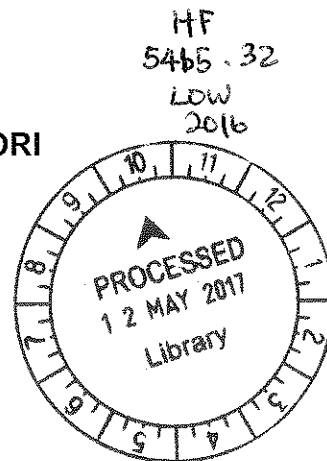


INTI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBADI)

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS HAIR REMOVAL CREAM; EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIAN FEMALES.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of consumer buying intention towards hair removal cream in Malaysia. In view of the objectives, there are limitation in literature concerning consumer buying intention in consuming hair removal cream, especially in understanding the recent low demand of hair removal cream despite an increase in demand in depilatory industry globally. With that being said, the available literature on hair removal cream buying behaviour does not address the current phenomenon. As such, it is important for the research being conducted in Malaysia.

To further understand the phenomenon, the used of independent variable such as acceptability, affordability, accessibility and awareness is to be tested to derive the relationship of the consumer buying intention towards hair removal cream. As such, the use of grounded theory such as theory of reasoned action will be used as a guide to better understand the buying behaviour and intention of the participants.

The research methodology use will be that of a correlation in nature and the result expected will be there is a positive relationship on the independent variable towards the buying intention of the consumers.

Key Words: Consumer buying behaviour, consumer buying intention, hair removal cream, theory of reasoned action, influence, expectation.

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Thirdly, I would also like to extend my gratitude to those respondents who had share their valuable opinion on their hair removal experience as every chance given to me from them in answering my questionnaire lead me closer to completing this thesis. Finally, to the librarians that had helped me in the sourcing of books and journals, thank you and your help and you all will always be remembered.

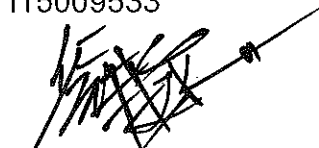
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been duly acknowledged.

Name: LOW SUM CHWEEN

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LOW SUM CHWEEN', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 26/NOV/2016

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
DECLARATION	iii
List of Abbreviation	vii
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
1.0 Chapter Overview.....	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4
1.3 Research Objectives	5
1.3.1 General Objective	5
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of Study.....	6
1.5.1 Academic	6
1.5.2 Managerial	7
1.6 Scope of Study.....	7
1.7 Limitations of Study	7
1.7.1 The limitation of population sampling	7
1.7.2 Limitation of the quantitative method.....	8
1.7.3 Limitation of time	8
1.8 Operational Definition	8
1.8.1 Hair removal cream.....	8
1.8.2 Consumer buying intention.....	9
1.8.3 Acceptability	9
1.8.4 Affordability	9
1.8.5 Accessibility.....	9
1.8.6 Awareness	10
1.9 Organisation of Chapters.....	10
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review.....	11
2.0 Chapter Overview.....	11
2.1 Literature Review and Critique	11
2.1.1 Dependant Variable: Consumer Buying Intention	11
2.1.2 Independent Variables	13
2.2 Theoretical Foundation.....	18

2.2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action.....	18
2.3 Conceptual Framework	20
2.4 Hypotheses Development	21
2.5 Chapter Summary	21
CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology.....	22
3.0 Chapter Overview.....	22
3.1 Research Design.....	22
3.2 Unit of Analysis.....	23
3.3 Study Population, Sampling Design and Sampling Plan	23
3.3.1 Target Population.....	24
3.3.2 Sampling Frame and Sampling Location.....	24
3.3.3 Sampling Technique.....	24
3.3.4 Sampling Size	24
3.4 Measurement Instrument.....	25
3.5 Validity.....	25
3.6 Pilot Study	26
3.7 Questionnaire Design.....	26
3.8 Data Collection, Data Access and Analysis Methods	27
3.8.1 Factor Analysis.....	27
3.8.2 Reliability Test.....	27
3.8.3 Multiple Regression.....	28
3.8.4 Multicollinearity.....	28
3.9 Conclusion.....	29
3.10 Ethical Considerations.....	29
Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Findings and Interpretation.....	30
4.0 Chapter Overview.....	30
4.1 Data Collection Process	30
4.2 Descriptive Results.....	31
4.3 Normality Test	32
4.4 Reliability and Validity Test.....	34
4.5 Hypotheses Test.....	37
4.6 Chapter Summary	40
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion & Recommendations.....	41
5.0 Chapter Overview.....	41
5.1 Discussions	41

5.2 Academic.....	42
5.3 Managerial Implication.....	42
5.4 Recommendations.....	43
5.4.1 Selecting Suitable Distribution Channel	43
5.4.2 Providing Free Sample.....	43
5.4.3 Loss Leader Strategy	44
5.5 Limitations of Study	44
5.6 Further Research of Study	45
5.7 Conclusion.....	45
5.8 Personal Reflection	46
6.0 References	47
7.0 Appendices.....	51

List of Tables

<i>Table 1</i>	26
<i>Table 2</i>	28
<i>Table 3</i>	31
<i>Table 4</i>	32
<i>Table 5</i>	35
<i>Table 6</i>	37
<i>Table 7</i>	38
<i>Table 8</i>	39

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	4
<i>Figure 2</i>	14
<i>Figure 3</i>	16
<i>Figure 4</i>	20
<i>Figure 5</i>	20
<i>Figure 6</i>	22

List of Abbreviation

4A	Acceptability, Affordability, Accessibility and Awareness
4P	Product, Price, Promotion, Place
IPL	Intense Pulse Light
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.0 Chapter Overview

The essence of chapter one is to provide an overall perspective of the research topic by first providing clear information regarding the *research background* (1.1). This is then followed by highlighting the *problem statement* (1.2) of the research which ultimately identifies the gap that exists among existing research information. It is from the problem statement that gives rise to the manifestation of the *research objectives* (1.3) of the study that leads to the formation of the *research questions* (1.4). Subsequently, the importance and contribution of the study is stated as the *significance of the study* (1.5). Next, the *scope of the research* (1.6) will be defined and this is followed by stating the *limitations of the research* (1.7). Finally, the current chapter ends with the *operational definition* (1.8) and followed by a summary of the other chapters with the heading of *organisation of chapter* (1.9).

1.1 Research Background

Hair removal among women is considered an important and essential part to every female across different cultures throughout the world (Hansen, 2007). Based on recent research, an average woman will remove their hair at least three times per week (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004). According to Boboltz (2015) the high demand for hair removal products among females seems to be a global phenomenon due to the fact that women tend to have a conceptual association between body hair and an expectation of the ideal gender. Having a hairy body is considered being a sign of masculinity, whereas a hairless body indicates a sign of femininity (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004). In addition to being symbolic, hair removal is considered as a way to maintain body hygiene at certain parts of the women's body (Conger, 2015).

Throughout modern society, an image of a smooth and hairless female is constantly used in advertisement for all beauty products that is associated with women users. Especially in promoting women hair removal products, marketers intentionally use hairless females to instill shame to women who seem to be hairy. By reinforcing the social norm of being hairless, women strive to be hairless so that they can blend in the society as a real female (Boboltz, 2015).

However, not every women are hairless in nature and every female will experience a different degree of hair grow on their body and to be hairless requires lots of effort and work. As such, in order to strive towards an ideal acceptable female concept, women have to practice hair removal (Boboltz, 2015).

According to Le (2015), hair removal is a multi-billion dollar business. Based on the report by research firm IBISWorld, the global hair removal industry itself grew an average of 7.6 percent annually between 2010 and 2015. The total estimated 300,000 business in personal waxing racked up sales totally US\$11 billion. According to Euromonitor (2016), the depilatory industry in Malaysia are estimated worth RM34 million and the trend of being hairless is growing.

Based on the findings of Toerien and Wilkinson (2004), over 99% of participants reported removing some hair and most commonly from the underarms, legs, pubic area, and eyebrows. Participants have indicated that shaving is the most common depilatory method (97.20%), followed by plucking (85.10%), Hair removal creams (84.51%) and home waxing (44.25%). With such high demand for hair removal products, competition both globally and locally is extremely intense. This then give rise to the need for hair removal cream producers to know their customers buying behaviour well and to apply the knowledge to the formulation of marketing strategy (Tobak, 2014).

The topic on consumer behaviour and buying intention, has always been a domain of great interest to marketers as the knowledge helps the marketer to have an in-depth understanding as to how the consumers make their decision from the information derive which eventually forms a perception that is either favourable or unfavourable towards the product or services (Evans, 2010). Moutinho (2012) agreed that the consumer's buying intention is there for influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors which most of these factors are uncontrollable and totally not within the influence of the marketers. Therefor base on a general agreement, consumer behaviour refers to the study of individuals, groups or organisation in regards to the processes use to acquire certain product or services (Solomon, Russell-Bennett and Previte, 2012).

As at to date when referring to the successful companies in the world, it can be seen that the companies derive their success by providing superior value to their customers (Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisenblit, 2010). Subsequently, Tobak (2014) mentioned that in order to provide superior customer value, companies have to be better in anticipating and reacting to the needs of the customers before the competition does so. Thus, Bagozzi, Abe and Bergami (2014) stated that companies worldwide had incorporate the knowledge of consumer behaviour in the formulation of the marketing strategies (*figure 1*).

In addition, Gronroos (2010) argued that consumers tend to react to the 4P of marketing mix when making buying decision on product related item. Waterschoot and Bulte (2011) further confirm that it is the condition of the 4P which subsequently lead to the 4A of marketing mix that is acceptability, affordability, accessibility and awareness tend to be more effective on tangible products.

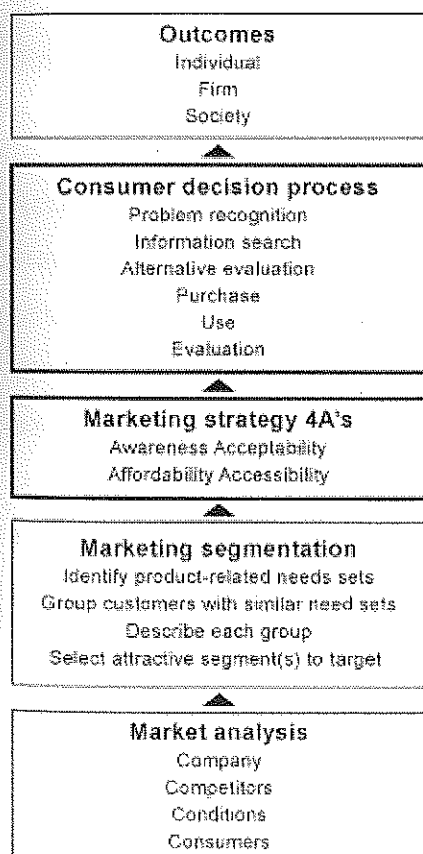


Figure 1: Application of consumer behaviour in the formulation of marketing strategy.
Source: Sheth and Sisodia (2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Chen (2014), it is evident that there is an increasing trend globally for women to opt for a more permanent hair removal method such as laser, Intense Pulse Light (IPL) and electrolysis. As a result, the preference for short term hair removal methods are slowly declining. Despite providing a more permanent hair removal experience, hair removal cream is not getting much popularity among the Malaysian.

Hair removal cream in general have a reputation for being smelly, cause skin to become darker, as well as causing irritation to skin. In addition, users of the cream had reported the experience of chemical burn to the skin (Conger, 2015).

The depilatories industry is highly competitive with many different option of solution for the end users. As a result, many hair removal cream producers try to diversify their brand compared to that of their competitors by innovating on the product effectiveness and safeties aspect (Boboltz, 2015). However, other producers try to cope with the threats by targeting consumers that place convenience as the main priority by altering the packaging and distribution channel of their product (Reynard, 2015).

According to Evans (2010), understanding consumer's behaviour is one of the key success factor for a firm's financial success in the market. Studies have shown that by understanding and fulfilling the needs and wants of the consumers is the essence for creating superior customer value and will eventually lead to higher sales from new and existing customers (Solomon et al., 2012). In the case of hair removal cream producers, it will enable firms to execute their marketing mix well in order to achieve their strategic marketing and business objectives (Schiffman et al., 2010). As a results many companies will allocate significant budget to know more about their current and potential customers (Moutinho, 2012).

Even though the issue on the need to understand consumer behaviour seems obvious for most industries, it has become even more important for Malaysian hair removal cream producers as the competition has intensified during times of hardship (Tobak, 2014). Based on the report of Bagozzi et al. (2014), consumer behaviour has been studied by researchers and in several different industries. Although there is many research on consumer buying behaviour on beauty industry, yet it seems that there is

a lack of information on the factors influencing the purchase of hair removal cream in Malaysia (Research Methodology, 2016).

According to Waterschoot and Bulte (2011), with intense competition surrounding the beauty product producers, the need for deeper understanding on consumer buying behaviour become an area of important for research. Due to the needs to better understand the consumer and there is a limitation of information, the results of this research will provide better information and understanding on other prevailing factors that is influencing the buying behaviour of consumers towards hair removal cream (Gronroos, 2010).

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

Collies and Hussey (2009) explained that research objective is defined as the plan of the research and the objective is analysed from the problem statement and provides attainable goals for the researcher. Hair removal cream has been in the lime light all this while. This research is conducted to examine the factors that influence the consumer buying intention towards the consumption of hair removal cream in Malaysia.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives in this research include the followings:

- 1) To explore/study whether a relationship is found between acceptability and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia.
- 2) To explore/study whether a relationship is found between affordability and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia.
- 3) To explore/study whether a relationship is found between accessibility and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia.

- 4) To explore/study whether a relationship is found between awareness and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia.

1.4 Research Questions

According to Cooper (2014), with the research objectives stated earlier, the research questions should be concrete, relevant and easily identified and thus contribute to the achievement of the research objectives.

- 1) Is there any relationship between acceptability and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia?
- 2) Is there any relationship between affordability and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia?
- 3) Is there any relationship between accessibility and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia?
- 4) Is there any relationship between awareness and consumer buying intention among female towards hair removal cream in Malaysia?

1.5 Significance of Study

Every single research provides its insights and contributions towards the academia and industry.

1.5.1 Academic

To the academia, this particular research provides insight into the consumer's behaviour towards hair removal cream (Hugstad, Taylor and Bruce, 2013). The findings of this study will enhance the availability of literature in the market (Tobak, 2014). This will enable future researcher to benefit from the knowledge and findings that is being done, saying in the research of Moutinho (2012). Additional benefits will be it further elaborate on the factors that influence the consumption behaviour such as acceptability, affordability, accessibility and awareness (Solomon et al., 2012).

1.5.2 Managerial

To the industry, the findings from the research will shed light to the hair removal cream producers as to the preference of the consumers in the buying process (Waterschoot and Bulte, 2011). This will enable the marketer to gain strong ground on the factors influencing the buying decision of their customers (Shelth and Sisodia, 2012). With proper understanding, marketer can then apply the 4A marketing mix effectively in order to achieve their marketing strategy objectives (Gronroos, 2012).

1.6 Scope of Study

This particular research discusses the factors that influences the purchase behaviour of individual towards hair removal cream in Malaysia.

In this research, the suitable sample size will be that of to receive a good response from 200 respondents. The convenient sampling method in distributing the questionnaire will be adopted. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the participants are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Research Methodology, 2016). This method is easy in obtaining the responses when conducting our survey as we can approach just about anyone around us that fit the criteria.

The main criterion for the inclusion of the participant as our survey sample is that they have to use hair removal cream before. The location of choice for our survey will be at the major transportation hub in Klang Valley.

1.7 Limitations of Study

1.7.1 The limitation of population sampling

Not able to use the probability sampling approach is one of the limitation that the researcher faced as the researcher dealing with a random crowd and the only option is non-probability sampling which uses judgmental sampling method. Therefor the researcher is not able to make a general assumption of the samples. Reason being the individual that are willing to be surveyed might not necessary represent the actual target population. This limitation is inherent in the probability of meeting people which