

A Study on Consumers' Brand Preferences Relating to Specific Cosmetic Products among Omani Women

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DOI: [10.36348/sjbms.2020.v05i07.006](https://doi.org/10.36348/sjbms.2020.v05i07.006)

| Received: 06.07.2020 | Accepted: 13.07.2020 | Published: 16.07.2020

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Abstract

The Sultanate of Oman which was once considered to be a very conservative country is now going through a phase of social change wherein her women have more social awareness and are becoming extremely conscious about how they look and present themselves in public. These being the case we can with surety say that this had led to them giving more emphasis to self-hygiene and looks, which has directly led to the increase in the use of cosmetic products. A plethora of cosmetic products both nationally and internationally made now flood the Omani market. This paper aims to study the behavioral patterns towards specific cosmetic products in Oman. However, beauty is not confined to one aspect alone. Hence this paper concentrates on how the Omani women respond to specific brands covering certain specific areas of care such as Personal care products (Beauty), Skin care products (Moisturizers, Hand wash & Perfumes), Hair care products (Shampoos & Oil). Within these areas also as the brands are too many, only certain prominent brands have been selected such as the below given to serve the research:

- (i) Beauty – Revlon, Lakme, Elle 18, Forever, Huda Beauty, Gosh, Crème Blind & Inglot.
- (ii) Moisturizers – Nivea, Vaseline, Ponds, Jhonson & Jhonsons, Lakme, Bath & Body, Garnier & Dove
- (iii) Shampoos – Pantene, Garnier, Dove, Head & Shoulders, Tressame, Sunsilk & Ultra- Doux.
- (iv) Oil – Parachute, Nyle, Dabur Amla, Indulekha Bringa, Dabur Almond Oil & Garnier.
- (v) Handwash – Dettol, Lifebuoy, Pears, Palmolive, Lux, Dove & Camay.
- (vi) Perfume – Oudine Melanie, Victoria secret bombshell, Gucci, Bulgari, Chanel, L'Coste & Paco Robanne.

Keywords: Consumers Omani Women Cosmetic Products.

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'Cosmetic product' refers to skin moisturizers, perfumes, lipsticks, fingernail polishes, eye and facial makeup preparations, cleansing shampoos, permanent waves, hair colors, and deodorants, as well as any substance intended for use as a component of a cosmetic product. The EU regulation 1223/2009 2.a. defines cosmetics as "Any substance or mixture which is intended to be placed in contact with the external parts of the human body with a view exclusively or mainly to clean, perfume, change their appearance etc., while at the same time keeping their appearance, protecting them and keeping them in good condition". The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "Something having the power to adorn, embellish or

beautify as also something that affects the appearance only [1]". A key point about the OED definition is that cosmetics are superficial rather than therapeutic agents. Cosmetics are not 'over the counter' (OTC) or prescription drugs or drug additives, their role is merely to improve your appearance.

The Omani women have always considered personal care and beauty to be an all-important factor on which they must concentrate on. Gone is the era when the women were secluded and used natural ingredients alone to beautify themselves. In the present era women are no more in the background and with their increased knowledge acquired through their exposure due to education, and with the movement of the economy from a 'Male centered working

community' to an economy where the women have started to work in reputed positions, they have had a chance to see and understand the western cultures. Since then beautifying oneself has become a part of the culture that women have continued to be much interested in. From then on there has been a boom of many beauty products being introduced into the market and various prominent brand names have popped up. Globalization has also been a major reason for this. Therefore, this study is intended to know the brand preferences of Omani Women related to specific cosmetic products.

Research Significance and Objectives

In the Sultanate of Oman, the beauty and cosmetics sector is experiencing growth for the past years. This study will help the cosmetic companies as well as the Oman society by providing useful information about the cosmetic brand preferences of Omani women. The research study will be of valuable use to marketers in identifying marketing opportunities related to the factors that they need to consider related to consumers' preference in choosing their cosmetic/skin care brands.

The objectives of this research paper are to

- (1) To identify the factors affecting buyer's decision for brand preferences of the cosmetic products.
- (2) To know the brand preferences of consumer relating to certain cosmetic products and
- (3) To determine if the preference in the brands varied due to the demographic profiles of the respondents and the factors in choosing the brands.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study focuses on consumers' cosmetic/skin care brand preferences relating to specific cosmetic products among Omani women. Based on the demographic profiles and factors that influence in choosing brand preferences, the following hypotheses are derived.

- H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and price in choosing their brand preferences.
- H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and promotional techniques in choosing their brand preferences.
- H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and quality of products in choosing their brand preferences.
- H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and quality of service in choosing their brand preferences.
- H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and design in choosing their brand preferences.
- H6: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and brand name in choosing their brand preferences.

- H7: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age and place/location in choosing their brand preferences.
- H8: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and price in choosing their brand preferences.
- H9: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and promotional techniques used in choosing their brand preferences.
- H10: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and quality of products in choosing their brand preferences.
- H11: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and quality of service in choosing their brand preferences.
- H12: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and design in choosing their brand preferences.
- H13: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's employment status and brand name in choosing their brand preferences.
- H14: There is a significant and positive relationship between respondent's age, employment status and place/location in choosing their brand preferences.

Factors affecting the selection of the cosmetic product

- (i) **Quality:** One of the most important and prime determinants for the selection of a product is its quality. Quality can be defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind or the degree of excellence of something. Since there are so many competitors existing in a market, the prime component for a product to be successful is that it should be better than others while satisfying the needs of the customer. Moreover, it must possess a distinctive attribute that is different from the rest of the competitor products. A customer can be cheated once but not always. If the customer is not satisfied by the quality of the product then the organization selling the product can never be successful in marketing the product over the long run. With reference to cosmetic products as it is in close touch with the skin, if the quality is not good then it can affect the mental state of the user. Hence quality has to be looked into. Russell and Taylor [2] explain quality as "fitness for use" or "conformance to requirements-". Even if the price is high they are willing to buy if it has the stated quality. Quality always plays a significant role in consumer buying behavior.
- (ii) **Price:** No consumer is looking for only Low-priced products. On the other hand, they are looking for something that relates to the best price. A very low priced product may sometimes project that the product is of very low quality.

Hence it is very important to project the quality of the product through its pricing strategy. The customers in today's market are intelligent enough to understand the inter linkage between the quality and the price. The price of the product may differ depending on the economic conditions of the company and the prevailing consumer perceptions about the product. Consumers mostly use price as an indication of the quality of the brand before they do their purchasing decision.

- (iii) **Place or the distribution channel:** It is through which the sellers promotes or markets the products to the consumers. Companies mostly take the advantage of a strong distribution channel to keep their products or brand in a strong position in the market. The companies use different places like supermarkets, hypermarkets, and retailers to sell the brand. These selling points are determined based on the scale of the operation and the objective of the shareholders.
- (iv) **Marketing campaigns or Promotion:** Promotion refers to communicating information about the product to the buyer to create brand values and brand profile [3]. The four main elements of the promotion mix are advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. Advertising plays a key role in influencing the decisions of the buyer. Marketing campaigns need to be done on a regular basis and in the local language to influence the buying decisions. Also this helps to remind and motivate the buyers to buy by creating a feeling that they need the product.
- (v) **Age group:** This attribute has a direct impact on a person's attitude towards a brand. The reigning trends on magazine covers attract and influences their decisions.
- (vi) **Purchasing Power:** The product may be excellent, but it fails to meet the buyers' purchasing ability, it will have high impact on its sales. Income level of a person has a direct impact on the purchasing power [4]. When the income levels rise naturally people tend to buy more luxury/premium products. The income affects the type of goods that consumers are likely to buy.
- (vii) **Trust:** The famous corporate trainer and Business author, Zig Ziglar said "If people like you, they will listen to you. If they trust you, they will do business with you". It is this trust that makes consumers return to their favorite brands. Trust is created based on the experience that one gets on using the product, or the feeling that one takes away with them on encountering the product. This experience is derived out of their satisfaction levels based on the quality of the product.
- (viii) **Literacy level:** Consumer preferences depend on the level of literacy of a person. A well-educated person may analyze the ingredients in particular

whereas a less educated person may not, due to his/her lack of knowledge about this aspect.

- (ix) **Separation Strategy:** Consumers prefer to buy a product which stands out separately in the market and is the best among several identical products. Where packaging and sales promotional strategies are uniquely designed to be eye catching and attractive to the dealer group that we are aiming at, the sales tend to be more.
- (x) **Packaging:** As beauty is the prime reason for the usage of this commodity the key factor that consumers get attracted to is the type of packaging and the brand icon who markets this product.
- (xi) **Choice:** Single line products always hold less allure for the customer, than when the products have multiple choices. Choice may serve to cater to the individual likes and dislikes of the customers. Choice allows for a personalized experience as, sharing the right content with the right people can make interactions faster, easier, and more efficient for the customers.
- (xii) **Natural ingredients:** In recent years, with increasing awareness among customers about how chemicals can affect the texture and health of the skin in the long run the customers are showing a tendency to prefer products which are made of natural ingredients ie., they are herbal and not chemical.
- (xiii) **Access 2.0:** Gone are those days when people went to the market which is a local area where the marketer and the customer are in close contract. With increased movement towards online shopping every product should have a website. The internet is used for finding products at the click of a finger. Searching and comparing products on the internet has become such a central reference point. However, this access to product information should be extremely easy and simple, informative, and attractive.
- (xiv) **Full disclosure:** When the customer is fully aware of all that the product is made of it helps determine her choice. Especially more so since cosmetics are in close contact with the skin and every skin type is not the same and people may be allergic to specific products. Every company should have the commitment to telling the truth relating to the composition of ingredients. Hiding facts and excessive small print doesn't go far when it comes to consumer satisfaction. Non-disclosure of key components that go to make the product can lead to dire consequences.
- (xv) **The one R – Responsibility:** When something goes wrong, if the supplier goes above and beyond the call of duty in taking responsibility, the end result is often that the customer is so impressed with the supplier's response, it negates the original problem.
- (xvi) **Convenience:** Convenience is an essential element for positive customer experience and

leads to greater sales. The components of convenience include

- (a) Decision convenience – How quickly and easily a customer can decide on what to select among the product range.
 - (b) Access convenience – How easily the product can be purchased which includes both on internet and nearby outlets.
 - (c) Benefit convenience – What core benefits that the customer can get.
 - (d) Transaction convenience – How quickly the payment can be done to complete the purchase transaction.
 - (e) Post-benefit convenience – Factors relating to after sales services and return policies.
- (xvii) **Combining of Emotion with Logic:** Customers tend to be satisfied with the product when the company can create a strong emotional attachment of the customer to the product. This can be done when the customers are provided with logical reasons as to why the use of their product would lead to a more satisfying experience for the customer. This means understanding their expectations to meet or even exceed the needs of the customers.
- (xviii) **Economic conditions:** Consumer spending decisions are known also to be influenced by the economic situation prevailing in the market. As cosmetics are luxury products the sale of these products would be positively affected during times of recession as consumers may not always feel the need to spend money on the same when the money available needs to be re-channelized for other more important necessities.
- (xix) **Group Influence:** This affects the decisions made by a consumer. The primary influential group consists of family members, and the peer group. Mass liking of some product may also be the motivator for a person to select the cosmetic product.
- (xx) **Social norm:** Cosmetic products have been increasingly used these days mainly because it has become a social norm. Today we are part of a society which believes that usage of cosmetic products and it is considered to be something that we cannot do without and non-usage of the same may be considered as not keeping up to the social standards. This has quite often been the cause for one and all to buy cosmetic products – TO FIT IN as they claim it to be.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand equity does not affect the female consumers in their decision of purchasing the cosmetic foreign products. The study was administered on the female consumers in the Thai region reveals that the respondents have the concept of brand equity: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality in their mind but it did not generally

relate the concept to make a final purchase decision of foreign makeup products [5].

Hamza Salim Khraim [6], analyzed how factors of brand loyalty towards cosmetic brands influence the consumer buying behavior. The findings of this study disclose that there is a positive and significant relationship between factors of brand loyalty namely brand name, product quality, price, design, promotion, and service quality and store environment with cosmetics brand loyalty.

In a study conducted on the buying behavior of Finnish Women related to facial skin care products shows that age is not having an impact on the purchasing behavior as many literatures suggests. The result also indicates that regarding the attitudes toward the use of natural ingredients in facial skin care products, differences were found between different demographic groups [7].

In a study conducted among the college students to know the brand loyalty of cosmetic brands in a University of Sargodha, Pakistan shows a positive relationships between brand credibility, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, product knowledge (independent variables) and brand loyalty (dependent variables). The results of present research shows that brand awareness has a highly influence on brand credibility and cosmetic industry can increase the loyalty of their consumer toward their brands by providing them awareness about their brands [8].

Sushilkumar [9] tries to find out a cosmetic brand which is popular and regular stuff of youth's basket irrespective of any purpose. The study findings indicate that brand loyalty has no significant association with gender and domiciles of users of cosmetic products. Similarly, annual spending on cosmetic products and domiciles of youth are statistically independent variables. Results also disclose that an excellent quality of a cosmetic brand was highly ranked by majority of respondents followed by satisfaction of needs & brand name.

According to Yee and Mansori [10], it was not easy to obtain and maintain consumer loyalty for a company's product because there were many forces drawing consumers away such as competition and consumers' thirst for variety. In their study on the factors that influences brand loyalty towards the cosmetic products, they found that perceived quality plays a significant role in influencing consumers to be brand loyal customers. Also the study shows that amongst others consumers prefer brand image, perceived quality, price and promotion as relevant factors attributable to brand loyalty. Thus, all these factors showed positive relationships with brand loyalty yet consumer satisfaction also showed a moderating effect on brand loyalty.

More than any other consumer industry, beauty and personal care are driven by trends. New trending ingredients, formulations, colors, and brands come around every season. The challenges that beauty and personal care brands face are a perfect microcosm of the challenges that *all* brands are facing today. The secret to balancing all these challenges understands the macro trend that's driving the micro trend [11].

Anjana [12] identified in her research paper about the factors influencing the cosmetic buying behavior of consumers as quality product, product price, brand name, product packaging and advertising have greater impact on customer buying decision. Brand, Quality, and price are among the strong competing factors in the decision-making process. When it comes to beauty products, it is even more intense that all the five factors play a major role in consumer buying decision.

In an article regarding the Buying Behavior of Herbal Cosmetics by Women Consumers Chattaraj *et al.* [13] investigated the significance of association between the demographic and socioeconomic attributes and frequency of buying herbal cosmetics. The findings of the study showed a significant relationship between age, household income, and education with frequency of purchasing herbal cosmetics. The results suggested that Promotion, Attributes, Worth of Purchasing, and Demonstration Effect influenced the buying behavior of herbal cosmetics.

In a study of 422 consumers in Turkmenistan to investigate the effect of brand name on consumer preferences, the researchers used a structural equation modelling and found that the brand name of a product has a strong impact on the decision making process of a consumer. This implies that brand creates consumer awareness and desirability that can facilitate consumer decision making and activate brand purchase. Peoples' brand experiences-built consumer's preferences toward certain brands directly or indirectly. The study concluded that the brand image has a significant and positive impact on consumer preferences.

Consumers want their beauty products to be clean, natural and safe and based on these qualities; they prefer the brand for their products. In a green market, defining terms is one of the challenges for brands. Standards for these terms may vary across borders (take "organic" for example) or there may be no standard definitions or regulations at all. This allows unscrupulous brands to mislead or confuse consumers, making it difficult for well-meaning brands to build consumer confidence.

Among a survey done on female consumers buying decision of foreign makeup products, the researchers identified a relationship among three important variables – Brand awareness, Brand

association and Brand perceived quality. The results show a significant relationship between the three variables and the buying decision of the consumers. Among the three variables the researchers found that brand awareness is the most influential element in the buying decision of foreign make up products among the female consumers.

In a study which analyses the effect of perceived benefits – emotional and instrumental on women's satisfaction with cosmetic brands indicate that both these benefits contribute to satisfaction with cosmetic brands – with an overall stronger influence of emotional consumption experiences. The greatest influences were found for the feeling of relief from dissatisfaction with one's self-image. This research reveals that one of the mechanisms through which cosmetics advertising works is by lowering women's self-perception in the first place and then delivering relief from this negative feeling as an emotional benefit through the brand.

When analyzing the consumer's purchase intention regarding eco-labelled cosmetics, preference was mainly given to cosmetics containing trusted eco labels and information. Familiarity with an eco-label, brand loyalty, health awareness and environmental awareness did not moderate the effect of brand on the purchase intention of consumers.

In a study done on consumers from the Dubrovnik-Neretva County on the various variables that influence consumers' intentions towards purchasing natural cosmetics shows that gender, consumers' purchase tendency towards organic food and consumers' purchase tendency towards new natural cosmetics brands have an influence on consumer purchase intentions. However, consumers' tendency towards health consciousness has no influence on consumers' intentions towards purchasing natural cosmetics. The results also show a strong positive relationship between purchase intentions and consumer preferences of natural cosmetics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was developed and distributed to targeted respondents in different areas in Oman. The questionnaire contained two sections: the first section about respondents' demographic profiles and the second section about brand preferences and factors in choosing their preferred cosmetic brands. The survey was carried out on a random sample of 78 female cosmetics users aged between 18–36. The survey was distributed at Shinas, Sohar, Liwa, kaboura, Saham and Muscat areas. A total of 100 were distributed and 78 usable survey questionnaires were returned and collected with 78% response rate.

Methods of Data Collection

(i) Primary Data – This was used to collect the information relating to the preferences of the consumers (in this case college students & Omani Staff – females) relating to the brands

preferred by them when using selected cosmetic products.

(ii) Secondary Data – This was mainly collected from the Internet.

Respondents Demographic Profile

Table-1

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age:		
18 – 20	6	8%
21 – 25	44	56%
26 – 30	6	8%
31 – 35	7	9%
36 - above	15	19%
Employment Status:		
Employed	12	15%
Self-employed/Entrepreneur	9	12%
Unemployed	8	10%
Students	49	63%

Table 1 shows that age composition of those whose ages were between 18-20 years were 8% of the respondents, whereas 56% of the respondent’s ages ranged between 21-25 years. About 8 % of the respondents ranged between 26-30 years old, 9% ranged between 31-35% and 19% ranged between 36 and above.

The sample was almost balanced between employed (15%), self-employed/entrepreneur (12%) and unemployed (10%) while majority of the respondents were students with a percentage of 63%.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers used Pearson correlation to test seven independent variables (price, promotion/advertisement, quality of products, and quality of service, design, brand name and place/location) that influenced respondents in choosing their cosmetic brand preferences and to test if a relationship existed between the respondent’s age and the brand preferences factors.

RESULTS

Table-2: Age versus the factors in choosing the cosmetics brand preferences

Variables	Pearson Correlation
Price	0.204
Promotion/Advertisement	0.092
Quality of Products	0.393
Quality of service	-0.044
Design	0.262
Brand name	0.243
Place/location	-0.135

Table-3: Employment status versus the factors in choosing the brand preferences

Variables	Correlation
Price	0.005
Promotion/Advertisement	0.097
Quality of Products	0.346
Quality of service	0.005
Design	0.085
Brand name	0.109
Place/location	0.031

Pearson Correlation Analysis between the factors in choosing cosmetic brand preferences and two demographic profiles: Age and employment status were executed. The objective of the analysis is to find out

whether there is significant positive relationship between the variables. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 and Table 3. In table 2, there are four variables that are moderately significant which are

price (0.204), quality of products (0.393), design (0.262) and brand name (0.243). This finding indicates that price, quality of the product, design and brand name are positively significant in the consumer decision making process in choosing cosmetic/skin care brands among Omani women. In table 3, only one variable is positively significant which is the quality of products (0.346).

The research results showed that respondents favored price, quality of products, design and brand name in choosing their cosmetic/skin care brand preferences. Quality of the products was shown to have positive relationship with respondent's age and employment status. The correlation between these two variables is shown in Table 2 & 3. The correlation is considered a moderate correlation ($r=0.393$ and $r=0.346$) based on Cohen's [14] guidelines. In addition, price, design and brand name were shown in table 2 to have positive relationship with respondent's age and the factors in choosing their cosmetic brand preferences.

The correlation for price, design and brand name is considered a moderate correlation, price ($r=0.204$), design ($r=0.26$) and brand name ($r=0.24$) based on Cohen's [14]. Overall results show that among the five age categories, females ages between 36 and above favor quality of the products more compared to the other age categories.

HYPOTHESIS TEST

As shown in Table 2 & 3, Null Hypotheses H1, H3, H5, H6 and H10 Null hypothesis shows that respondent's age & employment status and factors in choosing cosmetic brand preferences namely price, quality of products, design and brand name were found to have significant positive relationship in respondents' cosmetics brand preferences. Null hypotheses H2, H4, H7, H8, & H9, H11, H12, H13 & H14 were rejected because it shows that no significant positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table-4: Ranking of Cosmetic/Skin Care products preferred by Omani Women

Cosmetic Skin Care Products		Rank	Mean
1	Beauty	3	1.79
2	Moisturizers	2	2.41
3	Shampoos	5	1.36
4	Oil	1	2.96
5	Hand wash	4	1.74
6	Perfume	6	1.35

Based on table 4, the research results showed that consumers used Oil as number 1 with a total mean of 2.96 cosmetic/skin care followed by moisturizers

(2.41), beauty products (1.79) hand wash (1.74), shampoos (1.36) and perfume (1.35).

Table-5: Ranking of Cosmetic Skin Care Products Brand Preferences of Omani Women

I. Beauty Products		Rank	Mean
1	Revlon	6	3.27
2	Lakme	1	4.19
3	Elle 18	4	3.37
4	Huda Beauty	7	2.94
5	Gosh	3	3.69
6	Crème Blind	5	3.30
7	Inglot	2	3.81
8	Himalaya Herbals	8	2.38
II. Moisturizers			
1	Nivea	8	1.88
2	Vaseline	5	2.42
3	Ponds	2	3.05
4	Johnson's & Johnsons	6	2.19
5	Lakme	1	3.6
6	Bath & Body	9	1.88
7	Garnier	3	2.94
8	Dove	7	1.98
9	Himalaya Herbals	4	2.72

III. Shampoos		Rank	Mean
1	Pantene	7	2.14
2	Garnier	4	3.25
3	Dove	8	2.0
4	Head & Shoulders	6	2.73
5	Tressame	3	3.35
6	Sunsilk	2	3.36
7	Ultra-Doux	1	4.01
8	Himalaya Herbals	5	3.01
IV. Oil			
1	Parachute	3	3.50
2	Nyle	2	3.74
3	Dabur Amla	4	3.23
4	Indulekha Bringa	1	3.86
5	Dabur Almond Oil	5	3.02
6	Garnier	6	2.69
7	Himalaya Herbals	7	2.57
V. Hand Wash			
1	Dettol	7	2.18
2	Lifebouy	5	2.95
3	Pears	2	3.35
4	Palmolive	3	3.32
5	Lux	6	2.68
6	Dove	8	2.10
7	Camay	1	3.40
8	Himalaya Herbals	4	2.96
VI. Perfume			
1	Oudine Melanie	1	3.67
2	Victoria Secret	7	2.61
3	Gucci	6	2.70
4	Chanel	4	3.0
5	Bulgari	2	3.40
6	Paco Robanne	3	3.23
7	Calvein Klein	5	2.85
8	Amouage	8	2.22

Based on Table 5, it shows that in six cosmetic/skin care products, the first choice of the respondents is: Under the Beauty Products: Lakme;

Moisturizers: Lakme; Shampoos: Ultra Doux; Oil: Indulekha Bringa; Hand wash: Camay; and Perfume: Oudine Melanie.

Table-6: Factors influencing Brand Preferences among Omani Women

	Factors	Rank	Mean
1	Price	2	3.53
2	Promotion/Advertisement	4	3.26
3	Quality of the products	1	3.96
4	Quality of the service	6	3.09
5	Design	5	3.19
6	Brand names	3	3.50
7	Place/location	7	2.97

In Table 6, it shows that there were seven independent variable factors in choosing the cosmetics brand preferences that were tested by the researcher through the questionnaires distributed to respondents. The Likert scale was used in the questionnaire: 1 indicates Not important, 2 indicates Somewhat Important, 3 indicates Moderate Importance, 4 indicates Very Important and 5 indicates Extremely Important.

The result is derived from the highest mean score of factors of choosing brand preferences based on the respondents' answers.

FINDINGS

- Based on data analysis, it can be noted that majority of consumers of cosmetics are students

comprising 63% of the total sample population and age ranging between 21 to 25 years old.

- The dominant factor that governs the decisions of the users be it based on age or be it based on employment status in selecting cosmetic products was found to be quality followed by Brand name
- The Omani women prefer to use oil and moisturizers and their desire to think of use of beauty products come only after the above mentioned.
- In the use of cosmetic beauty products, the Omani women prefer to use Lakme products followed by Inglot in comparison to the other comparative choices
- With reference to Moisturizers also the Omani women prefer to use Lakme products, closely followed by Ponds.
- The Omani women in their choice of shampoos prefer their first choice as Ultra-Doux followed by Sunsilk.
- Among oils the first choice of Omani women seems to be Indulega bringa followed by Nyle.
- Their choice of soaps is firstly Camay followed by Pears.
- In their choice of perfumes their first best choice has been Oudine Melanie closely followed by Bulgari.
- Null Hypotheses H1, H3, H5, H6 and H10 shows that respondents age & employment status and factors in choosing cosmetic brand preferences namely price, quality of products, design and brand name were found to have significant positive relationship in respondents' cosmetics brand preferences.
- Null hypotheses H2, H4, H7, H8, & H9, H11, H12, H13 & H14 were rejected because it shows that no significant positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables.
- The overall result shows that the quality of the products is the most important factor followed by price, brand names, promotion and advertisement, product design quality of the service and store location or place that the respondents considered in choosing their cosmetic/skin care brand preferences.

CONCLUSION

Cosmetics and Beauty Products demand is one of the growing market sections in any department stores which have been competitive both in local and international brands. The purpose of this research paper is to determine the factors that affect the consumer's buying decisions for brand preferences and if the brand preferences will vary due to demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the data analysis and findings, the factors are identified: price, brand names, promotion and advertisement, product design, quality of the service and store location have greater impact or influence on consumer brand preferences. As a result,

the respondent's first choice preference is to use Oil and Moisturizers and the least is perfume. With regards to brand preferences, respondent's demographic profile varies depending on the age group and employment status.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For the Beauty Products Company, it is recommended to increase the awareness among the consumers regarding the use of cosmetic products using more prevalent icons and building the awareness of the services provided by the company, along with projecting product features more effectively through advertising.
- The research needs to be conducted using a greater population covering not only the age and employment status but also based on economic status of families where women may be unemployed but still use a lot of cosmetic products.
- The questionnaires need to be circulated among students who are young who also use cosmetics.
- The questionnaires need also to be circulated to the local beauty salons to find what other product choices are generally available there and preferred by the Omani women.
- Most of the products selected as choices under the various categories do not specify natural ingredients which would lead to a difference in the choices made by the women.
- The products selected are commonly known products in the international markets. However, a research could be conducted only on the use of locally made beauty care products to check on the brand preferences among those products as well.
- The questionnaire should be distributed to the illiterate people as well and filled up using enumerators for the purpose, whereby a greater insight could be got on the Omani women population, wherein still many of the older generation use beauty products but may not be literate enough to read questionnaires on their own.
- Moreover, a new research needs to be conducted once the COVID 19 situation elapses and the economic situation of people and the country would show remarkable changes. At that stage it would be interesting to find how many of the products are purchased and if their quantities will vary and if the choice would be based on the knowledge of the name of the producing country as well.

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