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Skin Whitening Products Purchasing Intention Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Skin whitening products have increasingly gained popularity in Asia especially among Thai consumers. This research investigated consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products in Bangkok by employing a questionnaire as a research instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to and collected from a sampling population of 400 in Bangkok metropolitan area. Descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized for data analysis. Our findings showed that consumers' buying intentions were affected by the following factors: brand association (quality according to the price, $p = 0.018$), reference group (printed advertisement, $p = 0.026$), retail outlet as a marketing mix (cosmetics shop with decoration, $p = 0.030$), pricing as a marketing mix (price as a factor to buy ($p = 0.001$), perception of skin whitening products as an expensive product ($p = 0.000$) and reasonable price to buy ($p = 0.001$). Interestingly, promotional marketing and perceived quality as marketing mixes did not contribute to consumers' intention to buy skin whitening products. Towards the end of this study, a refined research model frame is offered and a discussion is provided.

Key words: Skin whitening, attitude, buying intention, marketing mix

INTRODUCTION

Skin whitening products have increasingly gained a spot in the global cosmetics market. In 2012, the products saw a dramatic growth, 2 billion in sales, in the market in Asia-Pacific region, according to the Global Industry Analysts (2009). Hanpanitchareon (2003) has reported that light skin has recently been considered an aspect of beauty among young Thai adults; therefore, they readily turn to skin whitening products. However, this is in contrary to the work of Thirion *et al.* (2006) who stated that some people are turning away from skin whitening products because of their concerns about product quality and safety. This is also in line with the works of Numberger and Schwaiger (2003) and Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe (2004) who stated that a more valid perception towards a product is needed against aggressive advertisement.

This study sought to understand certain important factors contributing to consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products by examining their demographic characteristics, brand preference, reference groups and marketing mixes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review presented the literature relevant to the key concepts underlying the development of the model for this study. A substantial body of literature has been developed discussing of consumers' attitudes toward factors influencing decision for purchasing skincare whitening cream cosmetics

Marketing concept: According to Czinkota and Ronkainen (1996), "marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and

services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives)". Likewise, Coulter (1998) posited that "marketing is defined as process of assessing and meeting individual's or group's wants and needs by creating, offering and exchanging products of value". Bradley (1995) argued that marketing was a solution to informing customer's benefits of taking certain products and services in the market. Furthermore, marketing also included activities concerning acquiring customer's needs and insights (Assael, 1993) which in turn captured customer's mentality, satisfied the customer and generated profits to the seller (Griffin and Ebert, 1996).

In this regard, marketing principles were coverage of a series of activities and processes extending beyond an actual purchase (Haas, 1995).

In addition, Tuckwell (1991) emphasized that marketing was based upon understand of what the customer need and then developed the concept toward it. On the other hand, Kotler (1997) referred marketing as a collection of a managerial and social process in reflecting and offering the product and service with the value capable of answering to the customer. Therefore, marketing was considered the key to succeed in identifying customer's need, targeting the market, developing strategic plan and delivering the value to the product and service and to the company (Dibb and Simkin, 1996).

Service and satisfaction: A service is a level of service which does not exist at present to prospective clients which will decide the quality of service (Stanton *et al.*, 2007) and Weiten and Lloyd (2006) found that the service quality construct conforms to the structure of a third-order factor model that concern with actionable dimensions: outcome, interaction and environmental quality. Taylor and Armor (1996) studied that service is importance in international marketing and it has services which frequently more complex than that of goods which service attributes into custommadeness, intangibility, cultural sensitivity and perish ability. Furthermore "service quality delivery through web sites is an essential strategy to success, possibly more important than low price and web presence" (Welsh, 2009). Lovelock and Wright (2002) found that a reactor or perform tasks that one party offers to another party although the process may be associated with the product, but turnout was something invisible and it is also an economic activity that creates value and interest.

In addition, satisfaction refers to the feeling of one's pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing the perceived performance of product or service against one's expectations. If the performance meets or even exceeds one's expectations, the customer is like to be satisfied (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to make the customer perceive the product or service in a way that the customer expects.

Decision making theory: Kreitner (1995) argue that decision making is either programmed or nonprogrammed. Where the first one is fixed and formulated into certain rules, the latter one is flexible need a problem solving approach. Schermerhorn (2005) concluded that a decision is the choice from a range of possible alternative courses of action. The decision-making's process is concerned with various activities which guide the way through a problem, making a decision and evaluation of results. Nienaber (2010) referred that a decision is the alternative selected from available choices. The decision-making process involves various functions including problem solving, analyzing opportunities and coming to a resolution.

Consumer behavior: Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) defines consumer behavior as the behavior consumers' display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. In this study, consumer behavior refers to the actions taken for buyers in buying the products. According to consumer behavior are culture-bound about the cultural relationships with the self, personality and attitude which are the basis of consumer behavior models and branding and advertising strategies (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). Kumaravel and Vikkraman (2013) stated that consumer behavior largely affected by product specific factors like place, price, product and promotion.

Demographics

Gender: Garbarino and Strahilevitz (2004) confirmed that “when controlling for Internet usage, compared to men, women perceived more risk to buying online both in terms of probability and in terms of likelihood”. Finucane *et al.* (2000) investigated the sociopolitical factors in risk judgments is recommended to clarify gender and racial differences. Bakewell and Mitchell (2006) found that decision-making traits were common to both genders and three new male traits; namely; store-loyalty and low-price seeking, confused time-restricted and store-promiscuity as males and females were found to be significantly different with respect to affective process components and cognitive process components (Coley and Burgess, 2003). Foster and Resnick (2013) mentioned that customers seek reassurance in the service encounter by ‘matching’ and ‘mirroring’ the age and gender of customer-facing staff with their expectations of who should deliver appropriate service during the retail service encounter. Liu *et al.* (2012) found that significant gender differences in “the amount of money spent per purchase of cosmetics, “the time spent on cosmetics” which there were also significant differences in the level of importance assigned to “brand reputation, fresh scent, natural ingredients, reasonable price and recommended by advertising”. Furthermore, the obligation to make a purchase had a stronger effect on the purchasing behavior of women in contrast gratitude was a stronger reason for men to make a purchase (Kolyesnikova *et al.*, 2009).

Age: Meng and Pan (2012) suggested that the perceived information utility of cosmeceutical product advertising is the most significant factor in engaging young female consumers' interests and desire to try cosmeceuticals. Guo (2011) argued that young men's cosmetics purchasing behaviors are strongly influenced by cultural and personal factors as Chao (2012) found that manufacturers and retailers can develop undergraduate students' brand loyalty and preference and make them become the target consumer of specific brand by understanding their needs and opinions. Kokoi (2011) indicated that 20-35 and 40-60 year-old women were rather similar in terms of the factors affecting their buying behavior related to facial skin care products. Xuanxiaoqing *et al.* (2012) suggested that females over 41 years old is more likely to intend to impulse buy, because they have a permanent salary and want to spend money on themselves. Furthermore, Lautamaki (2013) mentioned that young Russian men have an attitude towards cosmetics products and using some products even on a daily basis.

Education degree: Wijesundera and Abeysekera (2010) found that the education qualifications and occupation with brand preference varies which marketing organizations can direct marketing campaigns specifically addressing to the different qualification levels and occupation categories. The study found that the education of people who are mostly graduates or post graduates are the consumers of either popular or middle end categories of personal care products which is the most

important target group for all the major players in the personal care segment (Sudhakar and Rani, 2013). Tsai (2013) stated that the educational function and inspirational role of media and advertising images in inducing women to accept mediated beauty standards as attainable and empowering. Berkholz *et al.* (2010) refereed that consumers must be educated about the consequences of their choices which encourage people to change their attitudes and habits, improvements in terms of their living standards and be communicated, especially the money-and time-saving aspects. Saeed *et al.* (2013) mentioned that consumers with high level of product knowledge relied more on COO related cues in their product evaluation as compared to consumers with low level of knowledge. Peattie (2002) stated that the health education in sun-safety which the particular communication characteristics of the Internet can be utilized to good effect including considerable synergy between the Internet as a medium, sun-safety as a message and teenagers as an audience.

Marital status: Kumaravel and Vikkraman (2013) mentioned that the majority of respondents are married and purchasing personal care product in urban areas by considering quality product at reasonable price. Kokoi (2011) found that women who had children were more favorable toward the use of natural ingredients in facial skin care products than women who did not have children. Furthermore, the marital status majorities first preference was whether the brand is suited for the skin (Wijesundera and Abeysekera, 2010). Ali and Said (2012) found that marital was generate the outcome that will used to explain the purchasing pattern of natural cosmetic among consumers which covering several aspects such as motive, information sources, type of natural cosmetics products and place of purchasing. Hamed *et al.* (2010) found that skin-lightening product users believed that lighter skin tone plays a role in self-esteem, perception of beauty and youth, marriage and employment opportunities when compared with nonusers.

Monthly income: Abdullah *et al.* (2013) found that the income level of female consumers is increasing their expenditure for cosmetic product is also increasing. Chao and Schor (1998) stated that income status are positively associated with the propensity to engage in status-purchasing, as are urban and suburban residence and being a Caucasian. Liu (2011) stated that the higher monthly incomes, the greater proportion of high acceptable cost on packaging design. Abdullah *et al.* (2013) found that “income level of female consumers is increasing their expenditure for cosmetics product is also increasing” as McConnell and Brue (1999) mentioned that high income also affects the type of products that consumers want to buy. Chiang and Yu (2010) suggested that the analytic data demographic variables such as monthly income, lifestyle and value, could assist cosmetics industry in designing the future marketing strategies.

Occupation: Sudhakar and Rani (2013) found that people who are working as employees are the consumers of either popular or middle end categories of personal care products and this signifies that middle class consumers is the most important target group for all the major players in the personal care segment. Ying San *et al.* (2012) ssuggested that variables such as occupation level has pointed out that attitude towards online shopping had the strongest effect on the intentions to shop online.

In sum, the first hypothesis of this is: Demographic factors contribute significantly to consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products (H1).

Brand loyalty: Ewing (2000) indicated that brand loyalty is investigated by examining actual past behavior and its impact on future behavioral intentions: in terms of expectation to purchase the same/another brand from the same/another retailer. Study show that the results provide special insight into gauging consumer perceptions and developing successful brand strategies (Silver and Hanson, 2003). Atkinson (2009) stated that the utilitarian and hedonic brand benefits both significantly contribute to female consumers' satisfaction with cosmetic brands. Money and Crotts (2003) found that brand experience affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty directly and indirectly through brand personality associations as Oliver (1999) stated that loyalty is "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future". Bakewell and Mitchell (2006) suggested that retailers should focus on loyalty creation programs, price-related appeals and methods for improving shopping efficiencies when targeting young male shoppers.

Therefore, the second hypothesis of this is: Brand association contributes significantly to consumers' attitude de towards buying skin whitening products (H2).

Reference groups: Consumer's behaviors can be easily induced by significant others. In this regard, the consumers are subject to pressure, norms and expectations (Fong and Burton, 2008).

For example, family members can have a various roles and therefore influence other members' decision making process (Webster, 2000). In a more specific sense, family's consumptive behavior patterns and attitudes have passed along to the family members (Swiencicki, 1998). Moreover, Entertainers and athletes can influence one's purchasing intentions and attitudes due to their characteristics of credibility, relevance and success attainment (Martin and Bush, 2000). The effectiveness of an endorsement is the extent to which the consumer associates with the endorser image and the degree to which those endorser's activities support cosmetics (Daneshvary and Schwer, 2000). Online cosmetics marketing has been affected the role of the celebrity and the sale representative as shoppers are seeking the functional value of the celebrity more than the economic value of the cosmetics (Sinha, 2003). Female consumers can be easily influenced by entertainers and magazine celebrities more than males (Richins, 1991) and they think about their appearance before having thought about what to spend on cosmetics (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).

Therefore, the third hypothesis of this study is: Reference groups contribute significantly to consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products (H3).

Marketing mix concept: Marketing mix consists of the basic elements (product, price, distribution and promotion) in order to win the targeted customers (Bradley, 1995). However, the result of employing the marketing mix conditionally depends on combination of the "mix" (Griffin and Ebert, 1996) argued that marketing-mix was derived from the exercise of activities such price, product-development and product-improvement activities, promotions, public relation, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling and distribution. Tuckwell (1991) proposed that the elements of market are used to satisfy the needs of a target market and as the "4 Ps" which were product, price, promotion and place or distribution. Importantly, marketing mix is the concept in modern marketing theory since it is the tools pursuing the marketing target Kotler (1997). In this regard, Dibb and Simkin, 1996, proposed that the marketing mix is the specific marketing action plan to win the market and the customers.

Therefore, the forth hypothesis of this study is: Marketing mix contributes significantly to consumer attitudes towards buying skin whitening products. The marketing mix dimensions are perceived quality (H4.1), pricing (H4.2), outlet (H4.3) and product promotion (H4.4).

In sum, little research has been conducted in terms of forecasting consumer behavior in their purchasing decisions in relation to whitening cream cosmetics, especially in Thailand. Cosmetics has been considered to be a high-involvement shopping item which consumers often buy for its symbolic meanings, image reinforcement or psychological satisfaction. This study examined factors that influenced consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products: their demographic characteristics, brand preference, reference group and marketing mixes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The theory of consumer purchasing behavior was discussed along with a discussion of the factors that influence the consumer. The factors influencing decision to purchase whitening products include value and lifestyle, brand preference, reference groups, advertising and promotion, marketing mix and demographics of respondents. After the review, hypotheses are articulated as following:

- H1:** Demographic factors contribute significantly to consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products
- H2:** Brand association contributes significantly to consumers' attitude de towards buying skin whitening products
- H3:** Reference groups contribute significantly to consumers' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products
- H4:** The marketing mix dimensions are:
 - H4.1:** Perceived quality
 - H4.2:** Pricing
 - H4.3:** Outlet
 - H4.4:** Product promotion

Formulated upon the hypotheses above, an initial conceptual framework of this research is proposed as displayed in Fig. 1.

The appropriate sample size for this study was determined by a formula used by Zikmund (1997). This equation is:

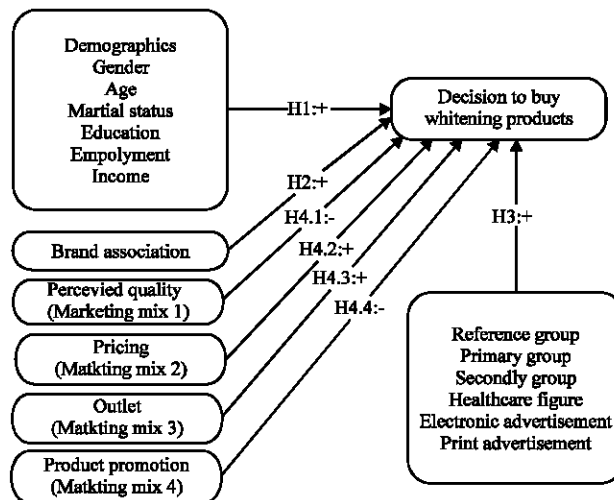


Fig. 1: Research model

$$n = Z^2 C l p q / E^2$$

Where:

n = The No. of items in the sample

Z² = The square of the confidence interval in standard error units

p = The estimated proportion of market share of skin whitening products

q = 1-p = the estimated proportion of market share untouched by skin whitening products

E² = The square of the maximum allowance for error between the true proportion and the sample proportion

The confidence level is set at 95% so (Z²cl) = 1.96. The allowance for error is set at 5% so E = 0.05. The market share for skin whitening products was not known and was estimated to be 50%. Therefore, p = 0.5., q = 1-p = 1-0.5 = 0.5. Inputting these values into the sample size equation yielded:

$$n = 1.96 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (0.05 \times 0.05) = 385 \text{ which is approximately } 400$$

The sampling technique used in this study was simple random sampling. It ensured that each individual in the population had the same probability of being chosen. The female respondents in this study were responsible for 60% and the male respondents were responsible for 40%. Participation in this study was voluntary and the participants were assured of anonymity.

The researcher handed out 400 copies of the questionnaire to a sampling group in central Bangkok in April 2013. The questionnaire return rate was 100%. The questions were categorized into four groups. These four groups were stated by Lines (2006) as proven significant factors influencing consumers' buying decision. They are as follows: demographics (Goyat, 2011); perceived cost and brand of cosmetics (Gupta, 2013; Khraim, 2011; Lin and Lin, 2007; Nezakati *et al.*, 2013; Sadeghi *et al.*, 2011); reference group (Barbora, 2006; Consterdine, 2009) and marketing mixes (Hosseini and Navaie, 2012; Weber and de Villebonne, 2002).

This research employed two kinds of statistical analyses. First, descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the demographics. They served as a concluding complementary analysis in the discussion. Second, one-way ANOVA and F-test were utilized for analyzing influencing factors underlying the consumers' buying intention.

RESULTS

The results of this study are organized into two parts. The first part is the analysis of the demographics of the respondents using descriptive statistics. The second part is the analysis of the respondents' attitudes towards buying skin whitening products.

The results in Table 1 show that the majority of the respondents which accounted for 58.3%, were men. The majority of the respondents which accounted for 72%, were single. Twenty two point eight percent were married and 28.3% were divorced. The majority of the respondents which accounted for 53.8%, completed an undergraduate degree. Eighteen percent had a postgraduate degree, 28.3% did not have a degree. The majority of the respondents which accounted for 77%, earned between THB 10,000-THB 19,999 a month. The numbers the respondents earning between THB 20,000-THB 29,999 and THB 30,000-THB 39,999 were 12 and 3%, respectively. The number of the respondents earning less than THB 10,000 a month accounted for 7.8% while only 0.3% earned more than THB 39,999 a month.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the sampling population

| Descriptive | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative (%) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------|
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 233 | 58.3 | 58.3 |
| Female | 167 | 41.8 | 100.0 |
| Age | | | |
| <20 | 40 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 20-29 | 340 | 85.0 | 95.0 |
| 30-39 | 20 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| >39 | 0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Marital status | | | |
| Single | 288 | 72.0 | 72.0 |
| Married | 91 | 22.8 | 94.8 |
| Divorced | 21 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| Education | | | |
| Lower than | 113 | 28.3 | 28.3 |
| Undergrad | 215 | 53.8 | 82.0 |
| Postgrad | 72 | 18.0 | 100.0 |
| Occupation | | | |
| Government service/state enterprise | 56 | 14.0 | 14.0 |
| Private enterprise | 60 | 15.0 | 29.0 |
| Self-employed | 60 | 15.0 | 44.0 |
| Housekeeper | 144 | 36.0 | 80.0 |
| Student | 69 | 17.3 | 97.3 |
| Other | 11 | 2.8 | 100.0 |
| Income | | | |
| <10,000 | 31 | 7.8 | 7.8 |
| 10,000-19,999 | 308 | 77.0 | 84.8 |
| 20,000-29,999 | 48 | 12.0 | 96.8 |
| 30,000-39,999 | 12 | 3.0 | 99.8 |
| > 39,999 | 1 | 0.3 | 100.0 |

Table 2: Variance analyses for testing of brand association factors

| Brand association | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|---|----------------|----|-------------|--------|---------|
| Good quality products are always expensive | 21.282 | 4 | 5.320 | 3.016* | 0.018 |
| Name brand products are always high quality | 1.090 | 4 | 0.272 | 0.264 | 0.901 |
| Name brand products are always trusted quality | 0.316 | 4 | 0.079 | 0.115 | 0.977 |
| Name brand products are expensive, but not always high quality | 2.108 | 4 | 0.527 | 0.532 | 0.713 |
| Generic products are as good as the name brand | 4.843 | 4 | 1.211 | 1.164 | 0.326 |
| Cosmetics are toxic and should be avoided | 1.554 | 4 | 0.388 | 0.330 | 0.858 |
| Sellers usually convince you to use cosmetics since it beautifies you | 2.619 | 4 | 0.655 | 0.767 | 0.547 |
| Natural skin should be not augmented | 1.612 | 4 | 0.403 | 0.268 | 0.899 |
| Skin whitening products attenuate your skin | 3.570 | 4 | 0.892 | 0.579 | 0.678 |
| People tend to like light-skinned women | 3.101 | 4 | 0.775 | 0.493 | 0.741 |

p* < 0.05

According to Table 2, the consumers' perception of good quality products was that they are always expensive (p = 0.018).

According to Table 3, print advertisement significantly influenced consumers' intention to buy skin whitening products (p = 0.026).

Table 3: Variance analyses for testing of reference group factors

| Reference group | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|--------------------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|---------|
| Primary group | 1.475 | 2 | 0.738 | 1.176 | 0.310 |
| Secondary group | 2.544 | 2 | 1.272 | 1.944 | 0.144 |
| Healthcare figure | 1.528 | 2 | 0.764 | 1.034 | 0.357 |
| Electronic advertisement | 1.711 | 2 | 0.855 | 1.153 | 0.317 |
| Print advertisement | 6.075 | 2 | 3.037 | 3.665* | 0.026 |

*p<0.05

Table 4: Variance analyses for testing marketing mix factors (perceived quality)

| Perceived quality | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|--|----------------|----|-------------|-------|---------|
| Packaging design is attractive | 1.449 | 2 | 0.725 | 1.367 | 0.256 |
| Products have quality and standard | 1.222 | 2 | 0.611 | 1.333 | 0.265 |
| Brand reputation/popularity | 0.797 | 2 | 0.399 | 0.829 | 0.437 |
| Products have a large selection | 0.290 | 2 | 0.145 | 0.281 | 0.755 |
| The products are continuously improved and released | 0.127 | 2 | 0.064 | 0.124 | 0.883 |
| The products are healthful to the skin | 0.111 | 2 | 0.055 | 0.130 | 0.878 |
| No allergies after using | 0.974 | 2 | 0.487 | 1.077 | 0.342 |
| Products are approved by food and drug administration | 0.144 | 2 | 0.072 | 0.166 | 0.847 |
| Main compositions of products align with your expectations | 0.362 | 2 | 0.181 | 0.392 | 0.676 |
| Customers can test products before buying | 0.766 | 2 | 0.383 | 0.756 | 0.470 |

*p<0.05

Table 5: Variance analyses for testing marketing mix factors (pricing)

| Pricing | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|---|----------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|
| Product price as high as the quality | 3.368 | 2 | 1.684 | 1.830 | 0.162 |
| Price is the main factor in decision-making to buy | 4.409 | 2 | 2.204 | 7.251* | 0.001 |
| Participants compare the price of each product before buying | 0.370 | 2 | 0.185 | 0.456 | 0.634 |
| Product's quality is more important than price | 0.412 | 2 | 0.206 | 0.594 | 0.553 |
| Price-tag should be clear | 0.494 | 2 | 0.247 | 0.571 | 0.566 |
| Skin whitening products should be relatively expensive than other skin products | 5.924 | 2 | 2.962 | 10.100* | 0.000 |
| Low-price skin whitening products are attractive, hence, decision to buy | 4.764 | 2 | 2.382 | 7.642* | 0.001 |
| Participants tend to buy products from the discount stores | 0.581 | 2 | 0.291 | 0.619 | 0.539 |

*p<0.05

According to Table 4, the consumers; intention to buy whitening products was not affected by the perceived quality.

According to Table 5:

- Price was the main factor in consumers' buying decision (p = 0.001)
- Skin whitening products should be more expensive than other skin products (p = 0.000)
- Low-price skin whitening products are attractive to buy (p = 0.001)

According to Table 6, the consumers; attitude were that decorations should be attractive and always readily available (p = 0.030).

According to Table 7, the consumers' attitude towards buying whitening products was not affected by promotional marketing.

Table 6: Variance analyses for testing marketing mix factors (outlet)

| Outlet | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|--|----------------|----|-------------|--------|---------|
| No. of shops is sufficient and it is easy to have access to | 0.125 | 2 | 0.062 | 0.129 | 0.879 |
| Decorations should be attractive and always available | 2.748 | 2 | 1.374 | 3.550* | 0.030 |
| Shop location should be easily reached and provide parking spots | 1.420 | 2 | 0.710 | 1.555 | 0.212 |
| Products should be sold only at leading department stores | 0.548 | 2 | 0.274 | 0.717 | 0.489 |
| Products should be sold at supermarkets | 0.696 | 2 | 0.348 | 0.614 | 0.541 |
| Products should be sold at convenient stores | 0.782 | 2 | 0.391 | 0.722 | 0.486 |
| Products should be sold at supercenters | 0.812 | 2 | 0.406 | 0.682 | 0.506 |
| Direct sales service should be available to customers | 1.237 | 2 | 0.618 | 1.045 | 0.353 |
| Products should be sold at skin healthcare centers | 0.094 | 2 | 0.047 | 0.089 | 0.914 |
| Products should be sold at beauty and health parlors | 0.654 | 2 | 0.327 | 0.516 | 0.597 |

*p<0.05

Table 7: Variance analyses for testing of marketing mix factors (promotional marketing)

| Promotional marketing | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p-value |
|---|----------------|----|-------------|-------|---------|
| Advertising has effects towards skin whitening products buying behavior | 1.591 | 2 | 0.796 | 1.341 | 0.263 |
| Discount program should be provided to the members | 2.642 | 2 | 1.321 | 1.871 | 0.155 |
| Sales representatives' courtesy | 2.978 | 2 | 1.489 | 2.318 | 0.100 |
| Giveaway products samples are provided to customers | 4.364 | 2 | 2.182 | 2.789 | 0.063 |
| Discount products | 3.353 | 2 | 1.677 | 2.213 | 0.111 |
| Products giveaway | 0.842 | 2 | 0.421 | 0.594 | 0.553 |
| Promotional events are occasionally provided | 3.781 | 2 | 1.890 | 2.421 | 0.090 |
| Lucky draws are provided | 2.227 | 2 | 1.114 | 1.770 | 0.172 |
| Decisions to buy are influenced the product demonstration | 2.317 | 2 | 1.159 | 1.617 | 0.200 |
| Enticing promotional events is related to decisions to buy | 2.902 | 2 | 1.451 | 1.532 | 0.217 |

*p<0.05

DISCUSSION

These results showed that males were keenly interested in skin whitening products. This is in accordance with the work of Yuan (2006) who mentioned that another trend witnessed in the skin lightener market was the introduction of whitening products for men. The finding that good quality products were perceived to always be expensive was in accordance with Chaneta (2010) who stated that persons who were oriented to higher price were more likely to buy well-known national brands because they thought good quality was indicated by higher price.

Another study also confirms this result, especially in young adults (Gronhoj, 2007). Print advertisement was more appealing, emotionally, than other media were. The reasons were the effective use of written language and the attractive images that stimulated the intention to buy skin whitening products (Hirsch, 2012; Witt, 1999).

Interestingly, perceived quality showed no significant influence in this study. This, however, may be due to the fact that there were too many whitening products with different kinds of packaging and hypes on the market. Therefore, buyers got confused and overloaded with unnecessary cognitive burdens and so ended up foregoing a purchase.

According to our results, store decoration played a significant role in participants' intention to buy beauty products. Consumers were visually attracted by beautiful store decoration and the attractive image of the decorated store could lure the consumers into believing that the quality of the products sold in the store was as good as the decoration. These realizations are aligned with recent studies on cosmetic shopping behaviors by and Joines (2009) and Rungcharoan and Siriwong (2009).

Promotional marketing, however, had no effect on the participants. The logic used to describe perceived quality can be applied here. Just like the case of perceived quality, all of the whitening product manufacturers used a huge variety of marketing campaigns and messages to address the consumers and this might also confuse the consumers. By the same token, the influence of promotional marketing was found to be insignificant. Taking these findings into account, the researcher improved on the initial research model and turned it into a refined research model. Regarding the findings, the irrelevant factors in the hypotheses of the previous model were removed, resulting in a more refined research model. In this refined model, the factors influencing consumer attitudes towards buying skin whitening products are as follows: brand association (quality according to price), reference group (print advertisement), outlet as marketing mix (shop with decoration), pricing as a marketing mix (price as a factor to buy, product perceived as expensive and reasonable price to buy).

CONCLUSION

Skin whiteners market in Thailand has continued to grow due to the favor for fair skin among Thai youths. In order to gain recognition and market share, the industry has been sending compelling messages to consumers through print advertisement. It also provided appealing outlet stores with attractive decoration. As for its pricing strategy, marketers have applied a "price discrimination" strategy. Since, consumers perceived that high price reflected high quality while at the same time, they were more likely to buy products with reasonable price, skin whitening product manufacturers should craft their pricing strategy by balancing these two contradictory aspects of pricing in order to gain general acceptance from the majority of consumers.

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