

Factors Affecting the Purchase of Imported Cosmetics by Chinese Consumers

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Abstract

In recent years, Chinese consumers' buying behavior in the international luxury consumer market has greatly risen due to China's rising economic strength. In this case, the imported cosmetics market has been strongly stimulated. Even in the context of the global economic downturn, the consumption of imported cosmetics by Chinese consumers has improved. Therefore, some key factors affecting purchasing behavior is necessary to be researched. There are four factors including celebrity influence, comparative advantage, appearance and brand culture in this empirical research. The results of the study show that the four factors all have positive impacts on women's purchase intention. This article aims to provide some inspiration for marketing in imported cosmetics industry.

Key words: Imported cosmetics, celebrity influence, comparative advantage, appearance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the main driving force for the growth of the global luxury goods industry, Chinese consumers will contribute 90% to the growth of the global personal luxury goods market in 2020, accounting for 35% of the total global personal luxury goods consumption [1]. This means that before 2020, the strategic focus of global luxury brands has shifted to China. Driven by the younger generation of consumers, the purchase rate of online luxury goods sales in China has increased from 13% in 2019 to 23% in 2020 [2]. Taking into account the continuous improvement of the appearance consumption level of the Chinese population, especially women, it is expected that the scale of China's cosmetics market will continue to expand from 2021 to 2025 [3]. Nowadays, the promotion of cosmetics is very

strong. Lipstick and skin care products occupy the largest market share in the household cosmetics category, surpassing color cosmetics in China. Skin care products are suitable for consumers of ages and have the largest consumer group. The role of skin care products is to improve skin conditions, not to cover up skin problems, so when buying skin care products, some consumers are more inclined to choose expensive and well-known products. In the Chinese market, as the pace of urban work accelerates, more and more young consumers between the ages of 25 and 30 are buying imported skin care products. This is because young women have developed anxiety about skin care problems. And the awareness of anti-aging has gradually increased. Table 1 indicates different levels of skin care products in Chinese markets.

Table-1 different levels of skin care products in Chinese market

Luxury	High-end	Mid-range	Normal
La Prairie	Lancome	VICHY	DaBao
The Ginza Cosmetics	DIOR	DHC	VAQUA
NOESA	Clinique	OLAY	Nivea
POLA	SK-II	MAYBELLINE	HERBORIST
Cosme Decorte	CPB	L'OREAL PARIS	wetcode
VALMONT	Shiseido	CHANDO	qianxiancao
Natura Bisse	CHANEL	LA ROCHE-POSAY	SPDC
Chantecaille	Clarins	AUPRES	INOHERB
LA MER	ShuUemura	AUPRES	Innisfree

With the development of mobile Internet technology, various social media not only meet the social needs of the masses, but also provide various conveniences for life, study and work, making the masses more and more dependent on social media. Second, with fierce market competition and changes in consumer perceptions, traditional marketing methods are no longer able to adapt to new changes in consumers [8]. Businesses need new marketing strategies. Therefore, this article studies the factors that affect women's purchase of skin care products from many aspects to provide ideas for businesses to produce new marketing strategies. This article provides better marketing ideas for product sales from the perspective of merchants, insight into customer needs, and better service to consumers.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Luo (2014) researched on the influence of Internet word of mouth on the purchase intention of skin care products consumers and pointed out that the quality, quantity, and professionalism of Internet word of mouth have a positive effect on purchase intention [4]. Zhang (2014) indicates that Brand memory has a significant influence on consumers' purchase intention [5]. Liu *et al.* (2017) show that most college students buy skin care products because of their good reputation or recommendations from relatives and friends [6]. Zhu & Xu (2017) indicates that although the tax burden of consumers has been reduced by half, the cost of consumption has not been reduced as a result [9]. Lei *et al.* (2019) figure out that price is considered first when online purchase, and the quality and brand factors are preferred in offline purchasing [12]. Yong (2020) puts that Promotion activities can effectively improve consumers' purchase intention [11]. Niu (2020) reminds that content marketing significantly affects consumers' willingness to spread the brand through the mediating role of brand identity [10]. Zhang (2021) proves that the development of social media advertising has a significant impact on female consumer groups [7]. Based on all above previous researched, this article focus on factors including celebrity influence, comparative advantage, appearance and brand appeal to better understand Chinese women purchasing behavior of skin care products.

3. HYPOTHESES

Nowadays, most people can make rational consumption according to the actual economic strength of the family and their actual conditions [21]. However, with the rapid development of modern society and the continuous improvement of people's living standards, people's desire for consumption has gradually become stronger, and there is more and more material, life and spiritual needs in various aspects such as study and life. This realistic demand Make people continue to chase fashion trends when they consume, which leads to a large number of herd consumption [13]. Compared with ordinary people, celebrities who have more exposure,

their words and deeds often appear in the eyes of the public. With their unique personal charm, celebrities have attracted fans' love and pursuit, earned a reputation for themselves. Fans hope that their expectations of idols will become reality and make idols continue to develop in order to show their full potential and gain satisfaction through star-chasing behavior. Therefore, many celebrity fans may buy products endorsed by celebrities. Thus,
H1: Celebrity influence will positively affect purchase intention.

Most people value what others think of themselves, and the perspective of others is very important to them. Social status depends to a large extent on economic achievements, so big-name skin care products have become one of the choices to prove economic strength and status. Most people think that the higher the price, the higher the status of the product. So people will be able to use big-name skin care products to prove their economic strength. The comparative advantage of imported skin care products or cosmetics is that they are high-end and well-known [14]. Therefore, imported cosmetics have become an important choice in the daily lives. Comparative advantage means that when a cheap skin care product does not achieve the desired effect, most consumers will think it is the reason for the product. But when this skin care product is replaced with a big-name skin care product, most consumers will think that the skin care product is not suitable for themselves, rather than that the big-name skin care product is not good [17]. This is the power of comparative advantage. Some consumers believe that expensive luxury goods can bring themselves a certain sense of superiority when buying, and they believe that they have more material wealth and spiritual satisfaction than others. Therefore,
H2: Comparative advantage will positively affect purchase intention.

The appearance of imported cosmetics or skin care products often exhibits unexpected performance, often breaking the convention to form their own characteristics. For example, the carvings on the lipstick, the gift box limited by the cosmetics brand and so on. And consumers are not all rational. Within their acceptable price range, more and more consumers pay not only for product quality and service, but for their own taste. Whether the appearance of the product is exquisite reflects the consumer's vision and taste, and consumers are willing to pay for their vision and taste [15]. And the appearance of the product can show the unique charm of the brand, which can not only meet the specific needs of consumers, but also bring consumers a sense of belonging and resonate with them. Purchasing products is not only for personal use, but also for giving away. Then the exquisite appearance of the product as a gift will make people's eyes shine, let the recipient feel the attention, and also allow the giver to express their importance to the recipient [18]. At this time, the big-

brand skin care products plus the exquisite outer packaging will look even more classy. Therefore,

H3: Appearance will positively affect purchase intention.

Brand culture is a combination of unique beliefs, values, rituals, norms and traditions related to the brand that are shared by the owners, buyers, users or yearning parties of a certain brand [13]. Under the premise of sufficient material consumption, the cultural connotation of the brand is more important to consumers [19]. The unique and novel brand culture created by the company is in line with consumers' thinking, allowing their emotions to be released through the product, resonating in their hearts, and satisfying their emotional needs [20]. When consumers agree with products with their own unique brand culture, the brand cultural environment is created to deepen consumers' understanding of brand culture, thereby laying the foundation for consumers' emotional support in the brand. The cultural atmosphere embodied by the brand culture is very important for stimulating consumer purchases [16]. For example, the target customers of high-end brands usually have a certain social status and economic strength, so the corresponding cultural atmosphere is noble and elegant, while the target audience of low-end brands is more concentrated on young people, so its cultural atmosphere must be having youthful vigor.

H4: Brand culture will positively affect purchase intention.

Figure 1 indicates the overall research model.

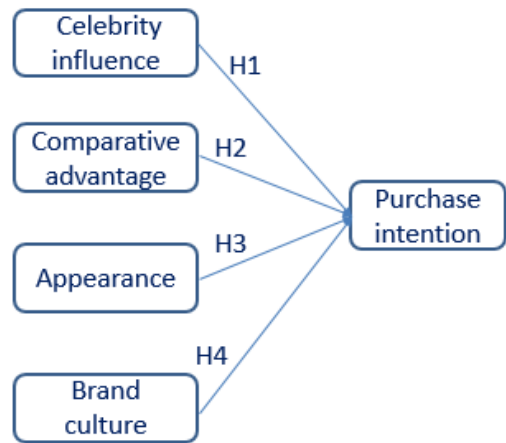


Fig-1: Research model

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

This survey was mainly released through the online questionnaire, and finally 223 valid samples were recovered. Among them, the target of this questionnaire survey is mainly young female consumers, because they have a better understanding of skin care products, and prefer to buy expensive imported cosmetics and skin care products. The samples obtained in this survey are in line with the sample settings of this research in terms of residence city, occupation, age, monthly income, etc. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics.

Table-2 Descriptive statistics

Name	Number	%	
Cities	Super metropolis	27	12.11%
	Provincial capital	42	18.83%
	City	46	20.63%
	Town	39	17.49%
	County	28	12.56%
	Village	41	18.39%
Age	18-22	94	42.15%
	23-30	55	24.66%
	31-40	20	8.97%
	Above 41	54	24.22%
Occupation	Student	107	47.98%
	Civil servants	8	3.59%
	Teachers	11	4.93%
	Freelance	26	11.66%
	Housewife	53	23.77%
	Others	18	8.07%
Income Per month	< 500 \$	141	63.23%
	≥500 & < 800 \$	43	19.28%
	≥8000 & < 1200 \$	24	10.76%
	≥1200 & < 1500 \$	7	3.14%
	≥1500	8	3.59%

The reliability test values are listed in Table 2, where values of cronbachs-alpha and composite reliability are greater than 0.7[22], and value of AVE is

greater than 0.5 [23], therefore it proves the reliability of the model.

Table-3: Convergent Validity, Composite Reliabilities testing results

Construct	Cronbachs Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Celebrity Influence	0.826	0.793	0.737
Comparative advantage	0.861	0.915	0.783
Appearance	0.812	0.888	0.726
Brand culture	0.783	0.873	0.769
Purchase intention	0.802	0.871	0.627

Table 3 shows that the load of these projects is higher than that of other projects. This step proves the validity of the model [24]. Therefore, all relevant tests

have proved the reliability and effectiveness of the model for structural model evaluation [25].

Table-4 Correlation Matrix and Square Roots of AVE

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
CI	0.858				
CA	0.211	0.884			
AP	0.152	0.231	0.852		
BC	0.406	0.371	0.475	0.876	
PI	0.318	0.319	0.541	0.077	0.819

Table 4 indicates that all of the four hypotheses are supported. The relationships between celebrity influence and purchase intention, appearance and purchase intention, brand culture and purchase intention are positively significant. Interestingly, relationship between comparative advantage and purchase intention is negative. The reason could be that Users are unwilling to admit their vanity to compare, thus deliberately lowering their scores in questionnaire. But this also clearly proves that consumers are so concerned about relative advantages that it is very necessary for manufacturers to improve the relative advantages of their products. Figure 2 indicates the research's structure model.

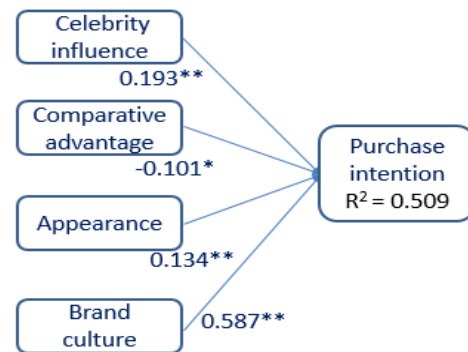


Fig-2: Structural Model (Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01)

Table 5 indicates the hypotheses results of the research.

Table-5 Hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Paths	Estimate	t-value
H1	Celebrity influence →purchase intention	0.193	3.892**
H2	Comparative advantage →purchase intention	-0.101	1.65*
H3	Appearance →purchase intention	0.134	2.63**
H4	Brand culture →purchase intention	0.587	11.018**

5. DISCUSSION

With the development of the Internet, online shopping has gradually replaced traditional shopping with the advantages of cheapness and speed, and has become a new shopping habit of consumers [26]. Compared with the real feelings of going to the store to buy skin care products, online shopping must know the

quality of the product after the purchase, so online shopping has uncertainties and risks. In order to reduce or avoid this uncertainty or risk, consumers will refer to the product's sales, ratings, reviews and other information. Consumers will be more cautious, will refer more to the opinions of others, and rely on others' decisions. In particular, products recommended by Internet celebrities will give consumers more peace of

mind. Cosmetic manufacturers should look for Internet celebrities that fit their products as endorsements and promote them on various online platforms to gain more empathy from young people.

As the main consumers of skin care products—women, in the process of choosing shopping, they usually choose their favorite products from an aesthetic point of view [27]. On this basis, some skin care products with elegant appearance, exquisite packaging and bright design are usually more attractive to consumers and stimulate their desire to shop. Although the design of skin care products has nothing to do with the basic needs of consumers at the time of purchase, the design can enable consumers to fully experience or understand branded products, which may arouse potential consumers' desire to shop and stimulate consumption. Ordinary designs or designs that are inconsistent with the aesthetic concepts of the target consumer group cannot attract people to consume, making it difficult to sell products. The appearance is not a supplement to the product, but an indispensable part of a complete skin care product. A successfully designed appearance can greatly increase the added value of the product [15].

As brand culture is increasingly being valued by consumers. Brand value is usually not only reflected in the function of the product, but also largely depends on its ability to carry and spread cultural significance [16]. Consumers prefer brands that are embedded in the culture they care about or that are in line with their ideas. For consumers, entertainment and social interaction have gradually become the main reasons for shopping. Brand culture can establish a consumer's social atmosphere according to their identity and preferences, thereby satisfying consumers' social experience [17].

6. LIMITATIONS

This article only conducted a questionnaire survey conducted by Chinese girls and did not conduct research on consumers in other countries. As the aesthetics of consumers in China, Japan and South Korea are similar, a combined study of consumers in these three countries should be carried out in the future. In this article, skin care products are used to represent cosmetics, but the importance of beauty products is ignored. In the future, a comparative study of skin care products and beauty products can be carried out.

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