status consumption and media influence has been conducted in the consumer behaviour field, limited knowledge of the relationship between these variables is available in

the beauty product realm. Owing to the attractiveness to appeal to the female Generation Y student cohort, it is important to investigate the relationship between variety-seeking, status consumption and the influence of the media and female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products. The results of this investigation will give valuable insights to marketing managers in the beauty industry to appeal to female Generation Y students in the South African market.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

For the purpose of this study a descriptive research design, following the single cross-sectional approach was used.

4.2 Sampling method

The target population for the study was identified as female students aged between 18 and 24 years, registered at South African public higher education institutions (HEIs). The sampling frame comprised the 26 registered South African public HEIs (Universities South Africa, 2015), including six universities of technology, nine comprehensive universities and 11 traditional universities. Non-probability judgement sampling was utilised to narrow down the sampling frame to include the campuses of three HEIs located in the Gauteng province – one university of technology, one comprehensive university and one traditional university. From this sampling frame, a non-probability convenience sample of 780 full-time female Generation Y students was drawn from these three institutions (260 per institution).

4.3 Research instrument and data collection

A self-administered survey questionnaire, comprising two sections, was used to collect the necessary data for this study. The first section gathered the students' demographic information and the second section was employed to obtain information regarding the research objectives. Variety-seeking was measured using the scale from Coulter, Feick and Price (2002) (three items), while the scale used to measure status consumption was developed by Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn (1999) (five items). The students' attitudes were measured by Song *et al.*'s (2014) scale (four items) and the effect of media influence by Mascarendas and Higby's (1993) scale (five items). All scaled responses were measured using a six-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

The questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 48 female Generation Y students at a campus that did not form part of the main sample. The Cronbach alpha values returned for the individual constructs in the pilot study ranged between 0.771 and 0.911, thereby indicating acceptable internal-consistency reliability (Wiid & Diggins, 2013). Subsequently, the questionnaire was administered to the sample of the main study. The questionnaires were distributed to students at each of the three HEI campuses after permission was solicited from lecturers. Lecturers were given strict instructions to inform students that participation was on a voluntary basis only. The captured data were analysed by making use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS), Version 25.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Sample description

From the 780 administered questionnaires, 610 complete and viable questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 78 percent. Although convenience sampling was used, the sample proved to be representative of the target population, including participants from each of the specified age groups, each of the 11 official languages of South Africa, and all nine provinces. The majority of the participants reported being 20 years of age (18.7%), followed by those 21 years of age (18.2%) and 19 years of age (18%). The majority of the students indicated their province of origin as the Gauteng province (61.3%), and their mother-tongue language as SeSotho (23.8%). Table 1 represents a description of the sample.

Table 1: Sample description

Age	n (%)	Language	n (%)	Province of origin	n (%)	Institution	n (%)
18	101 (16.6)	Afrikaans	19 (3.1)	Eastern Cape	18 (3)	Traditional university	214 (35.1)
19	110 (18)	English	41 (6.7)	Free State	46 (7.5)		
20	114 (18.7)	IsiNdebele	8 (1.3)	Gauteng	374 (61.3)	University of Technology	196 (32.1)
21	111 (18.2)	IsiXhosa	50 (8.2)	KwaZulu-Natal	15 (2.5)		
22	85 (13.9)	IsiZulu	116 (19)	Limpopo	77 (12.6)	Comprehensive university	200 (32.8)
23	59 (9.7)	SePedi	71 (11.6)	Mpumalanga	35 (5.7)		
24	30 (4.9)	SeSotho	145 (23.8)	Northern Cape	2 (0.3)		
		SeTswana	73 (12)	North-West	37 (6.1)		
		SiSwati	26 (4.3)	Western Cape	3 (0.5)		
		Venda	23 (3.8)	Missing	3 (0.5)		
		Tsonga	36 (5.9)				
		Other	1 (0.2)				
		Missing	1 (0.2)				

5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Principle component analysis, was conducted on the data set to determine whether the 17 variables used within the scale produced the four proposed constructs in the South African context. In order to assess the factorability of the data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett Test of Sphericity were examined. According to Pallant (2013), a KMO value above 0.6 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is recommended. The results of these two tests generated a KMO value of 0.855 and a significant Bartlett Test of Sphericity value (chi-square =4782.870 (df=136), (p=0.000), indicating sampling adequacy. Once the factorability of the data was established, principle component analysis, using varimax rotation, was performed. Table 2 presents the factor loadings in the rotated matrix.

Table 2: Principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation

Items	Factor loadings			
	1	2	3	4
Attitude				
I think using beauty products is a good thing to do.		.805		
Using beauty products is valuable to me.		.864		
Using beauty products is beneficial to me.		.850		
I think using beauty products is a necessary thing to do.		.810		
Variety-seeking				
I switch among brands of beauty products just to try something new once in a while.				.767
When I am shopping for beauty products, I am likely to buy new brands just for the fun of it.				.822
I get bored with buying the same brands of beauty products, and so I often try different brands.				.803
Status consumption				
I would buy a beauty product just because it has status.	.769			
I am interested in new beauty products with status.	.794			
I would pay more for a beauty product if it had status.	.825			
The status of a beauty product is important to me.	.803			
A beauty product is more valuable to me if it has some status appeal.	.811			
Media influence				
I mostly buy those beauty products/brands that are advertised on TV, radio and magazines.		.753		
Radio, TV and magazine advertisements determine my brand loyalties towards beauty products.		.781		
I continue buying the same brands as long as my favourite celebrity endorses them.		.568		
I usually consult the media to determine the best buys.		.716		
I usually look at the beauty advertisements before I buy.		.776		

As reported in Table 2, four factors emerged with eigen values greater than one and explained 66 percent of the total variance.

5.3 Reliability coefficients

The Cronbach alpha values computed in the main study for each of the four factors exceeded the recommended level of 0.7 (Pallant, 2013) and ranged from 0.769 for variety-seeking, 0.798 for media influence, 0.857 for attitude and 0.894

for status consumption, thereby indicating satisfactory internal-consistency reliability.

5.4 Correlation

Correlation analysis, using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient, was computed and examined in order to determine whether there were relationships between variety-seeking, status consumption, media influence and female Generation Y students' attitude towards beauty products. Table 3 reports on the findings of the correlation coefficients calculated.

Table 3: Relationship between attitude, variety-seeking, status consumption and media influence

	Attitude	Variety-seeking	Status consumption	Media influence
Attitude	1	0.189**	0.226**	0.186**
Variety-seeking		1	0.381**	0.249**
Status consumption			1	0.433**
Media influence				1

*Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As is evident from the correlation coefficients reported on in Table 3, there are statistically significant positive relationships between each of the pairs of constructs. The strongest correlation occurred between status consumption and media influence ($r = 0.433$), followed by between variety-seeking and status consumption ($r = 0.381$), variety-seeking and media influence ($r = 0.249$), attitude and status consumption ($r = 0.226$), attitude and variety-seeking ($r = 0.189$), and between attitude and media influence ($r = 0.186$).

This study sought to determine the relationships between female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products, variety-seeking, status consumption and media influence. The research instrument used in this study comprised 17 items drawn from existing literature (Coulter *et al.*, 2002; Eastman *et al.*, 1999; Mascarendas & Higby, 1993; Song *et al.*, 2014). Exploratory factor analysis revealed a four-factor structure that exhibits strong internal consistency. The findings of this study suggest a strong relationship between female Generation Y students' attitude towards beauty products, their tendency to seek variety and to engage in status consumption when purchasing beauty products and the influence

media has on them regarding beauty products. This is consistent with the findings of Sandhu and Paim (2016), Sundarapandiyani *et al.* (2015) and contradictory to the findings of Møller Jensen and Hansen (2006).

6. CONCLUSION

Marketers of beauty products, targeting females of the Generation Y cohort in South Africa need to familiarise themselves with this market and continuously monitor them. In order to target Generation Y females successfully, retailers and marketers of beauty products should make use of digital media platforms, as these individuals are technologically savvy and spend a sufficient amount of time online. Furthermore, media advertising should be focussed on the status of a product and the variety offered, as these variables are linked to Generation Y female students' attitude towards beauty products.

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