



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN RELATION TO HERBAL AND NON-HERBAL COSMETIC PRODUCTS AMONG MEN

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Abstract

Marketing of cosmetic products is leapfrogging rapidly. Evidences are galore to show the accelerating rate of growth of cosmetic products. Changes are gigantic especially among urban women. Indeed, cosmetic industries have been contributing heavily towards GNP growth in Indian economy. Cosmetic industries are getting huge attention from business entrepreneurs. In fact, it has been booming at an enviable rate. Beauty, glamour, personality, style, fad, fashion etc. cut across all ages in modern days. Thanks go to media proliferation and buzz. As a result, business potential and opportunity in cosmetic products are getting momentum. This has been touching male segments also who are equally responding to the present trend. Cosmetics were once the sole products for women. Now, men segments are in the eye of cosmetic business houses as this group is getting fashion conscious. So, to say, cosmetic industries are getting lucrative. Furthermore, markets for herbal cosmetic products are getting attractive. This has been a trend for many customers to switch over to herbal products day by day. That has propelled some companies to manufacture herbal cosmetics along with their original versions. The present study aims to investigate customer satisfaction among men customers cutting across age and income groups.

Introduction

Cosmetics retailing is a booming business today. No, doubt, it is an age old business. But, its importance and usefulness at present has been increased manifold. As a result, this business is proliferating at a rapid pace. Organized retail industries have come into force in numbers compared to olden days. True, traditional format of retailing like kirana shops or local level stores draw huge customers but chain stores, franchisee stores, departmental stores supermarkets, shopping malls etc are becoming chief attractions for a large level of educated and discerning customers. Nair (2006) rightly pointed out that organized retailers are in the spree of introducing innovative models of retailing to attract today's customers. But whatsoever the formats are, retailing, as service industry can achieve success only when it is able to meet customers' expectations. The expectations are mounting as competition in this business is escalating. Customers expect quality products, reasonable prices, warranties, and personal care from the retail sales persons, comfortable retail ambience and many more. So, competition mainly veers around all these facets. Organized retailing especially has been growing on these facets and success in retailing depends majorly on these factors. Moreover, pre-selling and post-selling components of selling are given huge importance. Role of promotion especially advertising assumes a stellar role in creating awareness, generating interest, arousing desire and prompting customers to rush to the retail points. Sometimes, sales promotions in terms of price offs, discount, sweepstakes etc are offered to allure customers to get the incentive opportunities. Post selling involves keeping the promises given to the customers on behalf of the retailers like replacing defective items, right packaging, honouring warranties, assuring customers for the product quality, right pricing, use guidance etc.

Retailing in cosmetic products at current times has undergone massive change. It is treated as a big industry in the globe. It fetches huge revenues, foreign exchange earnings, employment generation for the youths, increase in GNP and so many macro and micro economic parameters. Retailing has brought in significant changes in cosmetic industries. It has turned these industries into very attractive business opportunities. Keeping this in mind, the present paper has delved into this sector and made an in depth study over success in retailing in selling cosmetic product having herbal origins. Study on women customers in this field is abundant. Women are natural customers. But since few years, men are equally responding to the urge of cosmetics. Herbal cosmetics are buzzing around men customers too. Keeping this in mind, the current study tries to investigate the following.



1. Classification of men customers based on income and age groups on herbal versus non-herbal cosmetics.
2. A study over user satisfaction in relation to herbal and non-herbal cosmetics.
3. To determine whether there exists any significant differences of customer satisfaction across age and income groups.
4. To do rank order of attributes contributing to customer satisfaction made by customers preferring herbal and non-herbal cosmetic products.

Literature Survey

1. Retailing is grouped under service domain. It is basically a service providing activity. Berry (1986) pointed out that both selling of goods and services come under the purview of service marketing.
2. Koschnick (1995) opined that retail service is a part of business and if successful it can prop up a company economically and enhance its corporate equity.
3. Raven and Welsh (2004) expressed that service is an integral component of retailing to retain existing customers and attract potential customers.
4. Hoffman and Bateson (2008) observed that excellent service experience by customers in retailing can differentiate a company easily from others. In fact, excellent retailing is an opportunity to add more value to the product or service over and above the core services.
5. Kesari and Atulkar (2016) opined that by giving proper services efficiently and effectively, retailer service providers can obtain additional competitive advantage.
6. McDougall and Levesque (2000) stated that customer perception of service quality is the most important factor to drive customer satisfaction. But the crucial part of it is the way customers interpret the service quality and generate perception on it.
7. Finn and Lamb (1991) viewed that by maintaining quality service to the consumers, retailers are able to satisfy the consumers, retain existing consumers, attract new consumers and increase market share of the organizations.
8. Kumar and Reinartz (2006) explained that knowledge on customer satisfaction is vital in marketing to gain competitive advantage and maintain long term relationship.
9. Lambert, Stock and Ellram (1998) researched out the use of cosmetics has a very ancient origin. However during eighteenth and nineteenth century, cosmetic products got huge popularity and importance among teen agers and middle aged women.
10. Souiden and Diagene (2009) stated that consequent to the globalization and its impact on science, technology, income and education, customers have become more knowledgeable and conscious of hygiene and beauty.
11. Jamal and Goode (2001) observed that customers choose those cosmetic products that match their self image and self expressions.
12. Ismail et. al. (2012) noted that cosmetics manufacturing firms have emphasized upon improving service quality and loyalty with an aim to build long term relationship with customers.

Research Methodology

The following methods have been followed:

- a) The study has been conducted in Burdwan municipality area.
- b) In this area there are 15 stores dealing in herbal cosmetics products and 68 stores dealing in both herbal and non-herbal products.
- c) Men customers have been interviewed in this purpose. Based on total no of foot falls of men customers on an average in week days and weekends, it has been found that approximately 10% of the total foot falls belong to men customers. This is entirely based on pilot survey on interactions with cosmetic retail owners.
- d) Evening hours especially 5 pm to 9 pm are chosen by customers, both men and women for buying cosmetic products.



- e) Over three months men customers approaching different cosmetic retail outlets have been interviewed with questionnaires. 5 to 7 men customers per day have been interacted during three month time periods. 2 to 3 customers have agreed to give their views. Total no. of men customers stands at 236 of which 120 customers prefer non-herbal products and 116 customers prefer herbal products.

The break ups of customers in terms of age and income categories are as follows:

Age:

Non-Herbal Group:

Age: 20 to 30 years = 33, 30⁺ to 40 years = 48, 40⁺ years = 39

Herbal Group:

Age: 20 to 30 years = 46, 30⁺ to 40 years = 42, 40⁺ years = 28

Income:

Non-Herbal Group:

Rs. 10,000 to 25,000 = 43, Rs.25001 to 40,000 = 46, Rs.40, 000⁺ = 31

Herbal Group:

Rs. 10,000 to 25,000 = 27, Rs.25001 to 40,000 = 41, Rs.40, 000⁺ = 48

- f) A questionnaire has been prepared to measure customer satisfaction based on five variables like store environment, shopping convenience, merchandise category, merchandise quality and Value for money. In this regard a 5-point scale was prepared with the categories such as very good (5), good (4), neither good nor bad (3), bad (2) and very bad (1).
- g) Preparations of rank order scale over five attributes contributing to customer satisfaction according to opinions of customers preferring herbal and non-herbal products irrespective of age and income.

Hypotheses

- H₁: Customers belonging to three age groups do not differ with respect to customer satisfaction for herbal cosmetics.
- H₂: Customers belonging to three age groups do not differ with respect to customer satisfaction non-herbal cosmetics.
- H₃: Customers belonging to three income groups do not differ with respect to customer satisfaction for herbal cosmetics.
- H₄: Customers belonging to three income groups do not differ with respect to customer satisfaction non-herbal cosmetics.

Table:1,Herbal Products

Table: 1.1: Age

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Table					
Overall Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.616	2	1.308	3.099	.049
Within Groups	47.695	113	.422		
Total	50.311	115			[p < .05]



Table: 1.2: Income

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Table					
Overall Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.174	2	5.087	14.322	.000
Within Groups	40.137	113	.355		
Total	50.311	115			[p < .05]

Table:2,Non-Herbal Products

Table:2.1: Age

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Table					
Overall Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.714	2	1.857	3.838	.024
Within Groups	56.608	117	.484		
Total	60.322	119			[p < .05]

Table:2.2: Income

ANOVA(Analysis of Variance) Table					
Overall Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.213	2	3.607	7.945	.001
Within Groups	53.109	117	.454		
Total	60.322	119			[p < .05]

Table: 3

Dimensions	Herbal Products					Summated Scores
	5	4	3	2	1	
Store Environment	9	17	31	35	24	300
Shopping Convenience	7	17	33	31	28	292
Merchandise Category	11	22	38	33	12	335
Merchandise Quality	9	26	33	30	18	326
Value for Money	7	25	35	28	21	317

Table: 4

Dimensions	Non-herbal Products					Summated Scores
	5	4	3	2	1	
Store Environment	1	7	30	38	44	243
Shopping Convenience	3	26	34	28	29	306
Merchandise Category	7	23	36	25	29	314
Merchandise Quality	11	33	29	23	24	344
Value for Money	7	25	39	28	21	329



Interpretation of Findings

Cosmetic products find customers from women segments since time immemorial. But today, men customers have been displaying inclination towards these products. This amply suggests beauty consciousness of men segments. Even, men and women are both becoming automatic customers of retail houses dealing in cosmetic products. The present paper, as mentioned earlier, focuses specially on men customers who show huge interest in cosmetic products, both herbal and non-herbal. Herbal cosmetics find havoc response from men customers that creates some sorts of competitive environment in cosmetics markets as chemical based cosmetics confront strong rivalry from herbal ones. The present paper veers around customer satisfaction assessment both from customers of herbal and non-herbal products that vary across age and income. Age and income are two major demographic variables that are prominent deciders in taking buying decisions and expressing satisfaction. In this study three age groups i.e. 20 to 30 years, 30⁺ to 40 years and 40⁺ and income groups, i.e. 10 thousand to 25 thousand, 25thousand⁺ to 40 thousand and above 40 thousand have been studied for both customers preferring herbal and non-herbal products. Table: 1 shows findings for customers preferring herbal products. Table: 1.1 shows the results for age groups and Table: 1.2 for income groups. The results on ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for both the cases exhibit significant differences across age and income groups (rejection of hypotheses H₁ and H₃). In fact, with the increase in age customers become more discerning and mature and justify their buying behavior and express satisfaction very objectively compared to customers belonging to low age groups. Their product selection, use and repeat purchase are based on experience and knowledge acquired. Low age customers are comparatively more struggling groups regarding career start, getting stability in profession and money earnings. They justify their buying decisions in somewhat less timings and on word of mouth communications. In the same way, table 1.2 shows results on income divisions over customer satisfaction and significant differences are found here also. Indeed, higher the income of customers, higher the numbers of choice criteria and more criticality in expressing customer satisfaction compared to customers of low income groups. Table: 2 shows the findings on customer preferring non-herbal products. Table 2.1 and table: 2.2 projects the results on ANOVA over customer satisfaction across age and income groups. Both show significant differences with respect to age and income categories (rejection of hypotheses H₂ and H₄). The explanation is same as in customers preferring herbal product. So, both types of customers preferring herbal and non-herbal products have common viewpoints while expressing customer satisfaction. But, the academic interest still remains whether they prioritize the factors in justifying customer satisfaction in the same way or not. Table: 3 and Table: 4 show the results pertaining to rank orders of factors explaining customer satisfaction for customers preferring herbal and non-herbal products. Some interesting findings are observed. Customers preferring herbal cosmetic products show highest priority to merchandise category and lowest to shopping convenience. Merchandise quality is their second priority Value for money and store environment stand third and fourth. For, customers preferring non-herbal products, merchandise quality is highest in preference and store environment stands last. Value for money, merchandise category and shopping convenience occupy second, third and fourth positions respectively. Table: 5 displays the rank orders for both the groups of customers.

Table: 5

Types of Products	Preferential Ranking of Dimensions
Herbal Products	1. Merchandise category
	2. Merchandise quality
	3. Value for Money
	4. Store Environment
	5. Shopping Convenience
Non- Herbal Products	1. Merchandise quality
	2. Value for Money
	3. Merchandise category
	4. Shopping Convenience
	5. Store Environment



Customers of herbal products stress upon merchandise category. This is due to the heavy demand for herbal cosmetics in variety of cosmetic products. Customers want more availability of it and they can easily procure it. Customers of non-herbal sides emphasize upon merchandise quality. These customers are aware of few side effects non-herbal cosmetics and therefore give importance on quality. At the same time, customers of non-herbal and herbal products spend hugely to procure these items, therefore, their concerns of value for money are at the top of the lists. Store ambience and shopping convenience are no less important but product quality and value for money exceeds in importance over them.

Conclusion

Herbal cosmetics are getting huge popularity among men customers too. But non-herbal products are no less important. Customers of herbal and non-herbal cosmetics express their satisfaction over products but with change in age and income customers' degree of satisfaction varies significantly. This is useful information for retailers dealing in cosmetic products. So, while formulating segmenting and positioning strategies, this should be kept in mind. Retailers at the same time give more importance to store environment and shopping convenience because these are priority factors in customer satisfaction.

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