



Impact of Ethical Marketing Practices and Health Consciousness on Cosmetics Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention: Evidence from Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of ethical marketing practices and health consciousness on consumer attitudes and purchase intention for cosmetic products in Vietnam. A self-administered survey was conducted in August 2023 to collect data for our study. We received 250 valid responses after 4 months. SPSS software version 20 was employed for data analysis. Results showed that among three factors that affect consumer attitude, health consciousness played the most critical role, followed by product fairness and price fairness. Moreover, the attitude was confirmed in our study to affect the purchase intention of Vietnamese cosmetics consumers significantly. Our findings implied that cosmetic companies should tailor ethical marketing strategies to meet the preferences of Vietnamese consumers and boost their purchase intention.

Keywords: Cosmetics, Consumer Attitude, Ethical Marketing, Health Consciousness, Purchase Intention

JEL Classification: M31, P36, Q01, Q56

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the cosmetics business has experienced a notable change, with ethical marketing playing a vital role in shaping customer perceptions and buying decisions. Ethical marketing includes strategies that prioritize social and environmental responsibility, transparency, and integrity in commercial activities. In the cosmetics industry, it is necessary to guarantee that goods are not tested on animals, are obtained from sustainable sources, and have minimal environmental impact. As consumers gain greater consciousness of the ethical ramifications of their purchasing choices, they are more likely to favor companies that are in harmony with their values. The increasing desire for vegan and cruelty-free products clearly indicates a larger movement towards conscious consumerism.

The importance of examining ethical marketing in the cosmetics sector is its capacity to shape consumer conduct and foster brand allegiance.

Gaining an understanding of how ethical considerations impact consumer sentiments can offer valuable insights for organizations seeking to distinguish themselves in a competitive market. Brands that place high importance on ethical marketing can develop trust and credibility, which in turn can attract a devoted consumer base that appreciates openness and commitment to social responsibility. In addition, ethical marketing practices have the potential to improve a brand's reputation and attract a wide range of consumers.

Moreover, investigating the correlation between ethical marketing practices and consumer purchase intention can provide valuable insights for making strategic decisions and shaping the creation of products and marketing campaigns that strongly appeal to the intended audience. By aligning their business operations with the values of consumers, companies may improve their market position and also support the larger trend towards sustainability and ethical consumption.

Research indicates that companies that adhere to ethical marketing strategies experience positive consumer perceptions, leading to increased sales of their products (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Gupta, 2010). Additionally, research has shown that advertisements that include offensive aspects, such as religious offenses, can have a detrimental effect on consumers' perceptions of the companies associated with those ads (Butt et al., 2021). Furthermore, buyers have a sense of dissatisfaction when they become aware that another individual paid a lower price for identical goods, either from the same store or a different one (Shehryar and Hunt, 2005). Furthermore, this negative sentiment is reflected in their future purchasing intentions towards the products offered by these companies. Recent research continues to underscore the importance of ethical and sustainable practices in the cosmetics industry. For example, a study by Baby et al. (2024) discusses the growing consumer demand for sustainable ingredients in cosmetics, driven by increased awareness of environmental and health impacts.

In addition, several studies have proven that ethical marketing strategies increase consumer happiness and loyalty. Research conducted by Massey et al. (2018) showed that ethical marketing techniques, such as adopting eco-friendly packaging, benefit consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the cosmetics business. Yeo and Lee (2018) also discovered that cosmetics companies that used fair trade ingredients and other ethical marketing tactics had more loyal customers. Meanwhile, a more recent study by Rafi and Shaji (2024) provided empirical numerical data on the influence of emotional marketing and brand loyalty in the cosmetics industry. They used a sample survey method involving 247 cosmetics customers to collect data, which was then analyzed to explore the impact of emotional marketing strategies on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. This study included specific numerical findings and statistical analysis to support their conclusions (Rafi and Shaji, 2024). Although a number of studies on ethical marketing in the cosmetics industry have been conducted, the contexts of developing countries, like Vietnam, have not yet been examined thoroughly.

In recent years, the cosmetics industry in Vietnam has undergone substantial expansion, with a yearly growth rate ranging from 15% to 20%. This growth can be attributed to the country's economic development, higher earnings, and growing consumer demand for personal care and beauty items (InCorp Vietnam, 2024). With the growth of the middle-class population, Vietnamese consumers are increasingly devoting a greater proportion of their money to cosmetics. It is projected that expenditure on cosmetics will reach \$2.69 billion by 2027 (InCorp Vietnam, 2024). The growth in demand can also be attributed to the impact of Korean beauty trends and the increasing prevalence of social media. The market in Vietnam is primarily controlled by imported goods, with South Korea, the European Union, Japan, and the United States being the main countries that export items to Vietnam. Despite being less numerous, local brands are becoming more well-known by emphasizing cost-effectiveness and utilizing the abundant natural resources of the nation, such as turmeric, green tea, and aloe vera.

In such a context, the significance of ethical marketing is growing in Vietnam's cosmetics business. With increasing awareness of health

and environmental concerns, there is a growing market demand for items that are vegan and free from animal cruelty (InCorp Vietnam, 2024). Adhering to ethical marketing strategies enables firms to cultivate trust and attract socially conscious consumers, thereby setting themselves apart in a fiercely competitive industry. Moreover, it is essential to tackle problems related to counterfeit merchandise and provide open and honest communication regarding the origins and components of items. This is vital for establishing customer loyalty to the brand and ensuring continuous expansion in the market (IMARC, 2024). Overall, the cosmetics sector in Vietnam is positioned for ongoing expansion, with ethical advertising playing a crucial part in meeting consumer demands and promoting a sustainable business climate.

However, despite the increasing importance of ethical marketing practices in the cosmetics industry, little research has been conducted in an emerging context like Vietnam. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of ethical marketing practices on the attitude and purchase intention of Vietnamese cosmetic consumers. We chose the Vietnamese cosmetics industry because it has quickly become one of the most competitive markets in Southeast Asia.

This paper is structured into five sections. Section 1 introduces the topic. Section 2 presents the theoretical background and hypothesis development. Section 3 summarizes the methods used in the present study. Section 4 discusses the findings. Finally, some limitations of the research and conclusion are mentioned in section 5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Consumer Attitude

Attitudes can be defined as concise evaluations of situations or objects based on experiences and knowledge derived from cognitive, affective, or behavioral components (Gupta, 2010; Petty et al., 1997). Within this context, the cognitive component refers to the beliefs, judgments, or thoughts associated with an attitude object, whereas the affective component encompasses the feelings, emotions, or drives connected to an attitude object (McGuire, 2014).

Consumers, with their awareness, knowledge, information, and interest, tend to choose only a few brands out of many available options in the market. They form preferences for these selected brands by evaluating the overall value proposition, which includes various features of a product beyond its basic core offering and obvious benefits (Kotler et al., 2006).

An examination of consumer attitudes towards ethical marketing practices reveals important insights into the relationship between ethics and purchasing decisions. For example, a study by Lee and Jin (2019) specifically investigates the impact of ethical marketing on consumer responses in the beauty industry. From 500 respondents, they find that consumers are significantly more likely to purchase beauty products from brands that demonstrate a commitment to ethical practices, such as cruelty-free testing and

environmentally sustainable packaging. However, this trend does not eliminate consumers' attitudes toward buying products from unethical marketing practices—such as misleading advertising or exploiting social issues. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) challenged the notion that ethical considerations significantly influence consumer behavior. They argued that although consumers may claim to prioritize ethical concerns, such considerations do not always translate into ethical purchasing decisions (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). This perspective is echoed by recent studies such as Tanveer et al. (2021), who found that ethical marketing practices do affect consumer attitudes, but their impact on actual purchase intentions is often moderated by factors like price sensitivity and brand loyalty (Tanveer et al., 2021).

Recent empirical research has explored customer perceptions regarding the purchase of cosmetics products that claim health benefits, mainly focusing on organic and natural ingredients (Limbu, 2023). Another study of 335 women and men in India conducted by Tengli and Srinivasan (2022) reveals that over societal influence, a strong personal inclination towards health benefits has a significant impact on consumer behavior (Tengli and Srinivasan, 2022).

In terms of cosmetics product pricing, Malc et al. (2016) found that higher price transparency significantly improved consumers' perceptions of price fairness, which in turn positively influenced their purchasing decisions. The study utilized a survey method, gathering responses from 500 consumers, and applied statistical analyses to confirm the relationships among price transparency, perceived fairness, and buying behavior. Notably, the numerical findings indicated that a 10% increase in price transparency led to a 15% rise in perceived price fairness and a subsequent 12% increase in purchase intentions (Malc et al., 2016). However, according to the study by Chelsea and Sugiyanto (2024) of 155 respondents in Jakarta, both extremely high and low prices negatively influenced perceived price fairness and customer satisfaction (Chelsea and Sugiyanto, 2024). Numerical findings from the study indicated that 65% of respondents reported dissatisfaction with high prices due to a feeling of being overcharged, while 54% expressed doubts about product quality when prices were too low (Chelsea and Sugiyanto, 2024).

2.2. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's likelihood or willingness to buy a product or service. It is a critical concept in marketing as it helps predict future buying behavior and influences marketing strategies. Several factors can affect purchase intention, including brand perception, product quality, price, and consumer attitudes and preferences (Putra et al., 2024; Neiba and Singh, 2024). According to Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is a precursor to actual behavior, suggesting that understanding purchase intention can provide insights into future sales (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Marketers often use surveys and experiments to assess purchase intention, tailoring marketing strategies to enhance it. Additionally, digital marketing analytics have become instrumental in gauging consumer interest and optimizing marketing efforts based on purchase intention data (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Ethics, sustainability, and fairness are critical factors influencing purchase intentions, as they shape consumer attitudes and perceived value towards a product or brand. A recent study exploring the ethical consumption behaviors of Generation Z reveals that this cohort demonstrates a strong awareness and concern for ethical and environmental issues, significantly influencing their purchasing decisions in the cosmetics industry. The study, conducted through semi-structured interviews with Generation Z participants in the UK, found that social media exposure and online resources have heightened their awareness (Djafarova and Fouts, 2022). The way these products are packaged is also a significant factor in the purchasing intention of consumers. A study conducted by Dopico-Parada et al. (2021) found that 68% of surveyed consumers expressed a strong preference for cosmetics with sustainable packaging, indicating a clear positive correlation between sustainable packaging and purchasing intentions. The study revealed that consumers are increasingly conscious of environmental impacts and are willing to pay a premium for products that use eco-friendly packaging materials (Dopico-Parada et al., 2021).

Similarly, to the UK, a study conducted in Hungary found that environmental and health awareness trends significantly influence consumer behavior in the cosmetics market (Amberg and Fogarassy, 2019). Another study involving 425 Portuguese participants found that altruism, environmental knowledge, and subjective norms strongly correlate with purchasing cruelty-free cosmetics (Magano et al., 2022). These findings indicate that promoting ethical practices in the cosmetics industry can effectively influence consumer purchase intentions.

2.3. Ethical Marketing Practices, Health Consciousness, Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention

Ethical marketing is a systematic approach employed by corporations to promote customer interest in their products or services, foster strong customer connections, and create value for all stakeholders. This is achieved by integrating social and environmental factors into product development and promotional activities. The entire spectrum of marketing is considered, encompassing sales strategies, corporate communication, and business growth.

Ethical marketing practices involve promoting social and environmental responsibility through various strategies. These practices include the use of sustainable packaging, which reduces environmental impact, and cruelty-free testing, ensuring no harm is done to animals during product development. Both were highlighted in recent studies by Gouveia (2018), who examined these issues in the context of the cosmetic industry, emphasizing the shift towards alternative testing methods that do not involve animals and highlighting the environmental benefits of organic and sustainable products (Gouveia, 2018). Furthermore, fair trade sourcing supports fair wages and working conditions for producers. Additionally, ethical marketing emphasizes price fairness, ensuring that consumers are charged a reasonable price accurately reflecting the product's value. Studies indicate that fair pricing fosters consumer trust and strengthens consumer-brand relationships, though its direct impact on brand loyalty is less pronounced unless supported by additional ethical practices (Lee and Jin, 2019). Last but not least, transparency of ingredients

and their associated risks is also crucial, as it allows consumers to make informed decisions by clearly understanding what is in the products they purchase and any potential health impacts (Ali et al., 2023). By adopting these practices, companies not only contribute to societal well-being but also build a positive brand image and foster trust among consumers.

Ethical marketing is now central in the cosmetics industry, addressing issues like animal testing, toxic ingredients, and packaging waste (Luchs et al., 2010). Companies respond by adopting sustainable practices and offering eco-friendly products. Customers increasingly seek brands that demonstrate ethical and sustainable practices, preferring products with natural, organic ingredients and cruelty-free testing packaged in eco-friendly materials (Padel and Foster, 2005; Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006). This reflects heightened consumer awareness and concern for their purchases' environmental and ethical impacts. Ethical marketing profoundly influences consumer commitments within the cosmetics industry. By supporting brands with ethical values, consumers exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility, fostering brand loyalty and continued support (Kim and Choi, 2017). This cycle reinforces the pivotal role of ethical marketing in shaping consumer behavior and building enduring brand relationships. These practices are increasingly important to consumers, particularly younger generations, who prioritize social and environmental responsibility in their purchasing decisions (Bartikowski and Walsh, 2011; Son and Johnson, 2017). A recent study found that 68% of Generation Z respondents rated measures to reduce CO2 emissions and selective waste collection as "very important" (Sawicka and Marcinkowska, 2023). The study surveyed 344 university students, revealing that environmental CSR activities significantly influence their purchasing decisions. This finding underscores the necessity for companies to engage in and promote sustainable practices to attract and retain the younger consumer base (Sawicka and Marcinkowska, 2023).

2.3.1. Price fairness and consumer attitude

Price fairness is crucial in marketing, as consumers expect fair pricing to reflect a product's value. Practices like price gouging damage trust, while transparent pricing enhances loyalty (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). Price fairness is assessed based on a product's quality, competitive pricing, and market circumstances (Marn and Rosiello, 1992). Xia et al. (2010) showed that fair pricing influences buying behavior positively. It is evident that fair pricing, which involves providing detailed information on product costs and ingredients, boosts consumer trust and willingness to purchase, thereby enhancing brand loyalty and sales growth (Konuk, 2023).

Recent studies underscore the increasing consumer demand for more information about cosmetic product ingredients, particularly those deemed non-harmful. According to a study published in the journal *Cosmetics*, a significant portion of consumers (68.7%) expressed a desire for more information about bio-based ingredients used in skincare products. This interest reflects a broader trend where consumers are not only concerned with the efficacy and price of beauty products but also with the safety and environmental impact of the ingredients used (Sajinčić et al., 2021). This trend is consistent with findings from the Benchmarking Company's 2018

PinkReport, which noted that 95% of women prioritized product efficacy and ingredient transparency when purchasing beauty and personal care products (Dube and Dube, 2023). Furthermore, the study highlighted that consumers familiar with environmental issues are more likely to purchase environmentally friendly skincare products, indicating a strong correlation between knowledge and buying behavior (Sajinčić et al., 2021).

In addition, some studies have shown that fair pricing strategies can significantly enhance the sales of cosmetics brands. For example, Nguy et al. (2023) surveyed 480 consumers across three regions in Vietnam, revealed that fair pricing is one of the key determinants positively affecting purchasing decisions. The research indicated that a 15% increase in sales can be achieved through the implementation of fair pricing strategies.

From the above arguments, we proposed the following hypothesis: Hypothesis 1: Price fairness (PF) positively affects cosmetics consumer attitude (CA).

2.3.2. Product fairness and consumer attitude

Product fairness is crucial in moral advertising, as it describes how people feel about a product's quality and worth. Customers are more willing to spend money on goods and services they perceive as ethical and fair, so product fairness is crucial in determining customer responses and loyalty to a specific brand. Product fairness is also an essential aspect of ethical marketing. Perceived product quality, including fairness, significantly influences consumer attitudes toward the product, affecting their purchase intentions (Vo and Nguyen, 2015).

Several studies have concluded that product fairness has a positive impact on consumer attitude. The findings of Eze et al. (2012), who conducted a study on cosmetics products, showed that product image, knowledge about the product, and brand image have a significant impact on consumers' intention to buy cosmetics. Bolton and Lemon (1999) investigated the impact of perceived fairness in product quality on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. They found that when consumers perceive the quality of a product as consistent with their expectations and the price paid, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the product. This perception of fairness in quality enhances satisfaction, which is a strong predictor of consumer loyalty. Furthermore, Oliver and Swan (1989) demonstrated that perceived quality fairness affects consumers' post-purchase evaluations. When consumers believe that the quality they receive is fair and aligns with their expectations, they are more likely to express satisfaction and positive attitudes. This effect is amplified when the product quality exceeds expectations, leading to delight and strong brand advocacy.

Hence, we proposed the following hypothesis: Hypothesis 2: Product fairness (PRF) positively affects cosmetics consumer attitude (CA).

2.3.3. Health consciousness and consumer attitude

Health consciousness refers to the extent to which individuals incorporate health concerns into their daily activities (Yadav and Pathak, 2016; Wang et al., 2023). When making judgments about

purchasing green products, it is important to take into account the health element (Wandel and Bugge, 1997). This includes buying green products (Ritter et al., 2015) and organic food (Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005; Smith and Paladino, 2010; Yadav and Pathak, 2016; Le and Nguyen, 2022). Furthermore, other studies, like Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005), Chakrabarti (2010), and Yadav and Pathak (2016), have demonstrated that health knowledge can have a favorable impact on attitude. Consumers who prioritize their health are more inclined to develop positive attitudes and intentions toward purchasing environmentally friendly furniture due to the favorable results it offers.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between health consciousness and consumer behavior in the context of ethical marketing. For instance, Amberg and Fogarassy (2019) surveyed consumers to examine the influence of health consciousness on the purchase intentions of organic cosmetic products. The findings revealed that consumers with higher levels of health consciousness were more likely to choose organic cosmetics due to their perceived health benefits. Lakshmi Prabha and Sindhuja (2022) explored the relationship between consumers' health concerns and their inclination to purchase organic cosmetics. The results demonstrate a robust positive correlation between health-related consumer awareness and the desire to buy organic cosmetics. Hence, this study posits the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Health consciousness (HC) positively affects cosmetics consumer attitude (CA).

2.3.4. Consumer attitude and purchase intention

In the cosmetics industry, factors like product quality, brand reputation, and perceived value shape consumer attitudes (Pawar and Rathod, 2019). Gidaković et al. (2024) found that ethical and sustainable products positively influence consumer attitude and purchase intention. Negative attitudes can harm sales and reputation, and these often stem from issues like poor product quality or unethical conduct (Pee, 2016).

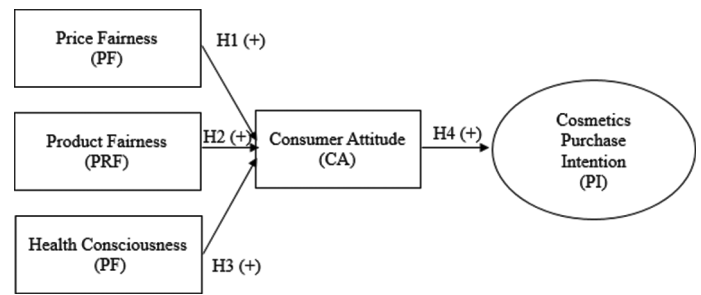
Many studies have confirmed that consumer attitude significantly influences the purchase intention and satisfaction of consumers. For example, Shahbandi et al. (2021) studied e-commerce services, highlighting a significant relationship between customer attitude and satisfaction. Similarly, Majeed et al. (2022) found a positive link between customer attitude and satisfaction in the hotel industry. Furthermore, Hung et al. (2016), in a study of 2057 consumers in Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy and Germany, insisted that purchase intention toward processed meat products was associated positively with attitude, education and other product-related variables. Jung et al. (2020) concluded that Chinese consumers' attitude had strong positive effect on the purchase intention toward sustainable apparel products and this relationship was moderated by aesthetic values.

For the above reasons, in this study, we formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Consumer attitude (CA) positively affects cosmetics purchase intention (PI).

The above hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Proposed research model



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Measurements

We adopted and adapted the measurement scales for this present study from the existing literature in developed and developing countries. The measurement scale of price fairness (4 items) was adopted from several studies, including Kaura (2012) and Iyer et al. (2016). The product fairness scale with four items was adapted from Green and Antoine (2011) and Kumar (2016). Meanwhile, the health consciousness (3 items) scale was modified from the study of Nguyen and Phan. (2022). The consumer attitude scale has five items, adopted from Owens and Sarov (2010) and Kim et al. (2012). Finally, the scale of purchase intention (3 items) was retrieved from Kim et al. (2012), Lin and Lu (2010), and Ozbek et al. (2012).

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The data were collected from three big cities in Vietnam: Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. The three aforementioned cities were selected because they are big cities with high income and a concentration of young and dynamic labor. The survey commenced in August 2023. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained throughout the study.

The electronic questionnaire was then distributed using online platforms, which consisted of two stages. First, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of participants who are our friends and relatives to check if the questionnaire items are understandable. The feedback from the pilot study was utilized to enhance the survey design and address any potential issues with the questions or response options. Second, the survey was distributed to potential participants using a snowball and convenience sampling method. We chose 30 potential advocates from some cosmetics forums and our friend circle to send out our questionnaire. These early advocates were then encouraged to share our survey to their friends. We received 250 valid questionnaires after 4 months of the survey. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Sample Characteristics

Regarding the sample profile, the sample size exhibits a relatively insignificant difference between males and females, with females comprising 56% and males comprising 44%. The age groups of 16-25 years old constituted the highest proportion of individuals,

with 60% of the whole sample. The demographic cohort aged over 35 years constitutes 9.2% of the sample population.

Regarding the educational attainment of the respondents, 18% hold a high school degree, while the majority, comprising 48%, are now pursuing a university degree. Additionally, 10.4% of the respondents have pursued post-graduate study, and 23.6% have completed university. Regarding income, 10.4% of the respondents have an income of <6 million VND per month, while 31.2% fall under the category of 6-<10 million VND. The category of 10-<15 million VND per month represents the most significant proportion at 34%, followed by the group of 15-<25 million VND, which accounts for 13.2%. Lastly, the group has a monthly income of 25-<40 million VND, accounting for 4.8% of the total respondents. The demographic group comprising individuals over 40 million VND accounted for 6.4% of the total population, per the available data. Table 1 illustrate more details.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Test Results

We ran Cronbach’s alpha test in SPSS to check the reliability and validity of the measurements. Table 2 below shows the results.

Table 2 shows that all factors have a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient >0.6, so all variables were retained for further analysis.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing Results and Discussions

First, we ran the Pearson correlation analysis to check if the data was acceptable for regression analysis. Table 3 below shows the results.

As illustrated in Table 3, all variables positively correlate with cosmetics purchase intention. Thus, the data meet the requirements for regression analysis. Then, we ran a regression analysis to test four proposed hypotheses. The results are presented in Table 4 below.

It is shown in Table 3 that all hypotheses were supported as the Sig. values are smaller than 0.05. Among three factors that affect consumer attitude, health consciousness played the most

critical role ($\beta_3 = 0.407, P = 0.000$), followed by product fairness ($\beta_2 = 0.370, P = 0.000$). Our finding is in line with several studies, such as Lakshimi Prahaa and Sindhuja (2022), Kim and Seock (2009), González-Rodríguez et al. (2020).

This finding is attributed to the fact that Vietnamese consumers, particularly young people, seem to have better knowledge of healthcare products. Over the past few years, Vietnamese consumers have been increasingly conscious of their health and well-being, causing them to prefer products that are viewed as both safe and beneficial for their overall health. The change in consumer behavior is driven by various factors, such as more information accessibility, increased levels of education, and a preference for a healthier way of life.

There is a growing concern among Vietnamese consumers over the ingredients used in cosmetics and their potential effects on health. Consumers are attracted to items that incorporate natural and organic components due to the perception that they are less detrimental and align better with a health-conscious way of living. The increasing demand for natural and organic cosmetics in the Vietnamese market is indicative of this trend. Moreover, the influence of global health trends and the desire to emulate international beauty standards contribute to the health consciousness of Vietnamese consumers. They are more inclined to choose brands that promote health benefits and transparency about their ingredients. This shift has prompted cosmetic companies to reformulate their products, emphasizing safety and health benefits to meet consumer expectations.

Furthermore, price fairness ($\beta_1 = 0.311, P = 0.000$) was the least important factor that affected the consumer attitude when purchasing cosmetics products in Vietnam. Our finding is consistent with the results of some studies, including Sajinčič et al. (2021) in Slovenia, Konuk (2022) in European context, Nguy et al. (2023) and Nguyen and Tran (2024) in Vietnam.

It is undeniable that price fairness is often considered a crucial factor in consumer decision-making. However, it tends to be the least critical for Vietnamese consumers when it comes to cosmetics. In the Vietnamese cosmetics market, factors such as product quality, brand reputation, and cultural influences often take precedence over price fairness. Vietnamese consumers are increasingly inclined to prioritize the quality and effectiveness of cosmetic products, as these attributes directly impact their health and beauty goals. The growing awareness of skin health and beauty standards pushes consumers to invest in products that promise superior results, often overshadowing concerns about price fairness.

Furthermore, our finding can be explained by the fact that the influence of social media and celebrity endorsements further elevates the importance of brand image over price considerations. Additionally, cultural factors, including traditional beauty practices and preferences for certain ingredients, guide purchasing decisions. Vietnamese consumers are willing to pay a premium for products that align with these cultural values, deeming the perceived benefits more critical than price fairness. Consequently,

Table 1: Description of respondents’ profile

Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	110	44
Female	140	56
Age		
16-25	150	60
26-35	77	30.8
Over 35	23	9.2
Education		
High school	45	18
Undergraduate	120	48
Graduate	59	23.6
Post-graduate	26	10.4
Monthly income (VND)		
Under 6 million	26	10.4
6 - <10 million	78	31.2
10 - <15 milion	85	34
15 - <25 million	33	13.2
25- <40 million	12	4.8
Over 40 million	16	6.4

Table 2: Cronbach’s Alpha analysis results

Latent variable	Items	Description	Corrected item – total correlation
Price Fairness (PF) Cronbach’s alpha: 0.839	PF1	All extra costs and added features should be identified clearly in a cosmetics product	0.674
	PF2	Prices for cosmetics items should not be too high or too low	0.697
	PF3	Actual prices of cosmetics products must be shown in the advertisements	0.674
	PF4	The full price of cosmetics items should be shown before they are bought	0.666
Product Fairness (PRF) Cronbach’s alpha: 0.829	PRF1	Cosmetics products should be safe and good for what they are made for	0.663
	PRF2	Information should be given about all of the major risks that come with the cosmetics products	0.606
	PRF3	I prefer to buy cosmetics products from stores that salespeople treat me respectfully	0.660
	PRF4	Any change to a product’s parts that could make a big difference or affect a buyer’s decision to buy should be made clear.	0.696
Health Consciousness (HC) Cronbach’s alpha: 0.775	HC1	I care more about my health than almost all of my friends.	0.644
	HC2	I like to use cosmetics products on a daily basis to keep me healthy and beautiful.	0.617
	HC3	I often buy “health-improving cosmetics” or “natural or eco-friendly cosmetics.”	0.580
Consumer Attitude (CA) Cronbach’s alpha: 0.824	CA1	I prefer to buy a cosmetic product which claims to improve health and skin	0.709
	CA2	When I buy a cosmetic product, I fear that I might be overcharged	0.586
	CA3	I cannot try out real skincare products before buying them	0.606
	CA4	I would rather buy a cosmetics product that seems to have less harmful ingredients	0.577
	CA5	I hesitate to buy a cosmetics product if there is limited or little information available about it	0.620
Cosmetics Purchase Intention (PI) Cronbach’s alpha: 0.836	PI1	I would love to buy cosmetics products from brands that follow fairness in their marketing practices	0.688
	PI2	I would be willing to recommend cosmetics products from brands with ethical marketing practices to other people	0.699
	PI3	I plan to buy cosmetics products from brands with ethical marketing practices	0.707

Table 3: Correlations among variables

	PI	CA	PF	PRF	HC
PI	1.000				
CA	0.661	1.000			
PF	0.519	0.575	1.000		
PRF	0.617	0.376	0.555	1.000	
HC	0.628	0.637	0.509	0.529	1.000

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Standardized Coefficient Beta (β)	Sig.	Result
H1: PF → CA	0.311	0.000	Accepted
H2: PRF → CA	0.370	0.000	Accepted
H3: HC → CA	0.407	0.000	Accepted
H4: CA → PI	0.746	0.000	Accepted

PF: Price fairness; PRF: Product fairness; HC: Health consciousness; CA: Consumer attitude; PI: Purchase intention

while price fairness is a consideration, it is outweighed by these other factors that more significantly shape consumer attitudes toward cosmetics in Vietnam.

Notably, consumer attitude had a strong influence on the purchase intention of cosmetics products in Vietnam ($\beta_4 = 0.746$, $P = 0.000$). Our finding is supported by Jung et al. (2020), Hung et al. (2016), Zaremohzzabieh et al. (2020), Gupta and Pirsch (2022). It is apparent that the attitude of Vietnamese consumers toward cosmetic products significantly influences their purchase intention, primarily due to several cultural and economic factors. As Vietnam’s economy grows and urbanization increases, there is a rising middle class with greater disposable income and an interest in personal appearance and grooming. This economic shift has led to a higher demand for cosmetics, as consumers associate these products with enhanced social status and self-esteem.

Moreover, the Vietnamese culture places a high value on beauty and skincare, rooted in traditional beliefs that equate personal appearance with success and confidence. This cultural emphasis on aesthetics encourages consumers to invest in cosmetics that promise improved appearance and skin health. Additionally, the impact of social media and beauty influencers in Vietnam is significant and cannot be disregarded. These platforms have a crucial impact on defining customer perceptions and attitudes towards cosmetic items. They offer evaluations, tutorials, and endorsements that help establish trust and generate interest among potential purchasers. Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of both foreign and local cosmetic brands that provide a diverse selection of goods specifically designed for Vietnamese skin types and preferences further strengthens customers’ favorable attitudes towards cosmetics. The wide range of options available to consumers enables them to discover products that match their specific requirements and desires, hence increasing their inclination to make a purchase. This trend presents significant opportunities for cosmetics companies to tailor their marketing strategies to emphasize product efficacy, safety, and alignment with local beauty ideals.

For cosmetics companies, understanding these attitudes is crucial. They should focus on building strong brand identities that resonate with Vietnamese cultural values and lifestyles. By leveraging local insights and digital marketing strategies, companies can enhance their brand appeal and drive consumer engagement, ultimately boosting sales in this dynamic market.

5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

In conclusion, the interplay between ethical marketing practices and purchase intention in the cosmetics industry within emerging markets underscores the importance of trust and transparency.

As consumers become more aware and concerned about ethical issues, such as sustainability, fair trade, and animal welfare, their purchasing decisions increasingly reflect these values. Companies that align their marketing strategies with ethical principles can foster stronger consumer relationships, enhancing brand loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases. Studies have shown that ethical marketing can positively influence consumer perceptions and lead to higher purchase intentions (Gupta and Pirsch, 2022).

Moreover, in emerging markets, where regulatory frameworks may not be as robust, ethical marketing becomes a critical differentiator for brands. It not only addresses consumer demands but also preempts potential reputational risks associated with unethical practices. Brands that commit to ethical standards can leverage this as a competitive advantage, differentiating themselves in a crowded market (Lee and Jin, 2023). Ultimately, ethical marketing is not just a moral obligation but a strategic imperative that aligns with the evolving expectations of consumers in emerging economies. As such, businesses that prioritize ethical practices are likely to see a positive impact on their bottom line and long-term success (Nguyen and Tran, 2024).

This study has some limitations. The limited sample size and non-random sampling approach introduce the potential for bias in the research and limit the generalizability of the findings to the overall Vietnamese market. Furthermore, the research model exclusively concentrates on two factors pertaining to ethical marketing practices without addressing any other aspects. Hence, the research model may not comprehensively elucidate the Vietnamese consumers' inclination to acquire cosmetics. Therefore, we suggest future research to expand the sample size and revisit the theoretical framework with more variables. Some psychological and contextual factors might be considered to thoroughly examine the interlink between ethical marketing practices and the purchase behavior of Vietnamese consumers.

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