

## UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR IN THE JAPANESE PERSONAL GROOMING SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

*The consumer decision-making process has constantly been the subject of research in understanding the factors that influence and shape consumer choices as well as the consumer-thought process. As the conventional consumer black box model failed to provide a comprehensive insight into the consumer mind, this paper uses two different models to analyze the drivers of personal grooming product consumption. This paper first examines the basic building blocks that form the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model and the Hawkins, Best and Coney model. As emotions play a crucial role in consumer decision-making process, the role of emotions is reviewed accordingly as well. Finally, the factors that drive cosmetics consumption are discussed, demonstrating the relationship between the various factors and the categories according to the consumer models.*

**Key Words:** *Consumer Decision-Making, Grooming Products, Emotions, Japan.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior is a complex process involving the activities people engage in when seeking for, choosing, buying, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services with the goal of satisfying needs, wants and desires (Belch & Belch, 2004). A range of factors; both internal and external have been found to influence consumer behavior. These factors range from short-term to long-term emotional concerns (Hirschman, 1985; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). Understanding the process of how a purchase decision is reached is fundamental as this forms the foundation that can be used to analyze any given product or service. In this paper, two basic models form the foundation of the study, namely the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model and the Hawkins, Best and Coney model.

Both the EKB and HBC models were selected as they examine both external and internal factors that look beyond the basic stimulus-response black box model. The black box model looks at buyer decision-making process as the standard model of choice and has taken the assumption decisions and choices are made within rational stipulations and constraints where information is processed using Bayesian statistical principles (McFadden, 1999). The influence of emotions, culture, individual perception and preference is deemphasized even though human motivations are found to actually determine value and influence choices and decisions (Anslie, 1982). Emotions play an important role in driving purchase decisions; both planned and impulsive. Consumers are often driven by emotions in making decisions and developing brand loyalty.

### 2. THE BASIC MODELS

#### 2.1 The Engel, Kollat and Blackwell Model

The Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model describes consumers' decision process and how decisions are made when choosing among a list of alternatives available. The model builds on the field of consumer psychology theories and models such as those developed by Howard (1963) and Nicosia (1966); factors in the environment influence the forming of consumer decisions.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the EKB model basically consists of five sequential steps where information is processed before consumption decisions are made. The first stage starts with the need or problem recognition. This is followed by a search for alternative solutions which involves obtaining relevant information from various sources; both the external environment as well as internal self for instance memory and experiences. The third stage involves the evaluation of alternatives that is subjected to the consumer's personal criterion in deducing the preference. Once the decision is made, the consumer moves into the fourth stage where the purchasing of the selected alternative takes place. The final step involves post-purchase evaluation. The basic framework of the EKB model begins with the state of unfulfilled needs and wants. The

dissatisfaction arising from the discrepancy between the perceived current state and the desired state triggers the need or problem recognition. The internal motives, culture and values which are reflected in the lifestyle drive the needs, decisions and choices as lifestyle reflects the highest level of choice in a hierarchy of decisions (Saloman & Ben-Akiva, 1983). Lifestyle is described as the result of personality differences in the way individuals internalize environmental influences such as economic and demographics effects, cultural norms and values as well as social class and family influences over time (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1978). Engel, et.al (1978) also goes on to extend the scope of lifestyle as a pattern of enduring traits, activities, interests and opinions that determine general behavior and thereby making each individual distinctive.



Figure 2.1 The Decision Process Stages of the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell Model.  
(Source: Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, 1978)

Basically, internal factors drive the felt realization of unmet needs. However, external factors are not dismissed in any way as external sources can affect and change the perception of the current state, inducing feelings of unfulfilled needs. New experiences, information, advertising, the existence and offering of complementary goods and services and other external stimuli can arouse and trigger the perception of discrepancy that drives the purchase and consumption activities (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1978; McCracken, 1988). Economic and social changes experienced by the individual can also lead to new needs and felt discrepancies that continue to fuel consumption.

When the consumer searches for alternatives, the consumer could refer to or utilize a few channels of information sources in obtaining a list of alternatives, ideas and supporting reasons. Engel, et al. (1978) classified the information sources into three categories: impersonal, marketer and personal. The impersonal category covers the mass media that cascades general information. Activities of personal selling, advertising and point-of-sale contact point are grouped under marketer while friends, peer groups, family are the personal category. The searching of alternatives could start with initial information gathering from the impersonal and marketer categories or a word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendation from someone in the personal group. Alternatives could also result from personal experiences and former post-purchase evaluations. Products and services that we have chosen and consumed in the past and did not meet expectations would be eliminated and no longer be considered. The selection of alternatives is subjected to measures against personal values, preferences, beliefs and perception. This makes each alternative list unique to the individual.

The evaluation stage begins when sufficient alternatives are perceived to be available. Similar to the process of gathering alternatives, this stage is also influenced by both the internal and external factors that form the criteria and rules in forming preferences, choices and decisions. The values, motives, beliefs,

perception and attitudes of the individual guide the evaluation process (Engel et al., 1978; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). Experiences derived from shopping and previous consumption effect the assessment of the streamlined choices. An unpleasant experience encountered in the store or during the process of evaluating the product would reduce if not eliminate the decision to purchase the product or service and vice versa (Underhill, 1999). External influencers such as mass media, online community boards and advice from family and friends play an important role in the evaluation of alternatives. The economic factor also influences the evaluation and decision-making (Lerner, Small & Loewenstein, 2004).

The next stage sees the purchase decision being made followed by the final stage, the post-purchase evaluation. After consumption, the consumer then evaluates the wisdom of the choice made in selecting the alternative. There are two potential outcomes from this process, satisfaction or dissonance. If the product or service experience meets or exceeds the beliefs and expectations held when making the purchase choice, the consumer would be satisfied with the purchase decision. However, dissonance is experienced when the product or service does not meet the expectations and fails to deliver the pre-choice beliefs. When this occurs, the choice is 'devaluated' and the consumer begins the process of searching, obtaining information and evaluating other options.

The EKB model presents a basic framework in understanding the stages involved in consumer decision-making. It presents the fundamental principles and forces involved in understanding the 'consumer black box' in decision-making that gives a better comprehension of the consumer decision-making process. The mapping of external and internal factors that trigger needs and desires are further built upon the EKB model and reflected in the HBC model discussed in the following section.

## 2.2 The Hawkins, Best and Coney Model

Basically, as indicated earlier both long-term rational interests and short-term emotional concerns influence consumers' purchase decisions (Hirschman, 1985; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). The influence and role of both cognitive and affective processes in the consumer decision-making process has to be factored in obtaining a better understanding of consumption and choice drivers. Hawkins, Best and Coney (1998) viewed consumer needs as a result from numerous internal and external factors that are grouped under consumer self-concept and lifestyle. As shown in Figure 2.2, both internal forces such as perception, emotions and learning and aspects such a culture, family and demographics that serve as external influences generate experiences and acquisitions that form consumer self-concept and lifestyle. This in turn translates to needs the desires that drive the decision making-process (which is borrowed from the EKB model).

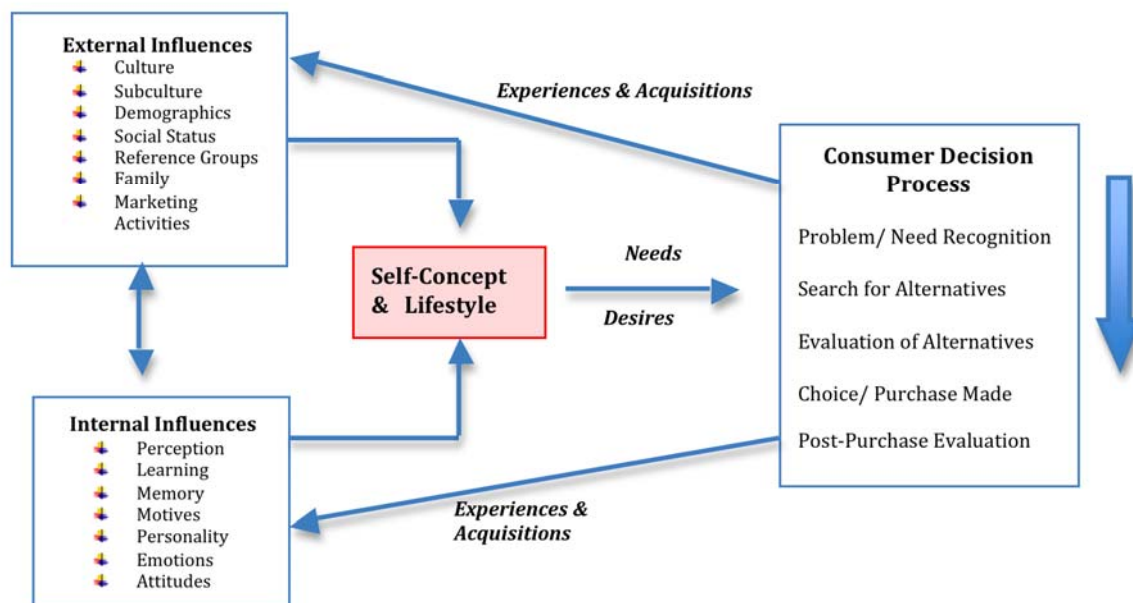


Figure 2.2 The Hawkins, Best and Coney Consumer Behavior Model (1998)

(Source: Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1998)

The HBC model builds on the EKB model and broadens it to the external and internal influences that shape the individual. However, even though factors such as emotions are recognized as an influence in decision-making, this model still takes the assumption that consumers approach consumption and purchasing decisions in a rational manner weighing options and alternatives before making a decision. Similar to the EKB model, the HBC model looks at the decision process as a flow that is rational, well-thought and deliberated; weighing cost-benefit and functional benefits. Both models provide the axiological in planned purchase as well as in understanding the reasons and factors that drive consumer behavior. However, both fall short in explaining impulse buying, the process and the factors that drive impulsive purchases and consumption.

Generally, consumers make two kinds of purchases, planned and impulsive. Impulsive purchases occur often where nine out of ten shoppers occasionally buy on impulse (Welles, 1986). The affective processes are responsible for creating impulsivity while cognitive processes are the rational side that maintains self-control. Affective process refers to the emotions, moods, feeling states while cognitive refers to mental structures and processes involving thinking, comprehension and interpreting; though affective and cognitive processes are different, they are not independent of one another (Youn, 2000). It is the balance between these two that dictate the degree of impulsiveness. Impulsive purchasing happens when consumers experience strong desires that outweigh restraints, the consumer loses the power of self-control and makes the purchase (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982; Youn, 2000). The interaction between these factors can be illustrated in Figure 2.2.1 where there are two situations and outcomes; one leading to impulsive buying and the other does not.

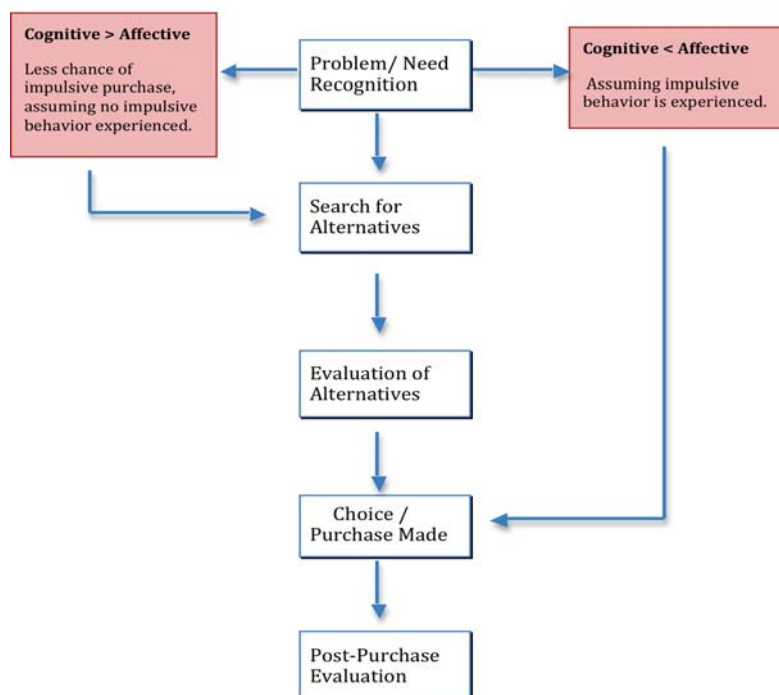


Figure 2.2.1 The Modified Decision Process Stages of the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell Model Incorporating Impulsive Purchasing Decisions.

(Source: Engel & Blackwell, 1982)

The affective and cognitive factors are the influences in triggering needs. Here, they also influence the possibility of impulsive purchase behavior. At different points in the decision making process, these factors play different roles and trigger different outcomes. This further substantiates the importance of these factors in consumer behavior and provides a holistic view of the drivers in consumption and choice. The models discussed provide the necessary foundation in understanding the factors of cosmetics consumption. In the following section, the focus shifts to comprehending affective factors is essential to understand the reasons that lead to such importance being placed on affective factors and the how and why brands should focus on tapping into consumer emotions.

### 2.3 The Emotion Factor

Ekman (2003) defined emotion as a process, influenced by our evolutionary and personal past, in which we sense that something important to our welfare is occurring, and a set of physiological changes and emotional behaviors begins to deal with the situation. His research led him to uncover emotions and facial expressions are largely universal. Ortony, Clore and Collins (1990) described emotions as valence reactions to events, agents, or objects, with their particular nature being determined by the way in which the eliciting situation is construed. The 'appraisal theory' (Lazarus, 1994; Scherer, Schorr & Johnstone, 2001) states that emotion results from how the individual believes the world to be, how events are believed to have come about, and what implications events are believed to have. The central tenet of appraisal theory is that emotions are elicited according to an individual's subjective interpretation or evaluation of important events or situations. Basically, senses trigger and evoke emotions (Cervonka, 1996; Herz, 1996) and in turn, emotions and feelings influence thoughts (Frijda, Manstead & Bern, 2000). The close relationship among cognition, senses and emotion is both a prevalent and pertinent phenomena in consumer behavior and decision-making, as it is the crux of how sensory branding can successfully influence consumer decisions.

Consumption is viewed as an embodied experience where the simple act of consuming that basically translates to consuming sensations (Paterson, 2006). This involves and begins with the senses that translate into emotions when we touch, smell, try and inspect in gauging and deriving how we feel and perceive the product or service. Needs and emotions are closely related (Mittal & Sheth, 2004). Various studies examining the correlation between emotions and consumption choices and decisions have been and are extensively undertaken to provide further understanding on consumer decisions and behavior (Sherman, Mathur & Smith, 1997; Underhill, 1999). Sherman, Mathur and Smith (1997) stated that the emotional state of the consumer is an important determinant in their purchase behaviors; pleasure was associated with the amount of money spent and consumer affinity for the store. Barlow and Maul (2000) indicated that the most important aspect of customer experience is emotional rather than satisfaction measured in customer satisfaction surveys. The Japanese have a holistic view of products. They view the product as a complete package; between both tangible and intangible components. The concept of *kansei* ( ) applies throughout. *Kansei* encompasses the oneness of the product and the user. It factors in the intangible that gives confidence, comfort and ease to the consumer when using any product (Herbig, 1995).

Consumers are found to be emotionally involved with their purchases and feel empowered from the act of shopping (Pooler, 2003). According to Underhill (1999), shopping is a means of therapy, reward, bribery and entertainment hence, making it an emotional and spiritual process. Lerner, Small and Loewenstein (2004) examined the impact of specific emotions and the carryover effects on economic decisions. The findings demonstrated that emotions influence decisions even when money is at stake, as emotions can have dramatic effects on economic transactions. O'Neill and Lambert (2001) too found that emotions can influence people's reaction to the prices of products. Price would have less of an influence when consumers are experiencing positive emotions. This explains impulsive purchase decisions where rational and logic, the cognitive aspects are weaker than the affective factors.

Inevitably, emotions play a very pertinent role in marketing (Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer, 1999; Geuens & DePelsmacker, 1998; Mattila & Enz, 2002; Papadatos, 2006). Papadatos (2006) illustrated the importance of establishing and building emotional connections between brands and consumers based on the example of Canada's Air Miles program. Geuens and DePelsmacker (1998) found that positive feelings, especially interest, cheerfulness, and lack of irritation, are associated with higher ad and brand recognition scores, whilst non-emotional ads lead to the least favorable affective reactions. Aaker and Stayman (1989) suggested that warm appeals have a stronger impact on women than men, whereas several researchers reported more positive reactions to erotic stimuli by men than by women (Alexander & Judd, 1979; Latour, 1990; Latour & Henthorne, 1994; Latour, Pitts, & Snook-Luther, 1990). De Pelsmacker and Geuens (1998) further substantiated the findings by indicating that brands advertised by means of an erotic appeal are more recognized by men than by women whereas brands using warm (or neutral) ads gained more recognition by women. Women also showed a more positive attitude towards the brand pictured in warm and neutral advertisements. Warmth (depicted in a cozy, friendly atmosphere) is believed to improve overall advertising results (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1981; Aaker, Stayman, & Hagerty, 1986; Aaker & Stayman, 1989). On the reverse, negative emotions experienced by the consumer can lead to negative word-of-mouth that would tarnish and damage brand reputation as word-of-mouth is a form of the social sharing of emotions (Wetzer, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007). Hence, it is evident that emotions can affect the bottom line of the corporation. After all consumers form relationships with brands, not products, not corporations (Decker, 1998). Therefore, the strategy of positively managing consumer emotions and brands is required and adopted by corporations.

The positive emotions toward the brand basically translate to a higher chance of the consumer wanting to purchase and consume the products or services associated to the brand. For the marketer, the objective is to create a strong emotional attachment between the consumer and the brand. Having mere positive emotions is insufficient in creating brand loyalty. There needs to be a stronger emotional connection where the consumer will 'irrationally' favor one brand over any other in the market. We have many brands that we see and think of in a positive light but there is only a handful that we remain loyal to. It is evident that it is not mere positive and happy feelings that the consumer develops rather there are other 'higher level' emotions that the brand is and should arouse.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory contends that when humans fulfill their basic physiological needs, they seek to satisfy a higher set of needs that occupy a set of hierarchy; beginning with physiological needs, safety, love & belonging, esteem and finally self actualization. These needs form the basis of human needs regardless of race, religion or gender. A common thread that runs through the higher level needs is emotion. Generally, emotional desires dominate utilitarian motives in the choice of products (Maslow, 1968). Based on Maslow's theory, the attaining of self-actualization and other higher level needs drive the consumption and purchase patterns. Consumers seek brands; products and services that fulfill the higher level needs. Consumption is a means of self-expression, identity and self-definition, a means of empowerment, escapism, self-worth and even therapy (Dennis, Newman & Marsland, 2005; Pooler, 2003; Schor, 1999). The consumer needs to feel the corresponding emotions – love, uniqueness, acceptance, possessing self-esteem and confidence, feeling good about one's self and empowerment. Brands, products and services that can arouse and elicit such emotions are easily preferred over others that provide a superficial, surface-level feel good reaction. The generic background of consumption paves the way for the consumption drivers' discussion in the subsequent section that focuses on the industry that is the core focus of this study; cosmetics.

### 3.0 THE CONSUMPTION OF COSMETICS

The EKB and HBC models stressed the importance of both external and internal factors that influence the decision-making processes experienced by the consumer. These factors can be mapped to being the drivers of cosmetics consumption, reflected in Figure 3.1. The interaction between the external factors such as society and economy and the internal factor of the self generates desires and needs that propels the consumption and influences the purchase behavior. While the list of factors (both internal and external) is far from exhaustive, Figure 3.1 captures the main aspects that are prevalent within the Japanese culture.

Society; societal expectations and its unwritten rules of one's physical presentation, has set the guidelines for individuals in gaining acceptance, happiness and even success (Dimitrius & Mazarella, 2001; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Irons, 2001; Jeffes, 1998; Patzer, 2006; Peiss, 1998; Quart, 2004; Wolf, 2002). The changes in socio-economy and political landscapes have further attributed to the shift in consumer tastes, affordability, living standards, lifestyles and consumption patterns. This elicits various 'internal needs' such as the need to be loved, appreciated and to experience a sense of belonging yet possess and express individuality as well as the desires to enjoy the finer things in life. This cycle perpetuates consumer consumption of cosmetics whereby the drivers of purchase and usage are embedded in both the society and psychology of the self.

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*Figure 3.1 The Factors that Drive Cosmetics Consumption Based on the External and Internal Influences from the HBC Model.*

### 3.1 External Factors

Various external factors have been found to influence and drive cosmetics consumption as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Society's unwritten rule of favoring beauty is a major force in shaping the prevalent obsession with beauty, driving sales of beauty products and services. The shift in the economic and social landscape has also attributed to the rise in Japanese cosmetics consumption.

#### 3.1.1 Society

##### 3.1.1.1 Changes in Society's Perception

Basically, the definition of beauty changes every period (Daibo, 2001). Before the Edo period, a beautiful face was defined as possessing thin eyebrows and rather flat, long faces. However in the Taisho period, the increase in women's involvement in social activities and the embrace of westernization saw the change of the definition of beauty to big eyes and full mouth. Such changes have witnessed the rising usage of cosmetics and beauty products from the earlier days of oshiroi and lipstick to a diverse range of cosmetics such as mascara, compact and lipgloss. The various fad and trends embraced by society have formed the guidelines for the 'ideal' look and fueled cosmetics consumption, from the 'chapatsu' look, defining eyebrows to the using of cosmetics to create a 'sweet' and 'cute' aura (Miller, 2006; Yonezawa, 2006).

##### 3.1.1.2 Values of Beauty

In the Japanese society, beauty is regarded as a virtue. In the Edo period, wearing make-up was regarded as one of women's virtues (Yamamoto, 2006). The positive correlation and association between values and cosmetics have become a driving force in the consumption of cosmetics. The embrace of beauty as a virtue by the Japanese society has its roots in Confucianism (Lee, 2003). This propelled and substantiated the need for cosmetics in attaining both beauty and social acceptance. Women were compelled to use cosmetics to display being virtuous. One of the reasons to have contributed to the usage of cosmetics amongst Japanese women is attributed to the idea of social etiquette (Miller, 2006). Beauty activities are viewed as essential and not a narcissistic, self-centered extravagance. The use of foundation when one is in public places is seen as an indication and measure of a woman's maturity in relations to social grace (Ashikari, 2003).

##### 3.1.1.3 Society's Innate Preference for Beauty

Society has long been rewarding beautiful people as findings supporting the fact that perception of beauty may be innate and transcends culture (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999; Perrett, May & Yoshikawa, 1994). Physical attractiveness opens doors and leads to the reaping and enjoyment of astonishing perks referred to as beauty premium (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Olson & Marshuetz, 2005). Physically attractive people have been found to receive better and more favorable treatment in hiring and career advancement (Dipboye, Arvey & Terpstra, 1977; Landy & Sigall, 1974). Attractive people are also regarded as having more social skills, smarter and more extroverted (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972). The innate preference for beauty has sprouted peer pressure in being attractive (Ono, 1999). From a societal and cultural perspective, Japanese ladies were found to have a preference for 'bishonen' men (Hirota, 1997; Matsui, 1993; Time Asia, 2005) and being 'beautiful', men would experience better, improved relationships with women (Tanaka, 2003). Hence, cosmetics consumption can be viewed as a means of attaining societal perks, success and acceptance as well as being seen in a positive light by society.

#### 3.1.2 Economic Shifts

A myriad of factors have been indicated to contributing to the increase in sales such as, changes in the economic system (Kondo, 1988; Miller, 2006) and the advancement of consumer capitalism (Firat, 1993; McCracken, 1988; Simmel, 1957). While the female consumers have always been focused on personal grooming products, a new market sector has been witnessed in the male consumer segment. The trend for Japanese men to spend resources in their physical looks and appearances began in the 1980s when Japanese women began to feel more empowered after labor laws called for equality in the workplace (SkinInc, 2006). The collapse of the bubble economy in the 1990s and end of life-long job security that made Japanese men realize they should look beyond conformity and merely focus on work. This spurred the interest in looking after and pampering themselves (Manila Times, 2005).

### 3.2 Internal Factors

The usage of cosmetics is as much driven by the internal factors as the external factors. Generally, these factors encompass the psychological and emotional aspects of the individual. The needs to create and

express identity and build self-confidence are among the various aspects that drive continuous consumption and determine brand choice.

### 3.2.1 Beauty and The Self

Cosmetics consumption today also takes the form of being a source of self-expression (Miller, 2006). Various styles have been adopted by Japanese women from *kogyaru* to B-Girl as a means of self-identity creation and expression. As the owning of branded items and clothing became an expensive and insufficient means of self-expression, consumers started turning to cosmetics that were more affordable and they could turn to for self-expression (Yonezawa, 2006). Cosmetics are regarded as a means of displaying and expressing identity and personal characteristics (Daibo, 2001). Consumers make brand selections, product choices; as well as colors and scents that they feel best encapsulate their personalities and identities. For instance, the 'Gothic Lolita' style uses the darker color tones whilst 'Ganguro' sees the usage of pastel colors and shimmer. Brands carry and express different messages and identities. Take for example, Chanel exudes a different image and gives a different identity than consumers of Anna Sui. Each and every brand from Dior to Kose tells a different story and has a unique identity that beckons consumers who essentially identifies with the values and image of the brand. Consumers forge an attachment with the selected brand as the brand is viewed as a channel of self-expression and the means of identity formation and self-concept.

The changing landscape in consumption which led to the postmodern approach has witnessed men playing a bigger role in consumerism and the consumption of 'beauty' products and services; in the pursuit of constructing their own identities and the very essence of who they are (Bocock, 1993; Shields, 1992). Today, as men play a bigger and active role in modern consumerism (Bocock, 1993; Davies & Bell, 1991; Firat, 1993) they now look to identity construction, achieved through the style of dress and body care, image, carrying the 'right look' (Bococok, 1993). The consumption of products has been identified as the contributing factor to the creation and attainment of desired self-image, identity and self- concept (Featherstone, 1993; Firat, 1993; Kellner, 1992; Mort, 1988; Schouten, 1991; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995).

Women began to focus more on themselves and saw beauty as a means of self-achievement and self-satisfaction. Knowing and feeling that they are gorgeous leads to self-confidence and self-worth. Beauty is essentially a sensory experience (Berg, 2001; Morgan, 1998). The attaining of 'beauty' or the ideal image is all about senses and emotions (Black, 2004; Lee, 1999; Rosen & Ablaza, 2006). This leads to feeling good about oneself and contributes to the building of self-confidence and self-esteem. The way people feel about themselves or self-relevant emotional states is closely linked to self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Emotions are very powerful forces that can influence and shape perceptions and behaviors.

Self-esteem is influenced by the affective states and it is linked to a diverse range of both positive and negative emotional states. It influences feelings and emotions, the feelings of happiness and contentment (Diener & Diener, 1995), depression and anxiety (Mineka, Watson, & Clark, 1998), and pride, arrogance and shame (James, 1890; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). The usage of cosmetics and its positive effects on the emotions has brought about changes in the consumer in terms of the increase in confidence and positive mental attitude whilst skincare has also been found to distress, soothe and provide mental healing to the consumers (Daibo, 2001). The implications arising from cosmetics consumption are not limited to merely the consumer experiencing positive emotions but rather, these affective states trigger deeper psychological effects and behaviors.

Cosmetics fulfill the inner desires, fantasies and dreams; there is a sense of euphoria and aesthetics as consumers achieve the desires of being beautiful and feeling like a celebrity. After World War II Japanese women regarded lipsticks as a symbol of hope and luxury in difficult times (Yamamoto, 2006). Evidently, cosmetics have assumed the role of being the 'pillar of hope and strength' during trying times, as it is able to lift the moods and spirits of the users through the promise of beauty and the positive effects derived from beauty. The emotive factor undoubtedly drives cosmetics consumption as it leads to an array of positive emotions experienced ranging from happiness to the feeling of self-confidence, hope and self-worth. The consumption of cosmetics is seen as a means not only of attaining societal acceptance and the sense of belonging as well as the increase in self-confidence and self-worth.

Acquiring and perfecting the art of make-up has become both a goal as well as a hobby (Yonezawa, 2006). Clammer (1997) maintained that purchasing has become central to the pursuit and experience of leisure. Various magazines and websites offer advice and techniques in make-up application that is diligently and religiously followed by the women. Yonezawa (2006) goes on to add that beauty has also evolved and taken the form of religion with women religiously subscribing to the beauty lessons, practices and rituals involved. The consumers find a sense of self-actualization and accomplishment when they have mastered the art of applying cosmetics (Daibo, 2001; Yamamoto, 2006).



#### 4. CONCLUSION

Cosmetics have always played a pertinent role in society. The understanding of the various factors, both internal and external that influence the consumption of cosmetics and brand selection is essential in understanding the drivers of consumer purchase decisions. The EKB and HBC models have provided the pertinent theoretical frameworks in seeing consumer decision-making in a clearer perspective. The factors and steps that are involved in the consumer decision-making process support and are adaptable to the context of this study as it sets the stage for reviewing the factors that influence the consumption and purchase choices among Japanese consumers. The models shared a common thread that reflects the intricate influence of the external and internal influences in every step of the decision-making process. Though the EKB and HBC models capture the main factors, what needs to be realized is that the factors and steps outlined in those models mimic that of an 'umbrella brand' where the factors and steps house an inexhaustible list of detailed aspects. For example in the external factors category under the 'umbrella' of culture, among the aspects that can be listed here are the Japanese value of beauty where the emphasis is on fair skin, the tradition that dictates beauty and the act of ensuring one 'manages' one's personal appearance well speaks of virtue and social etiquette. On a broader sense, these aspects differ according to culture however within the same culture, these aspects would be different according to the individual as there are internal factors at play; for instance a consumer who is comfortable with the way she looks and subscribes to anti-objectification of women may consume less cosmetics versus another individual who aspires to look as glamorous as celebrities. When the factors that drove and influenced consumer decisions presented in the consumer models were used to analyze the Japanese cosmetics consumption, they revealed the prevalence of Maslow's higher order needs such as self-esteem, sense of belonging and self-actualization in driving cosmetics consumption and brand choice.

This demonstrates the complexity involved in the consumer decision-making processes which shaped by the interaction of various forces, such as culture, self perception, emotions and the emotional and psychological state and needs of the individual. As corporations seek to develop products and services that trigger purchase behavior and consumption, their focus is on understanding the driving forces behind consumer decision-making. However, on the consumer's end there is a need to understand why we buy and consume products and services as a means to address the concerns of the 'consuming society' issues that have surfaced in the recent decades. This study provides a platform for future research on purchase and consumption patterns that can be segmented according to an array of segmentation areas such as demographics, psychographics and culture.

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