AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND IMAGE TOWARD PURCHASE INTENTION OF COSMETICS PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing brand image and its subsequent effect on purchase intention within the Vietnamese cosmetics industry. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) based on data from 254 respondents, the research examines the roles of promotion, product quality, trend and industry influence, brand reputation, design and packaging, and recommendation and review. The results reveal that product quality, trend and industry influence, and brand reputation significantly and positively impact brand image. In turn, brand image exerts a strong influence on purchase intention. However, promotion, design and packaging, and recommendation and review were found to have no significant effect on brand image. These findings suggest that Vietnamese cosmetic brands should prioritize product excellence, align with market trends, and enhance brand reputation to strengthen consumer perceptions and drive purchase decisions. The study offers practical implications for cosmetic companies seeking to compete more effectively in a rapidly growing and competitive market.

Keywords: cosmetic industry, brand image, purchase intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society places a high value on physical appearance and beauty. It is desirable to be physically beautiful. Most people identify the term "cosmetics" with beauty items for women, although it actually refers to a wide range of products for both men and women, including face makeup, lotion, shampoo, powder, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, hair spray, and so on (Omanga, 2013). As a result, the cosmetics industry targets both young men and women. Despite gender concerns, cosmetics remain significant in the twenty-first century. Cosmetics is a highly profitable, innovative, and rapidly increasing industry. Marketing managers must be aware of the constant alterations in consumer purchasing habits. Consumers today have higher expectations for the products produced by manufacturers since they are more knowledgeable. Cosmetics include any chemical or product used to complete or improve someone's look. This applies to nail paint, lotion, perfume, and makeup. Despite major developments in the cosmetics industry since ancient Egypt, the concept of cosmetics has remained unchanged. Today, the cosmetic sector is one of the most profitable in the world, with American cosmetics customers spending almost $10 billion USD every year (Mwai et al., 2015).

Vietnam is among the nations in the Asia-Pacific region with the fastest average income growth rates. The demand for various consumer goods has increased in the nation as individuals possess greater disposable income, especially for cosmetics and personal hygiene items. With the post-COVID-19 economic recovery in progress, international trade has accelerated. Expenditure on cosmetics is escalating in tandem with e-commerce, and in the forthcoming years, Vietnam's beauty and personal care industry is projected to experience a significant surge in revenue.

The cosmetic markets in Vietnam have experienced the emergence of South Korean beauty brands, which have become significant players in the region. Vietnam has some of the greatest global rates of appeal for K-beauty products. Vietnam's primary import partner for cosmetics has been South Korea, with imports valued at over 330 million US dollars in 2022. Vietnamese consumers favor products from a variety of origins, including Japanese and European brands, alongside South Korean enterprises. Local enterprises have been steadily asserting their position in the market despite fierce competition and a pronounced customer inclination towards foreign goods. Brands offering competitively priced, high-quality products, such as Cocoon, M.O.I Cosmetics, and Lemonade, have been progressively gaining market preference.

An in-depth and thorough analysis of the development potential and competitive advantages of Vietnamese cosmetic brands relative to overseas markets is essential. This entails analyzing many elements like market developments, consumer preferences, and competitive environments. Through a comprehensive investigation, we may acquire significant insights into the particular aspects that enhance the market appeal and performance of Vietnamese cosmetic companies. Moreover, comprehending the determinants that affect brand image is essential in molding consumer perceptions of Vietnamese cosmetic products. Elements such as product quality, brand reputation, packaging, pricing, and marketing methods significantly influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. By meticulously analyzing these aspects, we may discern the distinctive selling propositions and principal differentiators that enhance the market attractiveness of Vietnamese cosmetic businesses.

Furthermore, by examining the relationship between brand image and purchase intention, the research provides a more profound comprehension of how Vietnamese cosmetic brands can successfully attract and keep clients. Elements include brand loyalty, consumer trust, perceived value, product distinctiveness, and promotional efforts influence customer purchase intention. Through the analysis of these aspects, we can offer actionable implications and recommendations for both researchers and industry practitioners, facilitating the enhancement of consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and, eventually, the competitiveness of Vietnamese cosmetic businesses. This paper intends to enhance the existing body of information by thoroughly analyzing the development potential and competitive advantages of Vietnamese cosmetic companies, alongside the elements affecting brand image and the customer purchase intentions.

The research purpose is to examine the elements that influence brand image and its effect on purchase intention. The criteria include Promotion (PM), Product Quality (PQ), Trend and Industry Influence (TR), Brand Reputation (BR), Design and Packaging (DP), and Recommendation and Review (RC). The findings and practical applications of this study can provide essential resources for researchers and industry professionals, facilitating informed decision-making and the implementation of strategies that will enhance the growth and success of Vietnamese cosmetic brands in both domestic and international markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Purchase intention

Cuofano (2023) stated that purchase intention quantifies a consumer's propensity to undertake a particular action or make a purchasing decision concerning a product or service, which can be classified into four categories: information (awareness), investigation (consideration), navigation (evaluation/switching), and transactional (conversion). Purchase intention, or buyer's intent, refers to the degree of willingness and inclination of consumers to acquire your product or service within a specified period, typically ranging from 6 to 12 months. Moreover, familiarity with a brand

significantly enhances consumers' purchasing intentions. A product with elevated brand awareness will possess a greater market share. Prominent brands that have attained elevated brand awareness are more inclined to encourage consumers to repurchase the same brand and its products in the future, demonstrating unwavering loyalty and an unwillingness to switch to alternative brands under any circumstances.

2.2. Promotion

Promotion is linked to product sales in marketing or advertising. It involves enhancing customer awareness of a product or brand. It is the manner in which you communicate to individuals the items available for purchase, the nature of your product, its potential applications, and the reasons for its desirability (Mohammadzadeh, 2015). Promotion is crucial for brand development, recognition establishment, and client emotional engagement. Consequently, firms can gain a deeper insight into their customers' wants and preferences, facilitating the provision of goods. Moreover, while advertising products, promotion may be combined with additional factors such as price, location, and product quality. An efficient promotional plan comprises various elements, including personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, advertising, publicity, word-of-mouth, sponsorship, and web marketing. The integration of disparate components will yield a distinctive corporate strategy.

H1: Promotion is positively associated with band image.

2.3. Product quality

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) asserted that product quality is a primary positioning instrument for marketers. Quality is intrinsically linked to consumer value and satisfaction. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) defined product quality as a property pertaining to a product's capacity to fulfill explicit consumer requirements or implicit expectations. Product Excellence Customers experience satisfaction following the purchase and utilization of a product when its quality is high (Chaerudin & Syafarudin, 2021). Product quality is a critical determinant influencing customer purchasing decisions; hence, several quality labels have been established to ensure product quality and authenticity. Furthermore, consumers can readily identify superior products and make more informed purchasing decisions.

Businesses that prioritize product quality, especially in the cosmetics sector, would certainly endeavor to ensure quality through continuous quality control inspections. The assurance of production quality normally commences with the ingredients, the production process, and the finished goods. Any enterprise providing superior products, services, and branding will influence consumers' purchase choices. Product quality and brand image are interrelated, as both significantly affect customers' perceptions of products and businesses (Nikhashemi et al., 2017). Researchers believe that consumers' perceptions are affected by the product's quality.

H2: Product quality is positively associated with band image.

2.4. Trend and industry influence

Digital trend influence consumer decision-making by providing customers with an abundance of information. Consumers can now effortlessly explore products and services, peruse reviews, and compare prices with minimal clicks. Customers are now more informed and empowered regarding their purchases due to enhanced access to information.

Currently, social media and the internet are essential to brand marketing strategies. Multiple studies have illustrated the trend in social media has significant impact on brand image (Budiman, 2021;

Bilgin, 2018). Retailers can acquire data from social media and other sources concerning consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. At now, there is a paucity of research publications examining the trend variables that affect brand image and purchase intention. Therefore, H3 is proposed:

H3: Trend and industry influence are positively associated with band image.

2.5. Brand reputation

Brand reputation refers to the consumer's perception of a trustworthy and dependable brand. It is characterized as consumers' opinion of product quality associated with the brand name (Rindell & Iglesias, 2014). The consumers' perspective is influenced by their social standing when assessing product quality and reputation (Rindell & Iglesias, 2014). Consequently, brand reputation significantly impacts customer social position and affluence. Consumers seek to enhance their social standing by associating with firms that have a robust reputation. Selecting prestigious brands enables others to view them as possessing elevated social status. Studies demonstrate that consumers who purchase esteemed brands often aim to display their social standing. Brand reputation is a crucial factor for consumers in their purchasing decisions. They see diminished danger associated with brands with strong reputation. Consequently, it can influence purchasing decisions (Rindell & Iglesias, 2014).

Bloggers of varying reputational standings distinctly affect readers' judgments of specific content (Hsu et al., 2013). Previous research indicates that consumers rely on information from credible sources during their decision-making processes (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Brand reputation positively influences stakeholder outcomes and behavioral intentions, such as customer purchase intention, via customer perceptions and attitudes (Wang et al., 2021). Maden et al. (2012) asserted that a favorable reputation leads customers to view specific purchase transactions as more advantageous than others, hence reducing expenses associated with information search amid ambiguity and information asymmetry.

H4: Brand reputation is positively associated with band image.

2.6. Design and packaging

A design is a schematic representation created to illustrate the appearance and functionality of a building, garment, or other product prior to its construction or fabrication, using lines, shapes, and elements that influence consumer perception of a brand" (Frings, 1987). Fashion-savvy consumers are typically discerning regarding companies, which is why those that provide elegant packaging attract individuals who meticulously track fashion trends. Many fashion enthusiasts often purchase brands or products from stores that are highly fashionable. Duff (2007) examined the niche market for women's cosmetics, revealing that consumers are increasingly fashion-conscious and want goods that are aesthetically appealing and innovatively made; additionally, they often utilize distinct makeup styles for various situations.

Philip et al. (2005) asserted that packaging influences customer purchase behavior. It involves creating an appropriate container or packaging for products such as a perfume bottle and a toothpaste tube. The principal packing, including the container and wrapping paper, is discarded once the contents are utilized. Occasionally, shipping packages are abandoned prior to utilization. Currently, packaging design and style are regarded as a crucial marketing art by numerous companies (Philip et al., 2005). In a competitive market, consumers' buying behavior is influenced by appealing packaging designs. Consequently, producers should prioritize packaging designs to effectively showcase their products. All producers must formulate exact strategies for packaging, design, branding, and corporate nomenclature when introducing a new product to the market.

H5: Design and packaging is significantly and positively associated with band image.

2.7. Recommendation and review

In the case of blogging, perceived usefulness refers to the usefulness of the blogger's recommendation in improving consumers' buying performance (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Bloggers regarded as authorities in a specific product category are seen as impartial and non-commercial individuals (Hsu et al., 2013). Consequently, their perspectives and suggestions are perceived as more credible and beneficial (Wu, 2011), particularly in the realm of online buying where direct interactions are absent.

One of the primary functions of online reviews is to bolster consumer trust, hence strengthening their purchasing decisions (Resnick et al., 2000). Consequently, a secondary area of research has concentrated on the influence of online reviews on consumer trust. Ba and Pavlou (2002) demonstrated that consumer reviews partially augmented consumers' faith in merchants' credibility. Lim et al. (2006) discovered that customer endorsements from comparable peers enhanced a consumer's trust in the store. Lee et al. (2011) established that online consumer reviews influenced consumers' trust in online buying platforms.

**H6:** Recommendation and review is significantly and positively associated with band image.

2.8. Brand image

Brand image refers to a customer's perception of a brand derived from user interactions. The brand image is subject to evolution and is often linked to individuals acquiring or using a company's products or services. Businesses can most consistently cultivate their brand image based on each customer's viewpoint. Consistency is demonstrated in logos, slogans, signage, and similar elements. The brand's presence in the market influences the company's capacity to assess customer perceptions of brand imagery and its proficiency in managing brand positioning strategies, thereby effectively communicating the brand's equity to consumers (Mohammadzadeh, 2015).

The brand image serves as a conduit for enhancing the interaction between customers and businesses, so augmenting customer trust in the brand and facilitating retention for future purchases. Investments in brand image may aid businesses in retaining customers during new product launches or price increases. A robust brand image can assist organizations in attracting new clients, retaining current ones, and enhancing customer loyalty (Philip & Pradiani, 2024). Consequently, brand image significantly influences customer attraction.

H7: Brand image is significantly and positively associated with purchase intention.

The model following in figure 1 was constructed after doing a thorough examination of the relevant literature.
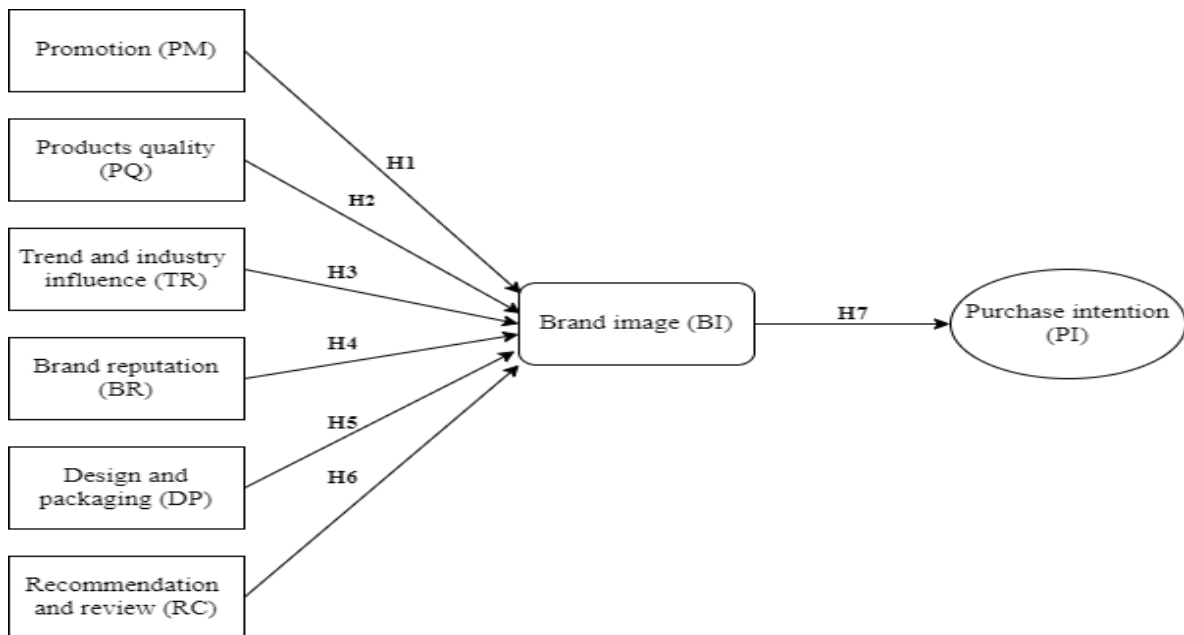
Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

Within the structural equation modeling (SEM) framework, variables are categorized as exogenous or endogenous (Lin et al., 2011). Exogenous variables are those not elucidated or forecasted by any other variables within the model, whereas endogenous variables are those that are elucidated or forecasted by one or more other variables.

In this study, the exogenous variables include Promotion (PM), Product Quality (PQ), Trend and Industry Influence (TR), Brand Reputation (BR), Design and Packaging (DP), and Recommendation and Review (RC). Brand image (BI) and Purchase Intention (PI) are endogenous variables present in the model.

3.2. Population and Sample Size

This study's data is primary data. 254 samples are obtained as the main data for this investigation. The sample size was determined by adopting the formula provided by (Comrey & Lee, 2013): n = 5*m (where n = population size and m = number of included questions)

The sample size for this investigation was calculated as n = 5* 31 = 155

The researcher collected data from 254 contributors by snowball sampling method.The research employed a quantitative methodology utilizing data derived from self-administered questionnaires. The participants completed the questionnaire using online forms disseminated through email and social media platforms. The participants were individuals aged 18 who had knowledge in cosmetics production.

3.3. Data Analysis Technique

The survey data will be categorized, recorded, and modified. The data was analyzed with the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22 and Partial Least Squares (Smart PLS version 3.0).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive analysis

Data used in this study were obtained from structured questionnaires designed which based on usable respondent consists of customers' profile. Table 1 presents the distribution frequency of characteristic of sample structure and general descriptions of respondents' characteristics are as follows:

Table 1. Demographic descriptive (N = 255)

Variables	Valid	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	62	24.3
	Female	192	75.3
	Others	1	0.4
Age (years old)	18 – 23	235	92.2
	23 – 30	10	3.9
	Over 30	10	3.9
Occupation	Student	223	87.4
	Worker	30	11.8
	Others	2	0.8
Spending on cosmetics (Millions VND per month)	Under 0.5	123	48.4
	0.5 – 1	105	41
	Over 1	27	10.6

Based on the result from table. There was a huge difference between women and men respondent percentages, with women (75.3%) greatly outnumbering men (24.3%). The largest age group was 18 – 23 (92.2%), followed by over 30 (3.9%), 23-30 (2.7%), and under 18 (1.2%). The research participants were mostly students (87.4%), workers (11.8%) and others (0.8%). The percentage are fairly even between categories, with the largest group is under 0.5 million (48.4%), followed by 0.5 – 1 million (41%) and over 1 million (10.6%).

4.2. Reliability analysis

Table 2. Reliabilities among the variable

Variable	Cronbach's	Highest corrected item total correlation	Lowest corrected item total correlation
Purchase intention (PI)	0.872	0.810	0.708
Brand Image (BI)	0.775	0.682	0.501
Promotion (PM)	0.879	0.800	0.744
Products quality (PQ)	0.817	0.711	0.592
Trend and industry influnce (TR)	0.809	0.713	0.554
Brand reputation (BR)	0.845	0.715	0.704
Design and packaging (DP)	0.872	0.788	0.713
Recommendation and review (RC)	0.884	0.776	0.770

The widely used method to test the internal consistency of the indicators of each factor is calculating the Crobach's α value (Maichum et al., 2017). Hair Jr et al. (2019) suggested that Cronbach's α value should be higher than 0.60 (Lee & Kim, 1999). All variables ranged from 0.685 to 0.938 and the lowest corrected item-total correlation was higher than 0.3. Therefore, all variables were internally consistent and reliable to conduct in this study.

4.3. Measurement model

The variables listed above must be calculated to provide reliability and validity when measuring abstract notions (Table 3). The data was analyzed for internal consistency using three measures: Cronbach's α, composite reliability, and average extracted variance (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker 1981). The factor loading should be greater than 0.70 (Hair 2010). In this study, all standardized factor loadings were significant, ranging from 0.749 to 0.925. The construct reliability was tested using composite reliability measures, which assess the degree to which elements in the construct measure the latent idea. The convergent validity of the CFA results should be verified by both composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair (2011), the estimated CR and AVE should be more than 0.700 and 0.500, respectively. Table 3 clearly shows that the CR and AVE values ranged from 0.783 to 0.922 and 0.690 to 0.806, respectively, which exceeded their prescribed norms.

Table 3: Standardized factor loadings, CR and AVE of the model

Construct	Item	Standardised factor loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0.861	0.922	0.797
	PI2	0.925		
	PI3	0.891		
Brand Image (BI)	BI1	0.884	0.870	0.692
	BI2	0.749		
	BI3	0.855		
Promotion (PM)	PM1	0.915	0.926	0.806
	PM2	0.894		
	PM3	0.884		
Products quality (PQ)	PQ1	0.893	0.892	0.733
	PQ2	0.873		
	PQ3	0.799		
Trend and industry influence (TR)	TR1	0.805	0.887	0.724
	TR2	0.871		
	TR3	0.875		
Brand reputation (BR)	BR1	0.863	0.906	0.762
	BR2	0.884		
	BR3	0.871		
Design and packaging (DP)	DP1	0.888	0.921	0.796
	DP2	0.911		
	DP3	0.877		
Recommendation and review (RC)	RC1	0.856	0.783	0.690
	RC2	0.810		
	RC3	0.826		

Table 4: The latent variable correlation matrix: discriminant validity

Variable	BI	BR	DP	PI	PM	PQ	RC	TR
BI	**0.832**							
BR	0.688	**0.873**						
RC	0.572	0.627	**0.901**					
DP	0.563	0.591	0.661	**0.892**				
PI	0.631	0.606	0.503	0.611	**0.893**			
PM	0.661	0.695	0.658	0.590	0.625	**0.898**		
PQ	0.704	0.742	0.617	0.603	0.625	0.688	**0.856**	
TR	0.672	0.676	0.560	0.548	0.608	0.669	0.664	**0.851**

The latent variable correlation matrix is used to establish discriminant validity, using the square root of AVE for measurements on the diagonal and correlations among measures as off-diagonal items in Table 4 (Le & Liaw, 2017). All diagonal elements had greater values than off-diagonal elements, indicating that the constructs were separate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The reliability and validity tests on the variables confirmed that the survey items were sufficiently valid and reliable for further analysis.

4.4. Structural equation model

Table 5: Results for structural equation model

Variables	Coefficients	T – values	P – values	Hypothesis	Hypothesis support
Brand Image (BI)→Purchase Intention (PI)	0.631	9.402	0.000	H7	Supported
Brand reputation (BR)→Brand Image (BI)	0.183	2.064	0.039	H4	Supported
Recommendation and review (RC)→Brand Image (BI)	0.029	0.416	0.678	**H6**	**Rejected**
Design and packaging (DP)→Brand Image (BI)	0.071	1.143	0.253	**H5**	**Rejected**
Promotion (PM)→Brand Image (BI)	0.145	1.789	0.074	**H1**	**Rejected**
Products quality (PQ)→Brand Image (BI)	0.258	3.185	0.002	H2	Supported
Trend and industry influence (TR)→ Brand Image (BI)	0.225	3.364	0.001	H3	Supported

Table 5 demonstrates the results of the structural model and the standardized path coefficient indicated effect among the constructs of the model. The results of the structural equation modeling provide valuable insights into the relationships between brand image (BI), purchase intention (PI),

and its key determinants in the context of the cosmetics industry. The path analysis confirms that **brand image (BI)** has a strong and statistically significant influence on **purchase intention (PI)** (**β = 0.631, T = 9.402, p < 0.001**), thereby supporting **Hypothesis H7**. This finding is similar with Wu et al., (2011) emphasizes the critical role of brand image in driving consumers' intention to purchase cosmetic products.

Several factors are identified as significant contributors to brand image. Notably, **brand reputation (BR)** demonstrates a significant positive effect on brand image (**β = 0.183, T = 2.064, p = 0.039**), lending support to **H4**. This suggests that a well-established reputation positively influences consumer perceptions of the brand. **Product quality (PQ)** also emerges as a significant predictor (**β = 0.258, T = 3.185, p = 0.002**), supporting **H2**, which confirms that perceived product excellence is essential in shaping a favorable brand image. This is similar to the findings of Kotler & Armstrong (2012) and Severi and Ling (2013), that product quality is a important factor in shaping brand image and become one of the main positioning tools for marketers. In addition, **trend and industry influence (TR)** has a significant positive impact on brand image (**β = 0.225, T = 3.364, p = 0.001**), supporting **H3**, and indicating that brands aligned with current trends and industry movements are more likely to be perceived positively by consumers.

Conversely, three hypothesized paths are not statistically supported. **Recommendation and review (RC)** shows no significant impact on brand image (**β = 0.029, T = 0.416, p = 0.678**), leading to the rejection of **H6**. Similarly, **design and packaging (DP)** (**β = 0.071, T = 1.143, p = 0.253**) and **promotion (PM)** (**β = 0.145, T = 1.789, p = 0.074**) are found to be non-significant predictors, resulting in the rejection of **H5** and **H1**, respectively. This finding is different with study of Schielke (2016) discovered that product design improves brand image. These findings suggest that while these factors may play a supporting role in consumer evaluations, they are not primary drivers of brand image formation in the cosmetic context analyzed.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion

People's desire for cosmetic products grows as their purchasing power and living standards rise, and the advent of international cosmetic companies necessitates the expansion of local cosmetic firms. This analysis aims to provide light on Vietnamese cosmetic enterprises' growth potential and competitive advantages in comparison to international markets. Furthermore, a detailed investigation of the factors that drive brand image is essential for identifying market trends.

According to the research, the most important indicators of brand image in the cosmetics market are two components: product quality and trends/industry. Trends and industries influence how brands shape their brand image. At the same time, study consumer trends and keep up with breakthrough cosmetic advancements. The quality of a cosmetic product is critical in generating trust and attracting customers. Since then, the cosmetic brand's image has influenced clients' purchasing intention. The outcomes of this thesis have validated the principles of the concept of reasoned action.

5.2. Implications

Based on the findings several implications can be made:

Since brand image (BI) has a strong and statistically significant impact on purchase intention (PI), cosmetic companies should focus on consistently building and reinforcing a positive brand image. Efforts should be directed towards crafting a distinctive, trustworthy, and emotionally engaging brand identity to drive consumer purchase decisions.

To enhancing brand image (BI), here is some implications based on findings.

First, Product quality emerged as the strongest driver of brand image. Cosmetic companies should consistently invest in high-quality ingredients, effective formulations, and rigorous quality control to build and maintain a favorable brand image. Communicating product efficacy and safety through certifications, clinical studies, and clear labeling can further strengthen consumer trust.

Second, the positive relationship between trend and industry influence (TR) and brand image highlights the need for companies to stay abreast of emerging beauty trends, technological advancements, and shifts in consumer behavior. Incorporating popular trends (e.g., sustainability, clean beauty, inclusivity) into product development and marketing strategies can enhance brand relevance and appeal. Brands should actively monitor market shifts and adapt their product development and marketing strategies to align with emerging consumer preferences and lifestyle trends.

Third, brand reputation was found to significantly impact brand image. Companies must build a reputable brand by emphasizing transparency, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and positive customer experiences. Engaging in community activities, collaborations with trusted influencers, and maintaining ethical practices can enhance brand reputation and, subsequently, brand image.

Contrary to initial expectations, the study found that promotion (PM), design and packaging (DP), and recommendation and review (RC) did not exert statistically significant impacts on brand image. While these variables are traditionally recognized as influential in shaping consumer perceptions, their lack of significance in this context suggests that other factors may hold more salient roles in the formation of brand image, particularly in this market or demographic. Several possible explanations may account for this outcome. First, consumers might be experiencing promotion fatigue due to oversaturation of marketing messages, leading to desensitization and reduced responsiveness to promotional efforts. Second, in product categories where functional performance or sustainability outweigh aesthetic appeal, design and packaging may be deprioritized in consumers' cognitive evaluations of brand image. Third, user-generated reviews and recommendations, though prevalent, may lack credibility or perceived authenticity if consumers suspect manipulation or bias, especially in digital platforms. These findings suggest that firms should recalibrate their branding strategies, perhaps placing greater emphasis on authenticity, core product value, and customer experience rather than relying heavily on surface-level promotional or packaging tactics. Nonetheless, while PM, DP, and RC may not show direct statistical significance, they should not be dismissed entirely, as their indirect or synergistic effects could still contribute to long-term brand equity.

5.3. Limitations and suggestion for future studies

One of the study's key weaknesses is its reliance on data obtained from a single place over a set timeframe. To address this constraint, future studies should collect samples from various locations and time periods. The data were collected from a specific geographic region without capturing variations across different regions of Vietnam or including international consumers. Regional cultural differences, income disparities, and urban-rural divides might influence consumer attitudes. Future studies should employ a multi-regional or even cross-national sampling frame and more sample to improve external validity.

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