Profiling South African female consumers' involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics

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ABSTRACT

The global cosmetics industry has shown resistance to downward economic cycles mainly due to continuing and growing demand of cosmetic products as well as an increase in online retail. Using Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) consumer-involvement profile (CIP) scale, this study developed female consumer profiles based on the type and degree of cosmetic involvement of respondents. These profiles were supplemented with demographic information (age and population group) as well as several decision-making behaviours (information sources, evaluation criteria and preferred outlets). Through cluster analysis, six consumer-involvement profile groups were identified from a sample of 430 female respondents. The results may assist in understanding female consumers with regard to their involvement in, and consumption of skincare and colour cosmetic products, which in turn, identify marketing opportunities for cosmetic companies.

Keywords: decision-making, involvement, cosmetics, South Africa, cluster, profile

The global cosmetics industry has continued to grow despite the recent global economic downturn (Orbis Research 2018). A report by Allied Market Research indicated that the global cosmetics market is expected to reach $81.24 billion by 2026, showing a 5.6% increase from 2019 (Allied Research 2018). Of this growth, the highest compound annual growth rate is expected from the Middle East and African region (Orbis Research 2018), with South Africa being one of the biggest personal care markets on the African continent (Department of Trade and Industry 2019).

Over the past decade, previous academic research has addressed several aspects of South African consumers' attitudes and/or purchase intentions (Beneke, Frey, Deuchar, Jacobs & Macready 2010; Chinomona 2016; Shimul 2019, Duh & Tshabalala 2019). However, as far as could be determined, no research is available on South African female consumers' involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics. For the purpose of this study, colour cosmetics include lipsticks, eyeliner, blush, nail polish, lip liner, eye shadow and facial foundation (Euromonitor International 2013). Skincare products include the use of facial care products such as facial wash, facial cream, facial toner, body and hand care products, and make-up remover products (MarketLine 2016).

The purpose of this study is to profile South African female consumers based on their type and degree of involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics. Each profile is further described in terms of its demographics (age and population group) and choice and consumption of skincare and colour cosmetics, such as information sources, evaluation criteria and preferred outlets. To this end, the paper provides a better understanding of differences between South African consumers in terms of their usage of skincare and colour cosmetics – opening marketing opportunities for cosmetic companies. It should be noted that reference to cosmetics in this paper, includes skincare and colour cosmetics.

This paper provides an overview of the cosmetics industry, followed by a discussion on consumer involvement and decision-making. This is followed by the presentation of the research design, analysis and results. The paper also offers a discussion on the implications of the research against the backdrop of the research limitations.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief overview of the global and local cosmetics industry

The global cosmetics industry is broken down into six main categories, namely skincare, make-up, perfumes, hair care, toiletries and deodorants, and oral cosmetics (Statista 2019). From these six main categories, skincare accounted for 37% of the global market in 2017 (Statista 2019) with some of the leading cosmetic brands worldwide in 2019 being Johnson's in top position followed by Chanel and L'Oreal Paris (Statista 2019).

The African continent is seen to have a very lucrative consumer base for cosmetic products (Beauty Africa 2019; Roland Berger Strategy Consultants 2013). Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, has an emerging middle class consisting of around 100 million Africans that earn an adequate income to purchase cosmetic products (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants 2013). For example, of the $27.1 billion Middle East and Africa beauty care industry in 2018, South Africa represented $4.5 billion followed by Nigeria and Kenya, with Kenya's market totalling more than $320 million (Beauty Africa 2019).

South African consumers seem to be spoilt for choice with numerous cosmetic brands from which to choose. According to the 2017 colour cosmetics figures, Revlon remains the most popular choice with 23% of the colour cosmetics sales, followed by Avon (13,1%), Estee Lauder (13,1%) and L'Oreal (11,3%) (MarketLine 2017). A total of 60,3% of the colour cosmetics market has been captured by four multinational brands namely Unilever South Africa, Proctor and Gamble, Colgate Palmolive, and Johnson & Johnson – which is a significant increase from 28,8% in 2015 (Bosiu, Chinanga, Das Nair, Mondliwa, Phiri, & Ziba 2017:24).

What is clear from the brief overview provided on the cosmetics industry is the continued growth rate in this industry, highlighting the importance of understanding consumers' involvement in cosmetic purchase decisions.

Consumer involvement

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) argue that consumers' decisions are influenced by their involvement with a specific product category, and that such involvement varies across product categories. The concept of involvement, specifically within a marketing context, first came to the fore in advertising in 1965 (Krugman 1965), and was defined as the "number of conscious bridging experiences, connections or personal references per minute that consumers make between their own lives and stimuli; rather than the consumers' attention, interest, or excitement" (Krugman 1965:355). Two decades later, a more prevalent definition of involvement was coined by Zaichkowsky (1985:342) as "a person's perceived relevance of an object based on their inherent needs, values, and interests." The term involvement can thus be used to describe the level of consumers' interest or complex decision-making towards a product (Zaichkowsky 2010). Consumer involvement and behaviour towards a specific product category (skincare and colour cosmetics in this study) is, therefore, claimed to provide a more specific profile of the consumer. Such profiles will present knowledge on how important cosmetics is to females, how interested they are in using cosmetic products and how much information is needed before a purchase decision is made.

According to Kapferer and Laurent (1985), the involvement construct is multidimensional, and should be interpreted as a profile consisting of different sub-dimensions. More specifically, their research suggests that involvement consists of five sub-dimensions, including (Laurent & Kapferer 1985):

- Interest, which refers to the perceived importance of the product (its personal meaning);
- Pleasure, which relates to the hedonistic value of the product, its emotional appeal, its ability to provide pleasure, and affect;
- The symbolic or sign-value attributed by the consumer to the product, its purchase, or its consumption, where the

sign-value is the message that the consumer is communicating to the outside world, through the purchase or use of a particular product; and

- Risk importance and probability of error, which relate to the perceived risk associated with the product purchase, which in turn has two facets, namely the perceived importance of negative consequences in cases of poor choice, and the perceived probability of making such a mistake.

Guthrie and Kim (2009) demonstrated that an analysis of each of the sub-dimensions developed by Kapferer and Laurent (1985) can be used to identify different consumer-involvement profiles; and therefore its use in this study.

Consumer decision-making

In addition to profiling cosmetic consumers using Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) CIP, this study will also supplement the involvement profiles with selected decision-making behaviours, as identified by Choi, Kim and Kim (2007). These decision-making behaviours include information sources, place of purchase, and cosmetic-product evaluation criteria.

First, information sources are sources that can help a consumer make a decision on a product or service (Erasmus 2013:342), and can be classified into personal information sources (friends, family, sales personnel) and non-personal information sources (advertisements, brochures, newspaper articles, Internet searches). These sources are selected based on key evaluation criteria, such as the degree to which the source is credible and informative, accessible, popular, and easy to understand (Broilo, Espartel & Basso 2016:202).

Second, the place of purchase refers to the type of store or distribution channel used to purchase cosmetics, including purchased on the Internet, from department stores, discount stores, speciality stores or door-to-door sales (Choi et al. 2007). Although majority of beauty sales still come from department stores, speciality stores are expected to be the most important drivers of retail growth; and online beauty sales have recorded the fastest growth over recent years (Deloitte 2017). Finally, the criteria that consumers use to evaluate cosmetic products include the price, the colour and the packaging of the product, the smell or fragrance of the product, the product volume, and the compatibility of the product with the consumer's skin type (Khraim 2011:129).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The scope for the research was limited to the domain of the skincare and colour cosmetics industry due to the consistent growth rates of the South African cosmetics market (Bosiu et al. 2017:26). Secondly, the research focused on females because of their affinity for cosmetics, and their desire to improve their imperfections through beauty products (Euromonitor International 2014a). Thirdly, the research involved two of the four population groups in Gauteng, namely Black African and White females. The main reason was the easier access to these groups in Gauteng because they are the two largest population groups in Gauteng, with Black Africans representing 80,4% and Whites 13,6% (Statistics South Africa 2019). Finally, based on cosmetics as the domain for the survey, a decision was made to involve younger females (aged 18-45 years), as South Africa has a young population, with approximately 79% of the nearly 58 million people in the country being under 45 years old (Statistics South Africa 2019). In Gauteng, 46% of the population are between 20 and 44 years of age (Statistics South Africa 2019).

Given the scope of the study, the primary research objective was to profile South African female consumers based on their type and degree of involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics based on Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) consumer-involvement profile. The secondary objective was to supplement each profile with a) demographic information (age and population group), and b) decision-making behaviour, specifically information sources used when searching for information on skincare and colour cosmetic products, criteria used to evaluate skincare and colour cosmetics prior to purchase, and preferences for different distribution channels through which cosmetic products can be purchased.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling and data collection

The target population included two of the four South African population groups, namely Black African and White females, aged between 18-45 years, who live, work or study in Gauteng. The respondents were sampled by using a non-probability quota-sampling approach. Quota sampling ensured that the different population and age sub-groups in the population were represented in the sample (Malhotra 2019). The data were collected using a self-completion questionnaire by means of campus-intercepts, mall-intercepts, and an online electronic survey. A total of 441 questionnaires were collected, with 430 questionnaires suitable for analysis.

The data analysis included a confirmatory factor analysis of the main construct, consumer involvement, to determine the validity before it could be used in the subsequent cluster analysis. After confirming the sub-dimensions of involvement, cluster analysis was conducted to address the primary research objective of profiling respondents according to their involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics. Finally, each profile was described in terms of its demographics and decision-making behaviour.

Measurement instrument and reliability

The measurement instrument consisted of four sections. Section A measured consumer involvement, using Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) original CIP scale, measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, labelled from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). For the purpose of our study, the 16-item scale was adapted to measure consumer involvement when purchasing skincare and colour cosmetics across five sub-dimensions, namely interest (3 items), pleasure (3 items), sign (3 items), risk importance (3 items), and risk probability (4 items).

Section B in the questionnaire focused on the decision-making behaviours. Firstly, seven information sources and their relative importance was measured by adapting the original seven-item scale of Choi et al. (2007) to the cosmetics domain, and by using a five-point Likert scale with scale points labelled from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Secondly, the eight criteria used to evaluate cosmetics were measured with the original eight-item scale of Choi et al. (2007), adapted to the domain of cosmetics and measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, labelled from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).

Section B also contained questions to: a) measure respondents' preferences for different retail outlets from which cosmetics could be purchased, using a multiple-item, single-response question, specifically developed for this study; b) respondents' reasons for choosing their most preferred retail outlet, measured using an adaptation of the model of Choi et al. (2007) with the original five-point Likert-type scale, which measured the perceived importance of five potential reasons why an outlet is chosen as a preferred choice; and c) the amount spent on cosmetics in the past month, using a multiple-choice, single-response question. Finally, Section C determined the respondents' demographic profile.

The measurement instrument was pre-tested among 20 respondents. The reliability was calculated for each of the sub-dimensions of consumer involvement using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, with results ranging between 0,63 and 0,89. Disappointingly, the Cronbach alpha value for the risk importance sub-dimension was below the preferred cut-off of 0,7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978:103). While the generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0,70, values of 0,60 have been accepted in cases where very few items are loading onto a construct (Hair et al. 2010:125). A decision was thus made to retain this sub-dimension for further analysis.

RESULTS

Sample profile

A total of 51,3% of the respondents were Black African, with 50% representation within the 18-23 age group. For the White group, the majority of the respondents (49,4%) were also in the youngest age group.

Confirmatory-factor analysis for consumer involvement

A confirmatory-factor analysis was conducted using the AMOS (version 23) software to determine the validity of the main construct (consumer involvement). The estimated regression coefficients (i.e. factor loadings) and their associated t-values are reported in Table 1. The fact that all the regression coefficients were statistically significant, and loaded on the latent variables suggested by the model further supports the usefulness of the solution.

The fit measures obtained in this study were as follows: NFI = 0,94; RFI = 0,91; IFI = 0,98; TLI = 0,93 and CFI = 0,96. When all the fit measures are considered, it may be concluded that the model provides an adequate representation of the covariances between the observed variables (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen 2008).

Table 1 provides the item loadings and t-values of the confirmatory-factor analysis for the different scale items, the means and standard deviations for each of the five sub-dimensions as well as the Cronbach-alpha values.

TABLE 1
CONFIRMATORY-FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

	Descriptive Measures		CFA factor loadings	
	Mean (M)	Std	Item loading	t-value
Interest (alpha = 0,89)	5,32	1,46	-	-
I really enjoy buying cosmetics	5,39	1,55	0,88	-
Whenever I buy cosmetics, it is like giving myself a present	5,2	1,72	0,85	22,27
To me cosmetics are pleasurable	5,31	1,56	0,86	22,59
Pleasure (alpha = 0,71)	5,08	1,52	-	-
What brand of cosmetics I purchase is extremely important to me	5,27	1,7	0,64	-
I am very interested in cosmetics	4,88	1,74	0,87	13,92
Sign (alpha = 0,88)	3,77	1,77	-	-
I can tell a lot about a person from the brand of cosmetics she buys	3,90	1,89	0,75	-
The cosmetics a person buys reflects who she is	3,60	1,94	0,91	19,01
The cosmetics I buy, describe the person I am	3,81	2,10	0,9	18,94
Risk importance (alpha = 0,63)	5,25	1,48	-	-
It is very irritating to buy cosmetics that are not right	5,43	1,74	0,69	-
I am annoyed with myself when it turns out that I made the wrong choice when buying cosmetics	5,05	1,71	0,68	8,15
Overall Risk probability (alpha = 0,88)	3,95	1,51	-	-
When I am in front of the cosmetics section, I always feel unsure about which to choose	4,17	1,8	0,79	-
When I buy cosmetics, I can never be exactly sure if the choice was right	3,84	1,74	0,87	18,89
Choosing cosmetics is quite hard.	4,17	1,82	0,74	15,75
When I buy cosmetics I can never be quite sure about my choice	3,69	1,68	0,81	17,68

Cluster analysis of respondent groups

Cluster analysis was used to create consumer profile clusters, based on the respondents' mean scores on each of the five involvement dimensions. A non-hierarchical k-means cluster analysis was conducted in order to produce a six-cluster solution. The final assignment of cases to clusters resulted in six clusters of n1=62, n2=96, n3=33, n4=60, n5=98 and n6=77. Each cluster was labelled according to its characteristics, and the following group labels were created: the conformist cosmetic buyer, the aspiring cosmetic buyer, the disinterested cosmetic buyer, the need for expertise cosmetic buyer, and finally the cautious cosmetic buyer.

The characteristics of each cluster were analysed, based on their means and labels. Table 2 shows the cluster means for each profile on each of the five dimensions of the CIP scale.

The results from Table 2 (based on the 7-point Likert-type scales) indicate that the 62 respondents in the conformist cosmetic buyer profile have a mean (M) score of M=4,76 on the pleasure dimension of the CIP scale, and M=4,81 on the interest dimension. The conformist cosmetic buyer knows that she may make a mistake (M=4,32) during purchasing, and sees some risk (M=4,56) of making such a mistake. The aspiring cosmetic buyer is completely involved in every aspect of the skincare and colour cosmetics decision-making process. She is highly interested (M=6,10) in cosmetics, derives a lot of pleasure (M=6,26) from using these products, and attaches some symbolic meaning (M=4,11) to the type and brand of skincare and colour cosmetics purchased.

The disinterested cosmetic buyer shows almost no interest (M=1,80) in skincare and colour cosmetics, and she derives very little pleasure (M=2,54) from purchasing these products to which she attaches almost no symbolic meaning (M=1,69). The need for expertise cosmetic buyer shows some interest (M=4.99) in and derives much pleasure (M=5,19) from purchasing skincare and colour cosmetics. However, she attaches very little symbolic meaning (M=2,35) to these products. The confident cosmetic buyer shows a high interest (M=6,23) in and derives a lot of pleasure (M=6,18) from buying skincare and colour cosmetics, and attaches a symbolic meaning (M=5,56) to the products.

Finally, the cautious cosmetic buyer shows some interest (M=4,79) and derives slight pleasure (M=4,03) from purchasing skincare and colour cosmetics. However, she perceives these products as having very little symbolic meaning (M=2,10) to her.

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF CLUSTER ANALYSIS AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT MEANS

Dimension	Overall Mean (M)	Conformist cosmetic buyer n = 62	Aspiring cosmetic buyer n = 96	Disinterested cosmetic buyer n = 33	Need for expertise cosmetic buyer n = 60	Confident cosmetic buyer n = 98	Cautious cosmetic buyer n = 77
Pleasure	5,32	4,76	6,26	2,54	5,19	6,18	4,03
Interest	5,08	4,81	6,10	1,80	4,99	6,23	4,79
Sign	3,78	4,99	4,11	1,69	2,35	5,56	2,10
Risk importance	5,25	4,56	6,32	3,00	4,29	6,19	5,01
Probability of error	3,96	4,32	4,92	3,92	2,73	2,46	5,37

*n = Number of respondents

Demographic profile of each involvement type

Table 3 shows the percentage of each age and population group within each of the involvement profiles.

From Table 3, several demographic observations can be made. The conformist cosmetic buyer profile largely comprises Black African consumers (n=40; 64,5%), with the highest percentage of Black African respondents being in the age groups 18-23 (21,6%) and 36-45 (16,7%). The aspiring cosmetic buyer is the second-largest overall profile (n=96), and has the highest percentage of White respondents (58,3%). Most of the White respondents in this cluster are aged 18-23 (26,2%) and 24-35 (32,4%). The disinterested cosmetic buyer is mainly between the ages of 18-23, with an almost equal spread between Black Africans (51,5%) and Whites (48,5%).

The need for expertise cosmetic buyer has the highest percentages in the age groups 18-23 (19,4%) and 36-45 (17,6%), with the highest percentage being comprised of White respondents (63,3%). The confident cosmetic buyer is the largest profile group (n=98). This cluster has the highest percentage of Black Africans (68,4%), compared with the other profiles, and it has a large number of respondents in the age groups 24-35 (43,4%) and 36-45 (50%). Finally, the cautious cosmetic buyer has the highest percentage of Whites (58,4%), and consists mainly of age groups between 18-23 (25,2%) and 36-45 (20,6%).

TABLE 3
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF EACH INVOLVEMENT GROUP

Age	Population group	Conformist cosmetic buyer n = 62	Aspiring cosmetic buyer n = 96	Disinterested cosmetic buyer n = 33	Need for expertise cosmetic buyer n = 60	Confident cosmetic buyer n = 98	Cautious cosmetic buyer n = 77
18 -23	**Black African** (n = 111)	24 21,6%	21 18,9%	14 12,6%	11 9,9%	19 17,1%	22 19,8%
	White (n = 103)	9 8,7%	27 26,2%	11 10,7%	20 19,4%	10 9,7%	26 25,2%
24 -35	**Black African** (n = 83)	12 14,5%	15 18,1%	3 3,6%	9 10,8%	36 43,4%	8 9,6%
	White (n = 71)	9 12,7%	23 32,4%	3 4,2%	12 16,9%	12 16,9%	12 16,9%
36 -45	**Black African** (n = 24)	4 16,7%	4 16,7%	0 0,0%	2 8,3%	12 50,0%	2 8,3%
	White (n =34)	4 11,8%	6 17,6%	2 5,9%	6 17,6%	9 26,5%	7 20,6%
Total % Black African per profile (*Total per row / n per cluster)		40 64,5%	40 41,7%	17 51,5%	22 36,7%	67 68,4%	32 41,6%
Total % White per profile (*Total per row / n per cluster)		22 35,5%	56 58,3%	16 48,5%	38 63,3%	31 31,6%	45 58,4%

*n = Number of respondents

Decision-making behaviour of each involvement type

Tables 4 to 6 provide information on the decision-making behaviour as they relate to the overall sample, as well as to the six involvement profiles. The decision-making behaviours include the information sources, the evaluation criteria, and the preferred outlets used by the respondents.

Firstly, the respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of seven sources of information that consumers typically use to obtain information on cosmetics. Table 4 provides the mean importance ratings for each of the six involvement profiles.

The findings from Table 4 indicate that word-of-mouth (M=3,81) was rated as the most important source to consult by the conformist cosmetic buyer (M=3,92), the aspiring cosmetic buyer (M=4,22), the disinterested cosmetic buyer (M=3,36) and the need for expertise cosmetic buyer (M=3,72). Obtaining a free sample of a product (M=3,68) was rated as the most important source of information by the cautious cosmetic buyer (M=3,94). An article in a magazine (M=3,56) was rated as the most important source of information consulted by the confident cosmetic buyer (M=4,13).

Table 5 provides the mean importance ratings obtained for each evaluation criterion for the sample as a whole, and for each of the six involvement profiles. The higher the mean score, the more important a specific evaluation criterion is for the sample as a whole, or for a particular involvement group.

It is evident from Table 5 (based on the 5-point Likert-type scale) that all the involvement groups rated compatibility with skin type as the most important criterion used to evaluate cosmetic products (M=4,66). The fragrance of the cosmetic product was indicated as the second most important criterion (M=4,01). The brand image (M=3,74) and the colour (M=3,72) of the product were rated closely in importance by all of the groups. The packaging of the product (M=3,48), and receiving a discount on the product (M=3,42) were also rated closely in importance in all of the groups.

Finally, Table 6 shows the percentage of respondents in each involvement group who prefer to shop at specific retail outlets.

The need for expertise, conformist and aspiring cosmetic buyers preferred department stores for purchasing their skincare and colour cosmetics, while the disinterested, confident, and cautious cosmetic buyers preferred discount stores.

TABLE 4
THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THE SAMPLE AND INVOLVEMENT GROUPS

Information sources	Overall mean (M)	Conformist cosmetic buyer n = 62	Aspiring cosmetic buyer n = 96	Disinterested cosmetic buyer n = 33	Need for expertise cosmetic buyer n = 60	Confident cosmetic buyer n = 98	Cautious cosmetic buyer n = 77
Word of mouth	3,81	3,92	4,22	3,36	3,72	3,76	3,90
Use of a free sample	3,68	3,69	3,99	3,03	3,53	3,91	3,94
Article in magazines	3,56	3,80	3,96	2,61	3,39	4,13	3,47
Advice from sales person	3,57	3,79	3,76	2,55	3,63	4,02	3,66
Advertise-ment in magazines	3,33	3,50	3,74	2,42	3,13	4,03	3,17
Television advertise-ment	3,15	3,39	3,52	2,33	2,77	3,85	3,06
Information from the Internet	2,89	3,06	3,23	2,12	2,85	3,28	2,82

* n = Number of respondents

TABLE 5
THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR THE SAMPLE AND THE INVOLVEMENT GROUPS

Evaluation criteria	Overall mean (M)	Conformist cosmetic buyer n = 62	Aspiring cosmetic buyer n = 96	Disinterested cosmetic buyer n = 33	Need for expertise cosmetic buyer n = 60	Confident cosmetic buyer n = 98	Cautious cosmetic buyer n = 77
Price	3,86	3,94	3,92	3,73	3,68	3,87	3,90
Brand image	3,74	3,92	4,05	2,82	3,48	4,14	3,29
Discount	3,42	3,68	3,49	2,91	3,17	3,45	3,51
Colour	3,72	3,58	3,93	3,48	3,57	3,78	3,73
Fragrance	4,01	4,02	3,98	3,58	3,93	4,12	4,16
Compatibility with skin	4,66	4,55	4,83	4,21	4,70	4,65	4,69
Packaging	3,48	3,68	3,72	3,21	3,25	3,47	3,32
Trend	2,94	3,31	3,18	2,06	2,53	3,29	2,62

*n = Number of respondents

TABLE 6
MOST PREFERRED OUTLET FROM WHICH TO PURCHASE FOR EACH INVOLVEMENT GROUP

Most preferred outlet	Conformist cosmetic buyer n = 62	Aspiring cosmetic buyer n = 96	Disinterested cosmetic buyer n = 33	Need for expertise cosmetic buyer n = 60	Confident cosmetic buyer n = 98	Cautious cosmetic buyer n = 77
Department store	45,9%	41,7%	36,4%	51,7%	35,4%	41,6%
Cosmetic speciality store	14,8%	7,3%	6,1%	5,0%	11,1%	7,8%
Discount stores	21,3%	38,5%	48,5%	26,7%	43,4%	42,9%
Beauty salon	3,3%	5,2%	0,0%	5,0%	2,0%	3,9%

*n = Number of respondents

*Results for Internet shopping, pharmacies, super markets and local markets are not shown here, as these outlets were each mentioned by less than 15 respondents.

Finally, with regard to consumer spending and income, the aspiring cosmetic buyer (24,5%) and the confident cosmetic buyer (21,2%) profiles contain the largest proportion of respondents who had spent more than R500 on cosmetics in the last month. The profile group that contained the largest proportion of respondents who indicated that they had spent less than R100 on cosmetics in the past month was the disinterested cosmetic buyer group (63,6%).

DISCUSSION

Six different consumer-involvement profiles were identified. First, the profiles with the highest levels of involvement are described, followed by the medium and finally the lowest involvement profiles. The highest involvement profiles include the aspiring cosmetic buyer (22.5%) consisting mainly of White respondents aged 18-35 and the confident cosmetic buyer (23%) dominated by Black African respondents aged 24-45. Both the aspiring cosmetic buyer and the confident cosmetic buyer show high interest in cosmetics, derive pleasure from the use of cosmetics, and attach symbolic meaning to cosmetics. The aspiring cosmetic buyer has a high level of uncertainty when choosing skincare and cosmetic products, and therefore marketers should provide free samples to these females as they deem this one of the most important sources of decision-making. This coincides with their need to consider the compatibility of the cosmetic products with their skin type before purchasing. In addition, free samples will also allow them the opportunity to confirm the appropriate colour of the product (another important evaluation criterion) before purchasing colour cosmetics. Good customer service is extremely important for this segment as it will ensure that positive word of mouth be spread which is the most important information source for this buyer. Advertising will be more effective if conducted by means of featured magazine articles as these will support the importance of the brands these buyers aspire to.

The next high involvement segment, confident cosmetic buyer, attaches the highest level of symbolic meaning to cosmetics compared to the other profiles, making this a highly susceptible segment for marketing messages as they believe cosmetics reflect who they are. For the confident cosmetic buyer cosmetic companies should focus on having knowledgeable sales people available in both department and discount stores. When assisting this buyer in store, attention should be placed on finding the cosmetic product most compatible with the buyer's skin type. Even though the cosmetic brand is important to this customer and high monthly spend on cosmetics are reported, price levels should be kept in mind when making purchase suggestions. In this regard cosmetics companies should have affordable alternatives available to this segment to ensure they remain involved in this product category.

The next three profiles can be described as females with average levels of involvement in skincare and colour cosmetics, and are the conformist cosmetic buyer (14.5%), the need-for-expertise cosmetic buyer (14%) and the cautious cosmetic buyer (18%). The conformist cosmetic buyer profile is dominated by Black African respondents aged 18-23 and 36-45. Similar to the previous segments described, this segment also attaches high levels of symbolic meaning to cosmetics, signalling an opportunity for marketers to move this segment into the high involvement space if they align the brand values of the cosmetic products with the brand values of the individuals. This can be achieved by publishing aspirational articles in magazines (an important information source for this segment), followed by marketing activities within department stores (their preferred outlet) using knowledgeable salespeople that can convince the buyer that their cosmetics brands reflect the person she is.

The other two average involvement profiles (need-for-expertise cosmetic buyer and the cautious cosmetic buyer) both consist mainly of White respondents aged between 18-23 and 36-45. The need-for-expertise cosmetic buyer is, of all three average involvement profiles the most confident in her cosmetic choices. Marketers should capitalise on this by having salespeople ready to assist in department stores by supporting her high level of interest with free samples to allow her to find the product most compatible with her skin type. Sampling products will also offer an opportunity to smell the products which are also an important evaluation criterion for this buyer.

With regard to the cautious cosmetic buyer, marketers should know that they represent the most unsure profile group of all. Their uncertainty relates to decision-making and not knowing which skincare and cosmetic products is best for them. This segment offers ample marketing opportunities. They shop at both department and discount stores and it is here where they would need advice and/or reassurance from sales people, and be given free samples to assist in their decision-making process.

Finally, the lowest level of involvement profile, and also the smallest segment is the disinterested cosmetic buyer (8%). This group is dominated by respondents aged 18-23 rather than by respondents from any specific population group. Marketers should probably consider whether it is worth their effort to get this segment involved, especially considering that they show very little interest in cosmetics, derive almost no pleasure from using cosmetics, and do not attach any symbolic meaning to cosmetics. Also, typical marketing activities may not penetrate this segment due to their lack of interest in any information sources related to cosmetics. Easiest way to reach this segment is in discount stores when offering reduced prices on skincare and cosmetics products. This group closely resembles the disinterested and casual cosmetic buyer identified by Guthrie and Kim (2009).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of respondents according to their involvement revealed different levels of involvement profiles, highlighting opportunities for marketers to grow lower involvement profiles. In addition, recognising the most common profiles can assist cosmetic companies in identifying trends in the usage of skincare and colour cosmetics. For example, the aspiring cosmetic buyer (24,5%) and the confident cosmetic buyer (21,2%) contain the largest proportion of respondents who had spent more than R500 on cosmetics in the last month. In addition, the study also provided information on consumers by indicating the typical information sources consulted by each involvement group, the criteria each group uses to evaluate cosmetic products, the outlets from which each group prefers to purchase, as well as the typical amount spent on cosmetics. The results of this study, therefore, provide useful information in understanding female behaviour with regard to skincare and colour cosmetics as an opportunity to increase consumption in this product category.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is important to note that the results of this study cannot be generalised to all female consumers due to the non-probability sampling method used. Demographically, the survey has a number of limitations. Firstly, the age spread in the sample was biased towards younger respondents; and future studies could include a wider age spread. Secondly, the study only investigated the differences between two of the four main population groupings in South Africa, namely Black African and White cosmetic consumers. Again, it is recommended that future research should involve respondents from the Indian/Asian and Coloured population groups as well.

There is evidence of a positive correlation between consumer fashion innovativeness, and product involvement in clothing fashion (Jordaan & Simpson 2006). Since innovators are a promising group to serve in terms of willingness to shop and money spent on clothing, it may be worthwhile to investigate the role of consumer innovativeness on the involvement of cosmetics.

Future studies may also consider investigating skincare amongst male consumers. The male consumer has become more metrosexual and appearance-conscious, and as such is using cosmetic products more frequently than before. This increased usage has been most dominant in men's skincare and bath-and-shower product categories (Euromonitor International 2014b). Future studies can focus on aspects such as beauty ideals and standards as well as the information sources used that are linked to culture, as this might influence profiles as well.

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