

Full Length Research Paper

Women satisfaction with cosmetic brands: The role of dissatisfaction and hedonic brand benefits

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Accepted 24 September, 2015

Research suggests that the exposure to pictures of good-looking and even slightly above-average-looking females lowers the self-image of exposed women and increases dissatisfaction with their own appearance. This study analyses the effect of perceived instrumental/utilitarian and hedonic/emotional brand benefits on women's satisfaction with cosmetic brands, focusing on relief from dissatisfaction with one's self-image as one of four identified emotional brand experiences. A survey of 355 women was carried out, assessing instrumental and hedonic brand benefits of the brand used by each interviewed participant, as well as the degree of satisfaction with the surveyed brand. The collected data was modelled using structural equation analysis. Results indicate that utilitarian and hedonic brand benefits both 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. However, from an ethical point of view, such a strategy is questionable, especially given the problems of eating disorders and body dysmorphia.

Key words: Brand associations, physical attractiveness, cosmetics consumption, advertising, women's psychology.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, beauty and physical attractiveness are constantly emphasized as desirable and admirable characteristics (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986; Joy and Venkatesh, 1994; Picot-Lemasson et al., 2002). Images of "idealized" human faces and bodies are widely used to promote products and services, these images being often openly sexual and associated with hedonism and leisure, while stressing the importance of appearance (Featherstone, 1993). In particular, consumers are continuously exposed to imagery of highly attractive females who advertise cosmetic brands. For consumers this may lead to significant behavioural implications. A number of studies have addressed the impact of the representation

of attractive women on female consumers. As a general result, the exposure to pictures of good-looking and even slightly above-average-looking females lowered the self-image of exposed women and increased dissatisfaction with their own appearance (Pollay, 1986; Myers and Biocca, 1992; Martin and Gentry, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2004). The desire to improve one's physical attractiveness seems to be an inherent characteristic of most individuals (Adams, 1977; Etcoff, 1999; Winston, 2003). Cosmetics have been traditionally used by women to control their physical appearance and, presumably, their physical attractiveness. While this study focuses on women – still the most salient consumers of cosmetic products – male consumers are also increasingly targeted by the cosmetics industry. Although, the literature is by no means voluminous, several researchers have examined the psychological correlates and consequences of cosmetic use (Cash and Cash, 1982; Miller and Cox, 1982; Graham and Kligman, 1985; Cash

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et al., 1985; Cox and Glick, 1986; Etcoff, 1999). Cash (1988) reviewed some of the available research evidence and, from a self-presentational perspective, argued that cosmetics use specifically and grooming behaviours in general function to manage and control not only social impressions but also self-image (for example, body image, self-perceptions, and mood states).

These findings indicate that the benefits sought after in the purchase of cosmetics in general as well as in deciding on a specific cosmetic brand are not limited to instrumental or functional benefits but may also be related to hedonistic or emotional consumption experiences. It is therefore, not surprising that a significant share of the claims in cosmetic brand advertising can be related to subjective psychological consumption motives, rather than objective outcomes. The aim of this study is to explore the brand associations of cosmetic brands from female consumers' perspective and to analyse the comparative effect of identified brand benefits on female consumers' satisfaction. The scope of this research extends to why women consume specific cosmetic brands, what role does cosmetics consumption play in emotional/hedonistic benefits in addition to the perception of instrumental/utilitarian benefits, and to what extent advertising is involved in evoking benefits of cosmetic brands. For this purpose, a survey of consumer perceptions of cosmetic brands was carried out, assessing instrumental and hedonic brand benefits of the brand used by each interviewed participant, as well as the degree of satisfaction with the surveyed brand. The collected data was modelled using structural equation analysis.

Customer satisfaction

Among researchers, the concept of customer satisfaction is usually discussed from two different perspectives: According to a cognitive perspective, this term is understood to be the assessment resulting from comparing customers' expectations and their perception of the value of the product/service received (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988). From an emotional perspective, satisfaction is considered a positive emotional state resulting from the consumption experience (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). On the other hand, customer satisfaction also depends on perceived value (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Ravald and Grönroos, 1996), which can be defined as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product/brand, based on perceptions of what is received (benefits received) and what is given (price paid and other costs associated with the purchase)" (Zeithaml, 1988). In the scope of this study, satisfaction is viewed as

a multidimensional construct (Danaher and Haddrell, 1996; Oliver and Swan, 1989), and it is conceptualized as an overall, post-consumption affective response by the consumer.

Physical appearance and cosmetic consumption

Judgments based on physical appearance are considered powerful forces in contemporary consumer culture. Physical attractiveness has been extensively studied in both personnel and social psychology. A number of studies have shown that people rated as "attractive" are found to be generally treated better socially than "unattractive" people. Thus, attractive individuals are predicted to be more successful than unattractive individuals in their business and personal lives (Godoy et al., 2005; Cash, 1980; Cox and Glick, 1986). For example, they are often more likely to be hired, promoted, and to earn higher salaries than unattractive individuals (Marlowe et al., 1996; Frieze et al., 1990, 1991; Hamermesh and Biddle, 1994; Schwer and Daneshvary, 2000). Also, multiple studies link personal appearance to positive reactions from others such as friendship preference (Byrne et al., 1968; Perrin, 1921) and romantic attraction (Walster et al., 1966; Brislin and Lewis, 1968; Byrne et al., 1970; Huston, 1973; Krebs and Adinolfi, 1975; Kaats and Davis, 1970; Sigall and Landy, 1973; Holmes and Hatch, 1938).

The reason why people like the physically attractive more than the physically unattractive is thought to be because the former are assumed to possess more desirable and rewarding personalities (Dion et al., 1972). Attractive people are ascribed more positive interpersonal attributes such as intelligence, happiness, and sociability (Miller, 1970). This effect is so robust and ubiquitous that it has been coined the "what-is-beautiful-is-good effect" (Eagley et al., 1991).

As a consequence, the consumer culture highlights the self-preservationist concept of the body, which encourages individuals to adopt instrumental strategies to combat deterioration and decay and combines it with the notion that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression (Featherstone, 1993; Sturrock and Pioch, 1998). The human body is considered a personal resource and a social symbol, which gives off messages about a person's self-identity (Catterall and Maclaran, 2001). Thus, the body becomes more and more integrated in social life and is often quite central to the individual's self-actualization (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995). This tendency is also supported by consumerism that presents appearance (bodily and otherwise) as the prime arbiter of values and concepts of self-development. The individual is increasingly seen as responsible – not

just for his/her behaviour – but also for the appearance and workings of his or her body. Consequently, to experience this connection and enjoy social favour, many individuals look for ways to improve their appearance and adhere to popular notions of beauty. The cosmetics and grooming industries all successfully cater to this demand for aesthetic enhancement (Askegaard et al., 2002).

Instrumental and hedonic benefits of cosmetic brands

Most authors agree in making a distinction between affective and cognitive processing in consumer choice behaviour (Petty et al., 1983; Janiszewski, 1990; Bagozzi et al., 1999). Thus, researchers have also focused on two related major dimensions of product or brand associations (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Mittal and Lee, 1989; Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Voss et al., 2003). The first is the traditional notion of instrumental or utilitarian performance where the brand is seen as performing a useful function. The second dimension is that of hedonic (emotional) performance (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Adaval, 2001; Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000) whereby brands are valued for their intrinsically pleasing properties. The influence of these two brand dimensions on customer satisfaction has been extensively studied by researchers in different contexts (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Oliver, 1993; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Rintamäki et al., 2006; Burns and Neisner, 2006).

In the specific domain of cosmetics, utilitarian brand benefits refer to the ability of the brand to effectively accomplish the promised effects over physical appearance (for example, body shaping, reducing wrinkles or cellulite, obtaining a firmer, brighter, hydrated skin). However, the perception of tangible outcomes of the use of cosmetics may be considered quite subjective. To underline the utilitarian benefit of cosmetic products, marketers most often use sophisticated packaging designs as product containers. In this context, some researchers suggest that the consumer's perception of the packaging may constitute a significant factor in his/her quality and performance judgements (Bloch, 1995; Pantin-Sohier et al., 2005; Stravinskienė et al., 2008).

With regard to the hedonic benefits of cosmetic brands, these refer to emotional experiences that the brand is able to deliver to the consumer (for example, the pleasure of feeling more attractive and younger or to feel more at ease with oneself). These brand-related stimuli constitute the major source of subjective, internal consumer responses, which some authors have referred to as brand experience (Brakus et al., 2008; Brakus et al.,

2009). Consumers' experiences with cosmetic brands, as retained in memory, will include emotional associations with the brand (Hansen and Christensen, 2007). Emotional brand experiences come as assemblies of elements such as specific appraisals, action tendencies, desires, feelings and physiological responses. In this research, four emotional experiences related to cosmetic brand consumption were identified in the literature and through a number of qualitative focus group sessions with female university students. They are (1) feelings of social and professional success, (2) feeling sexually attractive, (3) feeling of sensorial pleasure, and (4) relief from feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself.

Feelings of social and professional success

Most women agree on the fact that features such as physical attractiveness and beauty are more and more appreciated and required by society, and that attractive women have more chances of succeeding in their social and professional relationships (Etoff et al., 2004). Indeed, research shows that external appearance frequently affects professional success (Marlowe et al., 1996; Frieze et al., 1990; Hamermesh and Biddle, 1994) and is often decisive in social interactions (Nash et al., 2006; Adams and Read, 1983; Bloch and Richins, 1992). The use of cosmetics may enhance the reactions of others to the person using them (for example, people should perceive a woman more favourably in terms of personality characteristics and are likely to have a higher opinion of her; Graham and Jouhar, 1981). Kyle and Mahler (1996) showed that the use of cosmetics can even influence income in a woman's job as a result of the perceptions of higher female abilities. Ads where famous actresses or attractive and successful models are shown – symbolizing success both in their personal and professional lives – may evoke feelings of social success as a consumption experience (Forkan, 1980; McCracken, 1989). Thus, the consumption of specific cosmetic brands may deliver the feeling of being more successful in social interactions on a personal or professional level.

Feeling sexually attractive

To be attractive to the opposite sex has been considered one of the main stimuli for the consumption of cosmetic brands (Sturrock and Pioch, 1998). Several studies have shown that women perceive themselves as being more feminine, sensual, and sexually attractive to men when they use cosmetics (Cash, 1988; Cash and Cash, 1982; Cash et al., 1985; Cash et al., 1989; Cox and Glick, 1986; Buss and Schmitt, 1993). Some authors also suggest that

women may feel more sexually attractive while consuming a particular brand (Herman, 2003; Post, 2004). Cosmetic brands advertised by physically attractive women (Joseph, 1982; Patzer, 1985) as well as those inspiring a sense of identification in the consumer (Ward et al., 2002; Huckeba, 2005) generate a significant emotional impact, activating and strengthening the “brand-to-attractiveness” association in the minds of consumers.

Feelings of sensorial pleasure

Sensorial stimuli (visual and acoustic stimuli, as well as smell, touch and taste) also significantly contribute to the emotional brand experience (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986). Cosmetic brands can deliver emotional benefits through their association with multi-sensorial brand experiences (Aaker, 1996) such as touch (with textures capable of giving a sensation of smoothness and/or coolness to the skin) and smell (sensual fragrances capable of creating a sense of well-being and pleasure; Sedgwick et al., 2003). The positive stimulation of these senses by the brand can induce sensory as well as psychological pleasure (Craig Roberts et al., 2009; Korichi et al., 2009; Abriat et al., 2007).

Relief from feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself

It has been suggested that women frequently experience negative emotions such as feelings of worry for their physical appearance, or the feeling of guilt deriving from the self-perception of not doing enough to care for or improve their appearance (Fallon, 1990; Catterall and Maclaran, 2001; Askegaard et al., 2002). In today's society women are made to feel increasingly responsible for their body and physical appearance (Wykes and Gunter, 2005; Turner, 1996). In addition, numerous advertisements present standards of beauty that most women cannot attain with the effect that most women develop feelings of dissatisfaction with their own physical appearance (attractiveness, weight, and shape of the body; Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; Downs and Harrison, 1985; Silverstein et al., 1986; Etcoff et al., 2004). The social comparison theory has been used by a number of authors to explain how the representation of highly attractive models in advertising may affect female consumers (Martin and Gentry, 1997; Martin and Kennedy, 1993; Stiles and Kaplan, 2004; Tiggemann and McGill, 2004). According to Etcoff (1999), the need to reduce these negative emotions constitutes one of the main psychological motivations urging women to purchase cosmetic brands. The suggested persuasion mechanism observable in cosmetic brand advertising

would be, thus, as follows: The representation of attractive role models lowers the self-image of female consumers, while simultaneously the feeling of relief is associated with the brand – claiming that the problem with one's appearance can be solved through the consumption of the brand. Evoking temporarily feelings of dissatisfaction with themselves in targeted consumers may indeed represent an adequate advertising strategy because it may stimulate consumers to consume cosmetic brands to improve their appearance and produce feelings of accomplishment through aesthetic self-enhancement (Richins, 1991).

The positive influence that utilitarian and emotional brand dimensions exert on customer satisfaction has been shown in varying contexts (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Oliver, 1993; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Rintamäki et al., 2006). With regard to cosmetic brands it has been suggested that emotional brand experiences may be particularly relevant for female consumers' satisfaction (Ashmore et al., 1996; Chao and Schor, 1998; Hogg et al., 1998; Gould, 1998; Herman, 2003). In the empirical study, the following research question will be addressed:

To what extent (strength of observable effects) are the identified brand associations (utilitarian and emotional brand benefits) influential in shaping satisfaction judgments toward cosmetic brands?

The hypothesized model derived from the conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1.

METHODS

In order to address the research question, personal interviews were conducted on a sample of 355 women aged 18 to 60, selected through random sampling (random street interviews) and establishing an age quota (50% between 18 and 35 years, 50% between 36 and 60 years). The study focused on anti-aging and body-firming/body-shaping creams, a relatively new category of cosmetic products where there are indeed no observable short-term effects, while advertising claims refer to medium and longer-term beneficial outcomes. In each interview the person was asked to rate a number of items related to her perception of functional and emotional benefits of the cosmetic brand (body-firming and/or anti-aging cream) she mostly used, as well as her level of satisfaction with that brand. A filter question was used to discard non-consumers.

The development of measurement scales and indicators was based on the literature and several qualitative focus group sessions. Perceptions of “instrumental” brand benefits (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986), perception of the packaging (Stravinskiene et al., 2008), sensual pleasure evoked by the sensorial stimuli (touch and smell-related stimuli; Moskowitz, 1995; Meilgaard et al., 2006) and customer satisfaction (Danaher and Haddrell, 1996; Oliver and Swan, 1989) were measured as multi-item constructs on 5-point Likert-type scales. The measurement of the emotional consumption experiences “sexual attractiveness” and “social and professional success” combined verbal and nonverbal, pictorial instruments (Desmet, 2003).

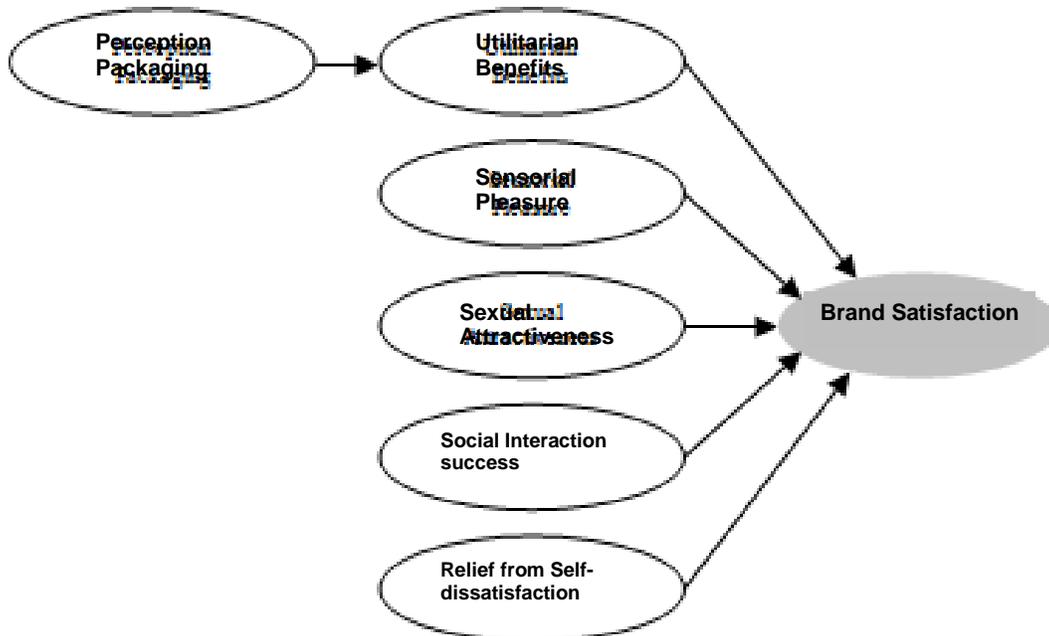


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of the impact of utilitarian and emotional brand associations on customer satisfaction with cosmetic brands.

According to Lang et al. (1993), pictorial information can match the stimulus properties of real objects or event referents, activating cognitive representations associated with emotional responses. Images of people and their facial and bodily expressions have been suggested for the measurement of emotions or emotional consumption experiences (Ekman and Friesen, 1975; Etcoff and Magee, 1992; Hadjikhani and de Gelder, 2003; Homa et al., 1976).

In addition, measurement tools should contextualize emotional experiences (Richins, 1997), either through semantic descriptions (Wierzbicka, 1992), or through images (Holbrook and Kuwahara, 1998). The respondents were shown a picture depicting context-embedded emotional situations portraying the analysed feelings and had to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale “to what extent do women that use beauty cream X feel like this?,” replacing X with the brand they had mentioned as the brand they consumed themselves. The method of asking for an evaluation of other women’s emotional responses rather than their own was conceived in order to force a projective task and thereby to discourage social desirability effects (Webb, 1992). The images were tested in previous qualitative focus group and in-depth interview sessions. For the measurement of the emotional brand benefit “relief from dissatisfaction with one’s self-concept” participants were shown images portraying the feeling of dissatisfaction with one’s appearance and behaviour (for example, having gained weight and developed cellulite). Subsequently, they were asked to rate the extent to which the consumption of their brand made consumers feel relief from the represented emotional experiences.

Constructs and indicators are depicted in the Appendix. The measurement scales were tested by confirmatory factor analysis (Table 1). Criteria for model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1995; Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1984; Bentler, 1990; Steiger and Lind, 1980; Kaplan, 2000; Byrne, 2001) indicate adequate fit. The dimensionality of the constructs was established following Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Factor loadings of all indicators are significant ($p < 0.000$) and exceed the minimum recommended value of 0.50. Furthermore, the variance-extracted measures exceed the square of the correlation

estimate in all constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity. Also, variance extracted and construct reliability exceed recommended thresholds (Bagozzi and Yi, 1994; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998).

RESULTS

In order to assess the effect of the extracted dimensions on the satisfaction construct, a structural equation analysis was conducted (Table 2). Again, measures indicate an adequate representation of the underlying data by the proposed factor structure. Furthermore, the structural equation analysis indicates significant positive influences of all analysed dimensions on the “brand satisfaction” construct. Remarkably, the utilitarian benefit of the analysed cosmetic brands affects consumers’ satisfaction only to a certain extent (standardized regression coefficient [SRC] = 0.20), while two emotional benefit dimensions (sexual attractiveness, SRC = 0.27 and relief from dissatisfaction, SRC = 0.32) have a stronger impact on the construct. Overall, the latter dimension seems to yield the strongest influence on women’s satisfaction. Also the latent constructs “sensory pleasure” (SRC = 0.18) and “social interaction success” (SRC = 0.15) had a significant but somewhat lower influence than the instrumental brand dimension. Finally, the results of the analysis show that the perception of the cosmetic product’s packaging had a significant positive influence on perceived utilitarian benefits (SRC = 0.51).

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (standardized regression coefficients, critical ratios, correlations, variance extracted, construct reliability, model fit).

Indicator	Factors						Satisfaction
	Utilitarian benefit	Perception packaging	Sensorial pleasure	Sexual attractiveness	Social interactions success	Relief from self-dissatisfaction	
Firmness and Elasticity	0.75; 1.03						
Younger Appearance	0.69; 1.00 ^a						
Hydrated and Soft Skin	0.59; 0.71						
Packaging Design		0.81; 1.00 ^a					
Exclusive and innovative		0.62; 0.70					
Sensual Scent			0.63; 1.00 ^a				
Pleasant Texture			0.67; 0.84				
Sexual Attractiveness (1)				0.86; 1.00 ^a			
Sexual Attractiveness (2)				0.88; 1.02			
Social Interactions Success (1)					0.91; 1.00 ^a		
Social Interactions Success (2)					0.96; 1.07		
Relief from Self-Dissatisfaction (1)						0.90; 1.00 ^a	
Relief from Self-Dissatisfaction (2)						0.87; 1.08	
Satisfaction							0.86; 1.00 ^a
Positive User Experience							0.89; 1.09
Correct Purchase Decision							0.84; 1.03
Correlations							
Perception	0.43						
Packaging							
Sensorial	0.60	0.44					
Pleasure							
Sexual	0.33	0.20	0.23				
Attractiveness							
Social Interactions Success	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.35			
Relief from Self-dissatisfaction	0.29	0.17	0.23	0.86	0.33		
Satisfaction	0.49	0.24	0.45	0.68	0.39	0.68	
Variance Extracted	0.46	0.52	0.42	0.76	0.88	0.78	0.74
Construct Reliability	0.72	0.68	0.59	0.86	0.94	0.88	0.90

Model Fit RMR = 0.03; GFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.91; PGFI = 0.58; NFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.97; RMSA = 0.05. ^aNon-standardized regression coefficients = 1. RMR = root mean square residual; GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; PGFI = Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Table 2. Structural equation analysis.

Factor	Regression coefficients (standardized, non-standardized; p)
Perception Packaging Utilitarian Benefit	0.51; 0.45; $p < 0.001$
Utilitarian Benefit Brand Satisfaction	0.20; 0.24; $p < 0.001$
Sensorial Pleasure Brand Satisfaction	0.18; 0.21; $p = 0.003$
Sexual Attractiveness Brand Satisfaction	0.27; 0.19; $p = 0.020$
Social Interactions Success Brand Satisfaction	0.15; 0.10; $p < 0.001$
Relief from Self-Dissatisfaction Brand Satisfaction	0.32; 0.23; $p = 0.005$

Model Fit: GFI = 0.94; AGFI = 0.90; NFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.96; RMR = 0.04; RMSEA = 0.06. GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMR = Root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study confirm that utilitarian and hedonic brand benefits both significantly contribute to female consumers' satisfaction with cosmetic brands. Thus, in first place, instilling product attribute beliefs through advertising is a relevant factor of brand success, in particular if objective utilitarian benefits (improvement of body shape, reduction of wrinkles, etc.) are difficult to assess or absent. In addition, the positive influence of the cosmetic products' packaging on the utilitarian benefit perception is confirmed. Thus, female consumers seem to infer product quality judgements depending on the products packaging design. Also pleasure feelings as a result of sensorial stimuli (product texture, fragrance, visual impact, etc.) significantly enhance brand satisfaction. However, overall, the influence of emotional consumption experiences seems to be more significant, confirming the view of a number of authors (Bloch and Richins, 1992; Chao and Schor, 1998; Herman, 2003). Thus, from a managerial standpoint, it seems advantageous if the brand evokes feelings of "sexual attractiveness" and "social and professional interaction success" in female consumers. This can be achieved through advertising by associating the brand with imagery representing successful and highly attractive role models. The concern for sexual attractiveness is hypothesized to originate from one of the most basic evolutionary patterns of human behaviour. Darwinian approaches to the study of physical attractiveness posit that the features of attractiveness are important biological signals of mate value that motivate behaviour in others (Etcoff, 1999; Perrett et al., 1998; Grammer and Thornhill, 1994; Aharon et al., 2001). Remarkably, the strongest overall contribution to customer satisfaction was achieved by the emotional experience of "relief from dissatisfaction with one's self-concept." The feeling of worry and/or guilt as a consequence of dissatisfaction with one's appearance and the perception of not doing enough to improve may be the combined result of the exposure to attractive women in advertising and the society-wide accepted notion of responsibility for one's appearance (Martin and Gentry, 1997; Martin and Kennedy, 1993; Tiggemann

and McGill, 2004; Stiles and Kaplan, 2004). Indirectly, this finding confirms the view that the need to reduce these negative emotions constitutes one of the main psychological motivations urging women to purchase cosmetic brands (Etcoff, 1999).

Thus, from a management perspective, it seems useful for cosmetic advertisers to expose female consumers to imagery of attractive women to lower their self-image and to evoke a feeling of dissatisfaction, while simultaneously presenting the brand as a means to experience relief from those negative emotions. Using social comparison processes to instill temporarily feelings of dissatisfaction in consumers (Richins, 1991) may indeed contribute to a subsequent higher brand satisfaction and turn out to be beneficial for cosmetic advertisers.

However, from an ethical point of view, such a strategy of lowering self images is questionable, especially given the problems of eating disorders and body dysmorphia. Researchers suggest advertising media may adversely impact women's body image, which can lead to unhealthy behaviour as women and girls strive for the ultra-thin body idealized by the media. Thus, if advertisers want to assume social responsibility, they should not make women feel unhappy with their bodies in order to make them purchase their products. As the controversial and highly successful "real beauty" campaign of Unilever's DOVE brand shows the representation of only slightly above average looking females may have the same overall or, at least, a similar impact, because even if initial dissatisfaction effects may be weaker, stronger identification processes may take place (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004). Although, Unilever's brand is promoting their products with a message of "real beauty" by encouraging women and girls to celebrate themselves as they are, the "real beauty" ads still need to sell women on the idea that they need these products to become even better. In other words, they are still saying women have to use these products to be beautiful.

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Appendix. Measurement scales of constructs.

Utilitarian Benefits

With Brand X creams my skin is soft and hydrated.
Brand X creams restore firmness and elasticity to my skin and body.
Brand X makes my skin and body have a younger appearance.

Perception of Packaging

I like the design of the packaging of Brand X creams.
The container of Brand X creams is exclusive and innovative.

Brand Satisfaction

I'm satisfied with Brand X.
My experiences using Brand X have always been good.
Purchasing Brand X I made the right choice.

Sensorial Pleasure

I like the feeling of Brand X products on my skin.
It's a pleasure to smell the sensual fragrance of Brand X products.

Success in Social and Professional Interactions



Item 1



Item 2

Relief from Dissatisfaction with One's Self-Image



Item 1



Item 2

Sexual Attractiveness



Item 1 Item 2