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EFFECT OF COVID-19 CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS COSMETICS: STUDY BASED ON WORKING FEMALES

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ABSTRACT:

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the lives of people, businesses, and also consumers. There has been a shift in consumer buying behaviour as well. This change in behaviour is due to many underlining factors such as a change in income, lockdown, disruption in the supply chain, unavailability of a product, accessibility of the product. Through this study, we aim to understand the buying behaviour of working females towards cosmetics during COVID-19. To see if there has been a change in the buying behaviour due to COVID-19 towards cosmetics products. If so, which factors are responsible for this change. We have used multiple regression methodology to test the collected data. Our findings reveal that; No change in cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females during COVID-19. Also, there have been observed that Cosmetics products like makeup which were purchased earlier ares no more purchased since the consumer don't feel the need for the products in the current COVID-19 scenario, on the contrary purchase of certain cosmetic products has risen during COVID-19. This study will contribute in the field of consumer buying behaviour and will give insights about the behaviour of consumers especially female consumers during pandemic crisis.

Keywords: Consumers, buying behaviour, Cosmetics, Pandemic, Female

INTRODUCTION

The cosmetic industry globally is estimated to be valued at $532 billion (Biron, 2019). India's cosmetics market was valued at around USD 11.16 billion in 2017 and is anticipated to grow at a Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.91% during the forecast period 2017-2030 (Intelligence, 2020). Cosmetic industry is showing positive prospects in future as per research. Though there might be some variations in the numbers due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, women consumers hold the lion's share owing to the inclination of women towards beauty products. Cosmetic products include skincare products like moisturizers, powders, toners, and sunscreen for different skin types and textures, hair care products like shampoo, conditioners, hair dyes, etc and face care and makeup products such as foundation, face cream, concealer, face powder, bronzers, etc., toiletries such as body wash, soap, and colour cosmetics. Since there has been a shift in the buying behaviour of consumers due to the recent pandemic, the purpose of this research is to identify the factors that have impacted the consumer buying behaviour towards cosmetics.

BACKGROUND

The outbreak of coronavirus started in China and the WHO declared it a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Consumers facing difficulties in making purchases since markets, malls, showrooms were shutdown, business also suffered during this period. For a brief period during the lockdown online deliveries were also stalled in areas that were declared as a red zone area. Most of the brands and companies have reflected positively on the change that has come along COVID-19 by producing hand sanitizers. During a survey pre-pandemic it was revealed that beauty shoppers preferred purchasing products from the retail outlets rather than making online beauty purchases. (Dotcom Distribution, 2020). In India, consumer expenditure in

personal care products grew by 14% and expenditure on skincare and makeup dropped by 15% during the pandemic (Mc Kinsey and Co, 2020).

Consumer buying behaviour can be defined as the favorable or unfavorable reaction towards a product due to external and internal environment. Factors such as the income of the consumer, price of the product, packaging, ingredients of the product, discounts and offers available on the product, brand preference impact consumer buying behaviour (Ramya & Ali, 2016). Influence of social media, advertisements and promotions too, have an impact on consumer buying behaviour (Boateng & Okoe, 2015). With the disruption in the supply chain and unavailability of certain products, consumers shifted to alternative options and brands which were available at that moment. Most of the change in the buying behaviour has been observed in essential and daily need items, hoarding, and stocking of groceries, hygiene, and personal care products (Laato, et al. 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour includes emotional, physical, psychological involvement by the consumer while buying goods and services, factors such as the price of the product, alternatives available, advertising, and income of the consumer have an impact on consumer behaviour (Chukwu, et al., 2019). Products purchased occasionally have shown to have greater involvement in decision making as compared to daily use products in which involvement is low from the consumer end (Qazzafi, 2019). Culture and religion are a major part of the consumer's life, hence along with price, motivation, they too have an impact on consumer buying behaviour (Auf, et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction and consumer buying behaviour are both impacted by price across all sectors and industries of goods and services (Qalati, et al., 2019).

The attitude of consumers is favorable towards different promotional tools, discounts, free samples, buy one get one offers, coupons which are used

for marketing purposes, have an impact on the sales in the short run as well as long run (Ahmad, et al., 2015). Millennials are found to be more inclined towards buying environment-friendly products and do not mind paying an extra amount even though the functionalities of the product remain the same for a higher price (Chaudhary & Bisai, 2019).

In online shopping perceived and psychological factors such as peer pressure, the impression of the product, the personality of the consumer have more impact on consumer buying behaviour as compared to other factors (Rungsrisawat, et al., 2019).

Consumer Buying Behaviour During A Pandemic- COVID-19

Pandemic has brought in a lot of challenges as well as opportunities for businesses and compelled them to rethink their marketing strategies. Businesses are struggling with finances and only those having strong financials can stay afloat, there is an urgent need to adapt and innovate in business to be able to sustain in the market (Tanveer, et al., 2020). Many businesses are compelled to adapt to new technologies to survive and retain themselves in these times, organizations showing rigidity in adaption to technology earlier now have willingly moved to zoom and other affordable technologies to have their presence online (Akpan, et al., 2020). Digital marketing has been adopted by many and has become more prevalent during COVID-19, it also has had a greater influence and capability of altering the attitude towards healthcare (Habes, et al., 2020).

A huge lag in the supply chain; productivity in factories has gone down; consumer's demand has gone down due to lay-offs and reduced income of the overall household (Tanveer, et al., 2020). Consumer expenditure during the lockdown saw a temporary downfall but later picked up to the same level as before. Concerns towards the shortage of goods especially groceries and other essential items triggered customers to start hoarding and stockpiling essential items and groceries during the initial phase of the

lockdown (Patil & Patil, 2020). Consumer expenditure on groceries was observed to have increased as a result of stockpiling and hoarding and the expenditure varied across geographic and demographic conditions (Chronopoulos, et al., 2020). Though hoarding of groceries and essentials was been observed, as the government started removing the imposition on lockdown, and supermarkets being more accessible a sudden drop in the purchase of essential items was observed in New Zealand (Hall, et al., 2020). Get to normal, stay frugal, cautiously extravagant, keep cutting, back with a bang are the five new consumer segments are expected to appear post-COVID-19 crisis according to EY (Rogers & Cosgrove, 2020).

The pandemic has led to new consumers migrating to online shopping, it was also observed that consumers were buying more consciously (Accenture, 2020). Customers avoid going to retail stores for purchases due to the fear of getting infected, this, in turn, has developed a negative feeling towards in-store visits (Szymkowiak, et al., 2020). Customers are preferring home delivery, online stores in red-zones, to attract more customers food-retailers are changing strategies by investing in capital and human resources to tackle supply-chain and delivery turn-around time issues (Grashuis, et al., 2020). Although the consumers are preferring online shopping, lag in the supply chain has created delays in the business process, overall, the orders on online channels have also gone down due to lower consumer buying behaviour (Hasanat, et al., 2020).

Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Cosmetics

When it comes to enhancing their external beauty, humans haven't shied away from using cosmetics (Anute, et al., 2015). In the past few years, men too have started to make use of cosmetics products for reasons like improving self-presentation, overcoming anxiety due to their appearance (Shimpi & Sinha, 2012). Factors such as brand name, accessibility of the

product, promotions and advertising, sales service during and post product purchase, product quality, packaging and design, specifications of the product, and product price significantly influence the buying decision of cosmetic consumers (Alhedhaif, et al., 2016). Religious sentiments too play a role in the purchase of cosmetic products (Rahman, et al., 2015). For marketers to create a long-term relationship with the consumers and make them loyal to the brand they should focus on the quality of the product, its price along with celebrity advertisements (Parmar, 2014).

Customers prefer organic cosmetics; a homegrown brand is preferred over others; quality of the product is a primary factor in the decision-making process; mostly consumers are loyal towards a particular brand (Anute, et al., 2015). Both married and unmarried women have shown to be sensitive towards product price, quality, and ingredients when it comes to being loyal towards the brand (Prasanna, 2019).

Consciousness towards environmental sustainability and health has moved the customers towards green cosmetics and customers are ready to pay a higher price for green products (Kim & Seock, 2009). Despite the preference towards green cosmetics, there is still exists a gap due to inaccurate communication of information about the products and companies should try to bridge this gap through their Integrated Marketing Channels (Lin, et al., 2018). Consumers preferring natural ingredient-based cosmetics do not mind paying a higher price for the product (Amberg & Fogarassy, 2019).

Female consumers are highly attracted by the packaging and design of cosmetics products, even though the product quality may not be that superior (Riaz, et al., 2015). Brands and products that have strong advertisements consumers show a positive reaction and higher buying intention towards them (Koshy & Manohar, 2017). On the contrary, even though advertisement and promotions of the product are strong their

significant importance given to the quality of the product by Gen -Y consumers during the purchase of the product, low product quality could lead to loss of customer market (Eze, et al., 2012).

Consumers tend to make cosmetic purchases online, only when they trust the product and the website through which they are purchasing (Fogel & Raghupathi, 2013). Cosmetics products endorsed by known celebrities and social media influencers have shown to greatly influence the buying behaviour in millennials though it cannot be taken as a substitute for other promotion channels used to build customer base (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019). Price, quality, and delivery service of the product have been shown to impact consumer satisfaction when ordering cosmetics online (Ma & Yang, 2018). Companies should pay attention to online reviews about their products as negative reviews can affect the brand image and impact consumer behaviour negatively (Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016).

Impulsive buying behaviour is found to be more prevalent in women and this potential is tapped by marketers, who project their product aesthetically to appeal the eyes of the consumer (Atulkar & Kesari, 2018). And its intensity largely depends on two major factors consumer characteristics and product characteristics (Kolondam, 2016). Cosmetics products are purchased more by females and also there exists a large variety in the female cosmetics segment.

OBJECTIVES*:*

This research aims to study following objectives

1. To Identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females.
2. To suggest related marketing strategies based on research findings.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Following model of research has been adopted while carrying out this research. Variables are selected based on intensive literature review.
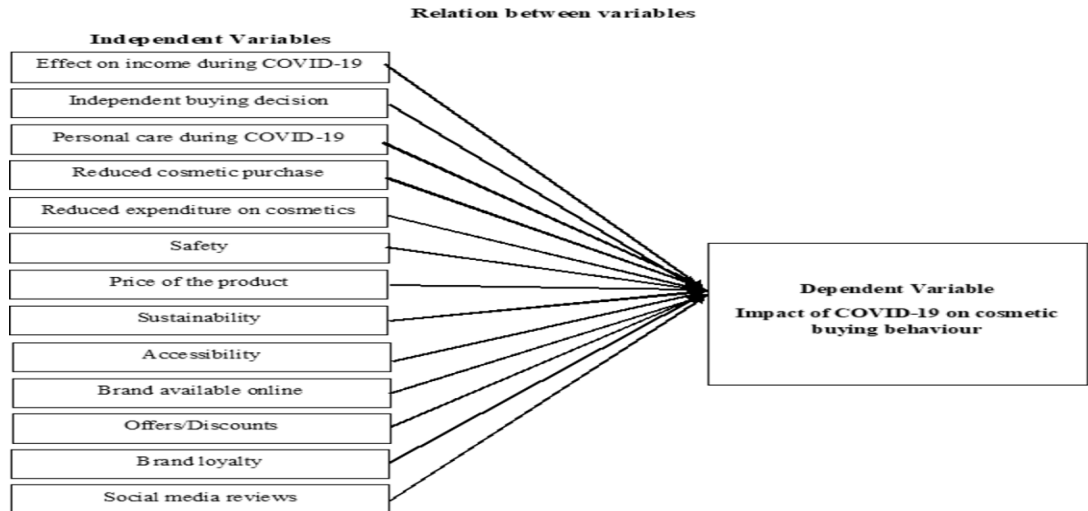

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis:

Null hypothesis - H0: No change in cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females during COVID-19.

Alternative hypothesis – H1: Change in cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females during COVID-19.

Methods

For this study, the convenience sampling method was data, a self-made questionnaire was used to collect data and information from respondents. The total size of the sample size for the study is 116. The survey for the study was conducted amongst working females across various cities of India during September 2020.

The data collected has been analysed over IBM SPSS Statistics 21. Multiple regression analysis has been applied on the data collected to

examine the change in the buying behaviour of working females towards cosmetics. Multiple regression is selected as it would analyse which independent factors alter the dependent factor and by what degree of measure.

Analysis

Section A- Background Questions Related To Sample

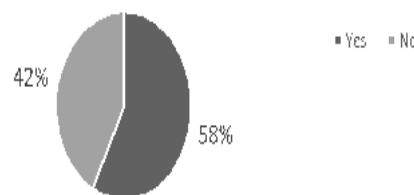[1]   Percentage of respondent's whose annual income got affected by COVID-19

Figure 2: Annual Income affected due to COVID 19

[2] Percentage of respondents having independent cosmetics buying decision
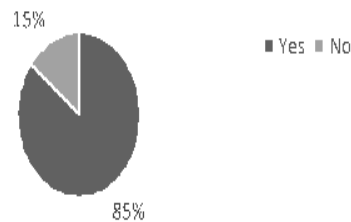

Figure 3 Independent cosmetics buying decisions

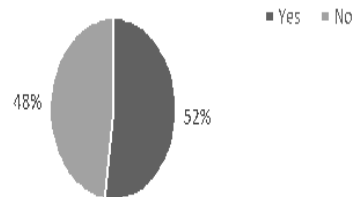[3] Impact of COVID -19 on cosmetic buying behaviour

Figure 4 Impact of COVID 19 on cosmetics buying behaviour

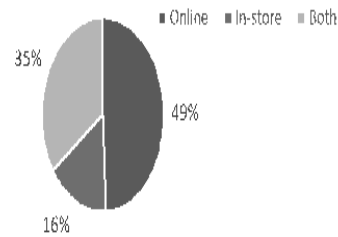[4] Medium of purchasing cosmetics during COVID-19

Figure 5 Medium of purchasing

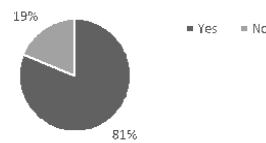[5] Attention towards personal care during COVID-19

Figure 6 personal care during COVID 19

Multiple regression has been applied to analyse section B of the questionnaire to analyse the relation and influence of independent variables on cosmetics buying behaviour during COVID-19.

a. **Adjusted R-square** – As predictors are added to the model, each predictor will explain some of the variance in the dependent variable simply due to chance. The value of R-square was .292, while the value of Adjusted R-square was .202.

F and **Sig.** – The F-value is the Mean Square Regression (.651) divided by the Mean Square Residual (.201), yielding F=3.240. The p-value associated with this F value is very small (0.0000). These values tell us that the independent variable predict the dependent variable reliably. The p-value when compared is smaller than (0.05).

The independent variables- social media reviews, safety importance, buying decision independent, personal care attention, reduced purchased, brand loyalty, accessible availability, offers discounts, brand online available, sustainable natural, price comparison, reduced expenditure, do not have any significance impact on the dependent variable i.e. change in buying behaviour towards cosmetics during COVID-19 as their p-value is >0.05. Only the variable buying decision independent has a p-value <0.05. Which

can be said to be marginally significant in the regression equation is predicting the dependent variable COVID19_impact_cosmeticbb.

Thus, authors can conclude to neglect the independent variables having no reliable impact on the dependent variable.

Hence, this research accepts the H0: null hypothesis: No change in cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females during COVID-19. And reject H1: alternative hypothesis: Change in cosmetic buying behaviour amongst Indian working females during COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

Due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was imposed across the nation, people started working from home which in turn saved a lot of their travel time and they leveraged it for other activities. Special attention towards personal care is given by individuals during COVID-19. Apart from daily use cosmetics products purchase of like skincare and haircare products by consumers have been observed to rise, especially by those who didn't purchase these products during pre-COVID-19. Cosmetics products such as face creams, face mask, hair mask, moisturizers were purchased apart from the purchase of daily essential cosmetic products. On the other side purchase of makeup products by consumers saw a dip, since there is no need to go out (office, social gathering, etc), purchase of makeup is found to be unnecessary as there is no going out and during rare outdoor visits wearing masks make it irrelevant to apply makeup as faces are not visible hence beating the agenda of applying makeup.

Expenditure on cosmetic products went down due to financial constraints (lay-offs and pay cuts), change in priorities more weightage to saving, investment and purchase of essential items during COVID-19. People indulged in mindful expenditure. Expenditures on food, sanitization products were given more priority during COVID-19. Consumers whose annual income fell during COVID-19 changed the attitudes towards the purchase of

cosmetic products, only essential cosmetics items are purchased by them as per the price of the product and their budget.

Unavailability of certain products due to disruption in the supply chain management led to people purchasing lesser products as availability was an issue. Respondents were found attracted to brands and products offering discounts. Working female doesn't seem to be influenced by the suggestions made to them by others or make use of cosmetic products gifted by family and friends. They form their own opinion and purchase if only they want to. The cosmetic buying behaviour of working females is made independently by their research, trial and error method. Though it was found that they are their decision stands influenced by reviews on social media and if a particular product is suggested or reviewed positively by a social media influencer whom they follow, then the probability of purchasing that particular product goes up.

As per the findings the marketers should make sure their products are available online and easily accessible since the customers are not willing to go to stores to purchase cosmetics and focus on more on marketing and promotion of daily use and other cosmetic products, rather than makeup products.

CONCLUSION

Researchers can conclude that the buying behaviour towards cosmetics during COVID-19 is not dependent on the following independent factors like income, independent buying decision, attention towards personal care during COVID-19, reduced purchase of cosmetics during COVID-19, reduced expenditure on cosmetics during COVID-19, sanitization factor, price of the cosmetic product, sustainability of the cosmetic products, accessibility and availability of the cosmetic product, offers and discounts, brand loyalty and social media reviews about the product.

1. Makeup is preferred only when going out for certain occasions (real-life social interaction).

2. Cosmetic products available online and offline both are preferred for purchase during COVID-19.

3. Purchase of certain cosmetic products went down and certain products purchase increased during COVID-19

4. Those whose annual income was affected during COVID-19 analysed and prioritized their purchase of cosmetics.

Further, the sample size could be increased currently, the convenience sampling method was used,116 responses were used for analysis and concluding for the study. Further, the research could be conducted for a specific age- group and more genders responses and reaction can be accounted for the study.

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Appendix

Table 1: Age Demographics

Age	No of respondents
20-25	44
25-30	31
30-35	10
35 and above	31

Table 2: Respondents pursued varied profession

Professions of respondents
Teacher
Software Developer
Product Manager
Entertainment
Business Analyst
Banker
Marketer
Entrepreneur
Professor
Architect
HR professional
Interior Designer
Nurse

Table 3: Model summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.541[a]	.292	.202	.4483

Table 4 Reliability and validity

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.719	.611	14

Cronbach's Alpha results .719 shows this model is acceptable to go ahead.

Table 5 ANOVA table

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.466	13	.651	3.240	.000[b]
	Residual	20.499	102	.201		
	Total	28.966	115			

a. Dependent Variable: COVID19_impact_cosmeticbb

Table 6 Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
1	(Constant)	2.059	.392		5.245	.000	1.280	2.837					
	Affect income	.258	.092	.255	2.802	.006	.075	.440	.257	.267	.233	.839	1.192
	Buying decision independent	.087	.124	.062	.703	.483	-.159	.334	.010	.069	.059	.895	1.117
	Personal care attention	.011	.116	.009	.095	.924	-.220	.242	.027	.009	.008	.833	1.200
	reduced purchased	-.044	.071	-.097	-.617	.538	-.185	.097	-.400	-.061	-.051	.280	3.571
	reduced expenditure	-.147	.075	-.317	-1.978	.051	-.295	.000	-.428	-.192	-.165	.270	3.697
	safety importance	.013	.046	.029	.280	.780	-.079	.105	-.114	.028	.023	.666	1.502
	price comparison	-.035	.044	-.086	-.795	.428	-.122	.052	-.250	-.079	-.066	.592	1.689
	Sustainable natural	.026	.050	.056	.528	.599	-.073	.126	-.039	.052	.044	.606	1.650
	Accessible availability	-.034	.043	-.082	-.786	.434	-.120	.052	-.164	-.078	-.065	.635	1.575
	Brand online available	-.049	.052	-.099	-.943	.348	-.152	.054	-.191	-.093	-.079	.625	1.601
	offers discounts	.036	.047	.079	.769	.444	-.057	.128	-.150	.076	.064	.651	1.535
	brand loyalty	-.025	.051	-.051	-.490	.625	-.126	.076	-.119	-.048	-.041	.647	1.545
	Social media reviews	-.018	.043	-.044	-.412	.681	-.104	.068	-.208	-.041	-.034	.616	1.624

a. Dependent Variable: COVID19_impact_cosmeticbb

Table 7: coefficients of independent variables

	Independent variable	Constant-a	2.059
x1	Affect income	b1	.258
x2	Buying decision independent	b2	.087
x3	Personal care attention	b3	.011
x4	reduced purchased	b4	-.044
x5	reduced expenditure	b5	-.147
x6	safety importance	b6	.013
x7	price comparison	b7	-.035
x8	Sustainable natural	b8	.026
x9	Accessible availability	b9	-.034
x10	Brand online available	b10	-.049
x11	offers discounts	b11	.036
x12	brand loyalty	b12	-.025
x13	Social media reviews	b13	-.018

Table 8- p-value or significance of independent variables

Independent variables	p-value
Affect income	.006
Buying decision independent	.483
Personal care attention	.924
reduced purchased	.538
reduced expenditure	.051
safety importance	.780
price comparison	.428
Sustainable natural	.599

Accessible availability	.434
Brand online available	.348
offers discounts	.444
brand loyalty	.625
Social media reviews	.681