

Cosmetics Buying Behavior of Korean, Japanese and Chinese Female University Students as Determined by Their Lifestyle

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I. Introduction

Modern fashion tends to be totalized by including hairstyle, accessories, makeup, etc. Skin care and makeup in particular is getting important in modern women's life, since the standard of living and consumption increases and their social activity is broadened. Accordingly, a lot of interests are shown in makeup, rather than clothing, as it is easy to change and express themselves in various forms (Cho, G. Y. & Yoo, T. S., 1998). Especially female university students have great interests in appearance and supplementary method like makeup, they are regarded as important buyers and consumers of cosmetics. In addition, the range of cosmetic market is increasing with openness of distribution market and development of technology.

This study was to investigate female university students' life style in Korea, China, and Japan. It analyzes purchase behavior of the three groups and provides fundamental information for product manufacturing and sales plan in the international level, which is necessary for domestic cosmetic manufacturers and distributors to penetrate not only domestic market but also China of great potential and the advanced Japanese market. It also suggests marketing strategies to meet female university students' consumption behavior.

II. Method

A preliminary survey was conducted to total 70 college girls attending a 4-year college in Seoul from March 5 to 6 in 2002. An analysis on final 58 correspondents of the total showed the degree of credibility over 0.88.

The main survey was conducted to total 12,000 females university students 100 per each grade of a university from March 11 to April 14 in 2002. 1,165 of the total (378 in Korea, 396 in China, and 391 in Japan) were collected and 1,127 were finally used in the analysis (361 in Korea, 381 in China, and 385 in Japan). For this study, 4-year university in Seoul, Tokyo,

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and Beijing, the capital of each country, were selected. As this survey was conducted in three countries, professionals translated Korean questionnaires into Japanese and Chinese. In order to prevent any error in translation, each translated survey questionnaires were translated into Korean again for unity and accuracy of the survey.

The analysis conducted in the study with SPSS statistics package includes factor analysis, cluster analysis, frequency analysis, Cronbach's α , *t*-test and Duncan's Multiple Range test.

III. Results

1) Korean female university students are positive to the change that they can improve their appearance with makeup as their monthly income increases. Their satisfaction on cosmetics, brand loyalty, and the rate of using foreign cosmetics also increase. They answer that they use a department store often because its quality is credible.

Analysis on Korean university students' lifestyle results in that they have groups of being less interested in appearance, caring about appearance introvertly, thinking appearance important in practical life, pursuing progressive fashion trend, and pursuing conservative fashion trend. The group being less interested in cosmetics earns less and spends less in monthly income cost and cosmetic purchase, while the groups of pursuing fashion trend spend more relatively. Contrary to the latter group, the former group uses domestic brand and does not apply them very often. The groups of being less interested in appearance and caring about appearance introvertly are not satisfied with cosmetics, while the others of pursuing fashion trend are.

2) Lifestyle of Chinese female university students includes groups of social interests, new generation leaders, passive egos, frugal character, and independent life. The monthly income of the group of social interests is the least, while that of the group of new generation leaders is the most. The groups of social interests, frugal character, and independent life buy cosmetics because they do not like products they bought before. Meanwhile, the group of new generation leaders buys them as they consumed products they bought before. The former groups make a purchase through women's magazine and makeup information, while the latter group does through friends and the group of passive egos gains information through mass media like TV and friends. The group of frugal character visits one place before purchase, but the groups of independent life visits more than four places.

The groups of social interests and new generation leaders use professional brand shops; the group of passive egos uses a supermarket or a pharmacy, and the groups of frugal character and independent life a department store. The group of social interests shows the lowest degree of satisfaction on each element of cosmetics, while that of passive egos shows the highest. When they are not satisfied with products, the group of social interests, frugal character, and independent life change it where they shopped, while the groups of new generation leaders and passive egos just let it be in most cases.

3) Japanese female university students' lifestyle analyzed includes the group of passive egos

and that of pleasure-seeking activity. Each group according to the lifestyle shows different cosmetics consumption behavior. The former dominates in juniors and the latter does in seniors. Monthly income and cosmetics purchase are higher in the former. They also have high brand loyalty for makeup products and high rate of cosmetic usage.

4) Comparative study of the three countries shows that Japanese use their domestic brands in a high ratio while the others use foreign brands. The brand loyalty on cosmetics is high in the order of Japan, Korea, and China. Chinese buy a new product because they do not like a previous one, while others do because they use up a previous one. Japanese get information from objective materials, while Koreans do through human network around them. The country searching information very much is Korea, then Japan and China. For purchasing cosmetics, Chinese choose a department store, Japanese a supermarket or a pharmacy, and Korean a discount store. Chinese select a department store because of its credibility, and the others do because of cheap price. Cosmetic purchase of Chinese and Korean is affected by their friends and colleagues, while that of Japanese gets an impact from models in advertisement or magazines. The satisfaction on cosmetics is high in Korea relatively, then Japan and China. When they are not satisfied with a product Chinese girls proactively change it in a shop where they bought it, while Japanese are very passive on that matter.

IV. Conclusion and Implementations

Since foreign cosmetics companies enter into Korean market and the domestic market is oversupplied, Korean cosmetics companies are looking for a chance to penetrate foreign markets to broaden their market power. Especially information about consumption behavior of customers and their cosmetics purchase in China, unlimited market, and Japan that has advanced in the industry would be very helpful for domestic companies to penetrate those markets and set marketing strategies and product development plan by consumers' purchase behavior.

In order to expand into Korean market, those companies need to have competitive price and quality improvement, since Korean consumers buy cosmetics in a discount store and get information from human network. In Japan they have to not only make consumers recognize their brand with continuous advertisement and effective sales strategies in order to strengthen customers' brand loyalty but also acquire distribution lines in supermarkets or pharmacies for customers to easily access to their products. Since Chinese customers consumes foreign brand rather than domestics and actively protest to low quality products, companies should take advantage of department stores, which deal with various brands from foreign countries, and improve product quality.

Beyond this study, it would be also very helpful for the growth of Korean cosmetic industry studying marketing cases of Korean companies and problems and improvement of distribution structure in China and Japan.

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