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## Article

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# In-Store Promotional Mix and the Effects on Female Consumer Buying Decisions in Relation to Cosmetic Products

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This study was conducted to ascertain the relationship between the females' in-store purchasing decision process and the promotional mix. Two cosmetic salesmen groups were interviewed by using focus group interview technique to understand females' buying decision process with in-store promotional mix. The results indicated that females with buying intention will improve the effectiveness of in-store promotional strategies. The purchase behavior stimulated by in-store promotions was related to customers' emotional motivation. Finally, different in-store promotional activities would induce different psychological feelings.

*Keywords: In-store marketing, impulse purchasing, promotional mix, cosmetic products, focus group interview*

*JEL: M31*

Cosmetic stores and pharmaceutical chain stores have been taking a greater market share from department stores (Lee, 2010). Therefore, it is important that administration of cosmetic shops in department stores must understand consumers' in-store buying decisions, in-store marketing, and effective utilization of in-store promotional mix. In 1898, St. Elmo Lewis described a model to discuss consumer buying patterns, called the consumer purchasing funnel. The purchasing funnel theory has since evolved to incorporate additional factors in order to reflect the real purchase behavior. The purchasing process has become more complex in today's environment, while the influencing factors are much more complicated and are not fully explained by the old purchasing funnel (Court et

al., 2009). Their research on the circular decision process informs that 60 percent of customers check the feedback of the products they purchase on the Internet. They also get to know about different brands during the evaluation period when searching for information on products. They may also choose to buy a product of different brand after studying the information collected. Therefore, marketers should be careful when spending marketing resources, such as emphasizing the promotion of "word of mouth" and in-store promotions. This study used the consumer purchase process theory to explain the impulse buying process, purchase decisions and the effectiveness of marketing tools in the purchase process (see Court et al., 2010).

Most in-store shoppers are tempted to make an impulse purchase because of the effectiveness of in-store promotional campaigns

for various products and because the touch points have been influential and expanded. This indicates that consumers do not complete the purchase behavior with their original buying intention, which come from the traditional buying funnel. The percentage of in-store shopping has increased due to consumers' impulse purchases. In a study Kollat and Willett (1967) pointed out that 50.5 percent of purchases are unplanned. This means that more than 40 percent of customers can be influenced or persuaded when they enter a store (Court et al., 2009), which means marketers have the chance to interrupt the decision-making process by using the right promotional tools, such as attractive packaging, free samples, and persuasive salespeople, etc. Consumers make an impulse purchase decision by an attractive in-store promotional mix. That means there are more brand options than expected during the evaluation phase. In addition, the buying path has become more complicated than before. Thus, it is necessary to understand the consumers' buying path and touch points in order to choose the right promotional mix to communicate with consumers, subsequently providing some practical suggestions for in-store marketing strategies.

Dose the traditional consumer decision-making process appropriate for in-store promotional activities? This study tried to understand that how cosmetics in-store promotional activities affect female consumer decision-making process in order to propose in-store promotion strategies. Especially, Internet sales grow greatly and impact in-store sales

seriously today, hence in-store promotion has become more important.

### **Problem Statement and Research Objectives**

Globally, almost 30 percent of shoppers make buying decisions when they are in-store (Clark, 2008). In-store marketing creates a special atmosphere and adds to the shopping experience. Many touch points in-store are outside the traditional purchasing funnel. Therefore, the linear purchasing funnel needs to be redesigned (Court et al., 2009). The purchasing funnel concept is useful for understanding the various influences on the consumer purchase decision-making process. However, purchasing decisions made in-store are part of a complicated process made up of many factors that most consumers may not be aware of. When shoppers enter the store, there are multiple sources of information that may change their shopping behavior. Specifically, how promotion strategies influence customers' psychological perception and emotion that would in turn affect their purchase decisions is an important issue.

Based on the impulse purchase study from Clark (2008), customers are categorized into four situations. 1. Customer with original purchase intention buys more. 2. Customer has an original purchase intention but buys another brand. 3. Customer has no purchase intention but buys preferred brand products. 4. Customer with no purchase intention buys a product are stimulated by the in-store promotional mix. On the other hand, department stores are still a major channel where customers can buy cosmetic products

(Yang et al., 2007). Therefore, the objectives of this study focused on the purchase decision journey for female cosmetics in department store, especially on how salespersons' selling skills and promotion schemes would affect customers' emotion and purchase behavior in these four different situations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### In-Store Marketing

The shoppers need to be delighted at all stages of the purchase process. In-store marketing is like a billboard, creating the buying factors for shoppers and promoting low or high market share brands, for both regular users and nonusers. Profit is related to increased traffic and sales due to in-store promotional mix (Blattberg and Neslin, 1989).

In today's global marketplace, the emphasis is on 'feel, relate and act' and this is driving the consumption and choice of brands (Srinivasan and Srivastave, 2010). Brands may spend their budget on TV advertisements, but the biggest battle is over in-store advertising (Clark, 2008). Thousands of advertisements being placed every day, an in-store investment is a fact and cannot be ignored. Also, over 50 percent of shoppers switch between brands and in-store promotions. Emotion is a key factor that drives consumers. Therefore, it is equally important to design the shopping environment properly to encourage a good purchase experience as well as an effective promotional campaign because, if not, people will just walk away. Marketers need to be able to turn shoppers into buyers and understand the purchasing process. It is necessary to consider

good in-store marketing strategies to connect brands with shoppers, together with their path to purchase. Marketers typically need a framework to enable them to focus on in-store marketing. The influence and interaction metrics may include brand awareness, loyalty, repurchases, evaluation, sales promotion, product demonstrations, product samples, and special discounts, etc. The 4P marketing mix of product, pricing, promotional activities, and place, becomes more complicated for in-store promotions with the addition of personnel, physical distribution, store layout and products, and productivity (McGoldrick, 2002).

An in-store marketing strategy should also consider the store position and consumer attribution. With a proper in-store marketing strategy, brands have the chance to influence shoppers and gain sales at the touch points. This will also help consumers to complete their in-store purchasing journey.

### In-Store Promotional Mix

The promotional mix is used to communicate with customers about brand value and to build a relationship between the store and the shopper. Therefore, the promotional mix is also called a marketing communication mix (Armstrong and Kotler, 2009). The objective of a promotion is to build awareness, create interest, evaluate information, create demand, build brand awareness and loyalty (Blattberg, Briesch and Fox, 1995). All promotional efforts aim to increase sales. To encourage the buyer and shopper to think of brands and products, the advertising and sales promotion should influence

customers directly, whereas publicity and public relations influence sales indirectly. Most people would rather purchase something they like (Alessandra, 2005). The interaction between people has become a critical element, providing the necessary touch points for generating a memorable experience. Experiential marketing creates an enjoyable experience and is entertaining for the consumer (Srinivasan and Srivastava, 2010). Some product usage experience is related to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of consumer behavior and can be defined as “hedonic consumption” (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). According to Meyer (2006), experiential marketing is more than merchandise, by rational and emotional touch points, it can make connections between sales person and consumers. Hence, to increase consumers’ motivation and spend more time in store, it is better to provide experience stimuli that meet consumers’ needs and intelligence that makes them become immersed in their shopping ventures (Srinivasan and Srivastava, 2010). In other words, the sales persons must have awareness of consumers’ shopping habits and marketing trends to create enjoyable atmosphere and entertaining experience to keep consumers coming back.

The promotional mix, mentioned above, which includes several external factors, such as in-store atmosphere, interaction with a sales person, and other customer purchasing decisions, can influence the in-store purchase journey. However, there are also some internal factors which may influence the in-store purchase journey, such as personal purchasing behavior, enjoyment of the

process of bargaining and enjoyment of the process of buying (Atsmon et al., 2010).

### **Buying Funnel and the Circular Consumer Decision Process**

The buying funnel is the concept of the five stages of the purchase decision-making process (awareness, familiarity, consideration, purchase and loyalty). The general concept is to narrow down the number of alternatives in the early stages to one in the final stage. The final destination purchase is the result of a sequential process of reducing the set of destination alternatives. For years, marketers used the model to understand and communicate with consumers.

However, Court and his colleagues surveyed 20,000 consumers across five industries and three continents to understand consumer’s purchasing decision. The results revealed that critical consumers, explosion products and digital channels have made funnel fail to capture all touch points and transformed into circular model (Court et al., 2009).

Nowadays, consumers are seeking and pulling information into their buying decision process, rather than relying on the messages that are pushed by brands. It is now necessary to re-examine the buying process to include those in-store factors because more and more buying decisions are made in-store. Court et al. (2010) pointed out that the buying process has become a circular decision process. The purchase decision-making process has four primary phases, representing potential battlegrounds. Brand loyalty may interrupt the decision-making process by entering into the consideration with a

strong influence, and may even force the exit from the buying funnel. Court et al. (2009) also pointed out that two-thirds of the touch points during the active evaluation phase involve consumer-driven marketing activities, such as word of mouth and in-store shopping to evaluate the brand. One third of the touch points involve company-driven marketing, which means that traditional marketing remains important but there is a change in the way that consumers are now making decisions.

Many consumers have no purchase intention or have not decided yet what to buy before they enter a store. They make an impulse purchase in the store and may experience the four stages of the purchase journey. The buying experience will lead to a preferred status for a set of brands if the buying and usage experience is good. Consumer loyalty is a combination of in-store experience, or the service and usage of the product or service after sale. Once the consumer has established their loyalty status towards a brand, the purchase journey for the specific product or service will be shorter because of good experience in the past. The purchase decision journey, therefore, becomes a circular process.

### **Impulse Purchase**

Impulse purchase has been defined extensively. Rook and Fisher (1995) assumed that when consumer intended to consume spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately and kinetically, impulse buying occurred. Impulse purchase was basically an unplanned purchase for non-essentials (Cobb and Hoyer, 1986; Kollat and

Willett, 1967). Emotions might be the underlying mechanism, eliciting consumers' buying intention and buying behavior (Babin and Babin, 2001). "The significance of impulse buying today" indicated that impulse buying could be classified into four types: pure impulse buying, reminder impulse buying, suggestion impulse buying and planned impulse buying (Stern, 1962). Although consumers thought they know what they want to buy, after entering the store, almost 15 percent of impulsive buying just happened because they enjoyed shopping at the store (Clark, 2008). The effects were more obvious on female. For example, Yang, Huang and Feng (2011) found significant impulse buying for females when cosmetic products were marketed with corporate promotions, individual budget and salesperson promotions. This might be why cosmetic companies always provide female consumer's usage experiences (Carù & Cova, 2007).

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, focus group interviews were used to collect information on the purchase journey and the content analysis method was used for a qualitative data analysis and summary.

### **Sampling and Design**

The research design included two focus group interviews to capture individual shopping experiences and the in-store buying decision process through discussion with the participants. The strength of this method is the deep interaction among the group participants (Morgan, 1993). The two focus group interviews were conducted at the Urban Hotel, Kaohsiung city, Taiwan. In this study, purposive sampling

procedures were used. A total of 12 female participants were chosen. Their ages varied from 25 to 35 years and all of them have had more than one shopping experience in a department store within the previous three months. According to the literature, the members of focus group should have a homogeneous background. Also, the participants should not know each other (McQuarrie and McIntyre, 1996). The research

The observers sat outside the circle to avoid affecting the performance of the participants.

### Interview Discussion Topics

The interview discussion topics were prepared before the meeting. There were seven topics for discussion during the interview and these were developed according to the objectives of the research, as shown in Table 1.

<b>The aim of the research</b>	<b>The topic for discussion</b>
To identify the participants are qualified and to open the participants' minds.	1. Could you describe your experiences of shopping in-store?
To identify what kind of shopping type in-store is.	2. Do you enjoy the shopping process? 3. Do you have any impulse buying experience?
To identify what and how the in-store promotional mix influences buying decisions.	4. What is your attitude toward promotional activity? 5. What kind of promotional activity do you like?
To identify what kind of promotional mix can attract consumers to visit a shop.	6. What reasons will encourage you to visit a cosmetic shop? 7. What promotional activity will attract you to a shop?

**Table 1: Focus Group - First Interview Discussion Topics**

team includes one moderator and two observers. The moderator has good experience in handling focus group interviews and asking the designated questions. The focus group members can freely discuss the topic raised without much intervention from the moderator (Morgan, 1996). The observers collected and analyzed the dialogues after typing the transcripts. The shoppers' experiences could then be contrasted and compared. Participants were encouraged to speak up if they had the same or different experiences, while other members were sharing their experience. In order to keep the group on task and make sure the different viewpoints and ideas were respected, the group interview was held at a neutral site, which had a conference-style room with a round table. Therefore, all the participants can see and interact with each other.

### Data Collection

The first phase of this study consisted of three hours of focus group interviews, which had two sessions. Each interview session was tape-recorded. The second phase was a demographic survey. The two observers were responsible for the transcriptions. Interview recordings were listened to and notes taken before the coding process. After the accuracy of the transcriptions was confirmed, the coding process was started.

### Data Analysis

The data from the focus group interview were analyzed using content analysis. There are three steps in the coding process. The first step was to define and develop the coding categories. The second step was to assign the symbols and the third process was to classify the relevant information so as to reduce useless information

(Gorden, 1992). After completion of the coding process, the data were checked again to find out the common themes, similar patterns, and mutual relationships for in-store consumers. First, identified the critical statement, and categorized into promotional mix, customers' purchase emotions and situations, finally, established correlation promotional mix with emotions responding. The coding categories were based on whether or not there is buying intention, emotions at the point of purchase and relative promotional tools. (see Appendix-I)

### Coding Categorization

The first layer category used in this study was customers with buying intention or without buying intention. The second layer category used in this study was promotional mix. The third layer category used in this study was emotions. Promotional mix was categorized by the research of the Simultaneous Media Usage Survey (Loechner and Write, 2006). It showed the percentages for the effectiveness of 11 types of in-store promotions and 10 types were mentioned by participants in this study. In terms of emotions, nine types of emotions were mentioned by the participants in this study. These emotions were happiness, cheapness, honor, uniqueness, trust, kindness, familiarity, embarrassment and impatience. The interview content was de-coded by coders A and B based on the description of the purchase process by each participant. During the process of analysis, it was found that there were some differing opinions between the coders. When there was a difference in opinion a third party (moderator)

was invited to help. The final results are shown in Table 2 (see Appendix-I)

### Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis was based on the method published by Kassarian (1977) to test the reliability of the research data in order to ensure the quality of the study. This method uses the level of agreement for the coding results within each category between the coders as standard. This study used two researchers to be the coders and focused on the buying process of cosmetic products by female customers and whether they were influenced psychologically by in-store promotional mixes. The equation used "n" coders to analyze the content reliability, as below,

$$A_x = 2 * M / N_1 + N_2; B = (n * A_x) / (1 + [(n-1) * A_x])$$

Where,  $A_x$ : degree of agreement to each coder;  $M$ : number of agreed items by each coder;  $N_1$ : number of agreed items from first coder;  $N_2$ : number of agreed items from second coder;  $n$ : number of coder participated. Based on the analysis results, the level of agreement between the two coders can be calculated. The reliability analysis for customer buying intention is  $(2 * [(2 * 20) / (21 + 21)]) / 1 + 1 * [(2 * 20) / (21 + 21)] = 0.974$ ; the customer buying process influenced by the promotional mix is  $(2 * [(2 * 36) / (40 + 40)]) / 1 + 1 * [(2 * 36) / (40 + 40)] = 0.947$ ; and the customer emotion influenced by the promotional mix is  $(2 * [(2 * 34) / (40 + 40)]) / 1 + 1 * [(2 * 34) / (40 + 40)] = 0.919$ . The coding results are acceptable if the reliability analysis is higher than 0.85. Therefore, the coding results in this study are reliable and acceptable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Content analysis and critical sentences were used to discuss and ground the results as follows:

### 1. Consumer emotions are an important mediating variable for impulse purchases

The purpose of promotional mix is to induce consumers' emotions (Teller and Dennis, 2012). The studies by Cobb and Hoyer (1986), and Kollat and Willett (1967) pointed out that an impulse purchase is an unplanned purchase. It is

The perception of cheapness is rational economic value and the perception of honor is extra value of the planned purchase. The perception of uniqueness is the fantasy value that can stimulate a purchase for customers with non-buying intention. However, the perception of happiness is the most important emotional factor that stimulates consumers' impulse purchase behavior.

Perception	With buying intention	Without buying intention	Total events
Happiness	4(40%)	5(45.5)	9(42.9%)
Cheapness	7(70%)	1(9.1%)	8(38.1%)
Uniqueness	1(10%)	4(36.4%)	5(23.8%)
Honor	2(20%)	0(0%)	2(9.5%)
Trust	2(20%)	3(27.3%)	5(23.8%)
Total events	10	11	100%

**Table 3: Focus Group - First Interview Discussion Topics**

very typical that customers always buy unplanned products because their purchase intentions are influenced by in-store promotional mixes. Babin and Babin (2001) mentioned that in-store consumer buying intentions and spending can be strongly influenced by emotions.

According to Table 3, consumers' perception of happiness, cheapness, uniqueness and trust in the in-store promotion will stimulate emotion and purchase behavior. Furthermore, it was found that different situations for buying intentions have different perceptions of emotions. Consumers with buying intention prefer the perception of cheapness and honor from in-store promotions. However, consumers without buying intention prefer the perception of uniqueness from in-store promotions. Consumers with buying intention have higher rationality and planned purchasing than those who do not have a buying intention.

### 2. Brand preference and brand recognition will help to increase the effectiveness of a promotional strategy

From the interviews with several consumers, it can be understood that some consumers have their own brand preference. This is an important factor that affects the effectiveness of a promotional strategy. In recent years, brand awareness has been the focus of many company marketing strategies. The factor of "brand image" has played an important role in the consumer's emotional motivation when making a buying decision. For example some subjects stated in interview that:

*P8: "I am very loyal to brands. I will buy products from the brands I used to use. Sometimes I like to buy these products from a sales representative I know and I won't negotiate too much on price or ask for free products because I*

*know them. Typically, I will buy what they recommend because they know what I need."*

*P5: "I just want to buy from someone I know because they can provide a better service to me. They have my purchase record. Therefore, they know what I will buy. They will also recommend some new products for me to try and I will buy sometimes. I get used to buying from people I know because I trust them. I will also buy their recommended products because I trust them."*

*P9: "There is a so called "Brand of the Day" promotion event. The target customers are the VIP group. They will focus on providing more services on the day, even snacks and meals. This will make us feel very different. The key point is the feeling. Our relationship has changed to friends and not seller and buyer anymore. Since we are friends already, I will buy more if they ask me to support them, such as from 20 sets to 30 sets."*

It can be seen that consumers can transfer their loyalty from a brand to their sales representatives. Consequently, they can become friends and maintain a long-term buying habit. Just as we trust the recommendations from our friends, sales representatives also became customers' friends as does the brand. No matter if the "trust" or "habit" comes from the sales representatives or the brand, it helps to increase the effectiveness of the promotional plan. Another psychological link to a brand is the "perception of honor". The sales person is the most important key factor to influence buying decisions and brand loyalty is the second most important factor.

This study found that emotion can be influenced by different promotional mixes. The purpose of a promotional mix is to induce

consumers' emotions. Most studies in the past were focused on the customer impulse buying behavior and the motivation stimulated by promotional events, i.e., the study of emotional factors on impulse buying behavior or the type of promotional event. There is less research that is focused on the emotions influenced by different promotional activities. A study from Liao (2008) found that the reminder type of impulse buying behavior has a more logical motivation, practical value satisfaction and a more thorough thinking and decision-making process than pure impulse buying behavior alone.

### **3. Different promotional activity induces different psychological perceptions**

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it can be understood that using a sales representative as part of the promotional mix can produce feelings of happiness, honor, uniqueness, trust, kindness, familiarity, embarrassment, and impatience. It can encourage customers to feel happiness and cheapness when the mix uses buy one get one free, buy more to get additional gifts, and the spend NTD 1000 to get NTD 100 free promotional strategy. The use of brand loyalty in a promotional mix can induce the feelings of honor, uniqueness, trust and familiarity. Experimental products can bring feelings of happiness, uniqueness, honor, trust, impatience and embarrassment to customers. The layout of the shop can make customers feel happiness and uniqueness. All other conclusions are listed in Table 4 (see Appendix-II).

During the in-store buying experience for cosmetic products influenced by promotional

mix, the perception of cheapness was mentioned 14 times (24.56%) when looking at the variables of emotion. For the emotional variables, this was followed by the perceptions of happiness, uniqueness, trust and familiarity (see Table 4).

For the in-store buying experience of cosmetic products, the sales representative was mentioned 21 times (36.84%) among all the promotional mixes. The remaining promotional mix items are brand loyalty (14.04%), experimental (10.53%), buy more to get additional gifts (10.53%) and special occasions (10.53%).

Beasley and Shank (1997) pointed out that frequent promotional events will increase the brand's buying frequency. Additionally, the pre-decision stage of consumer purchase behavior is strongly associated with impulse buying behavior (Tirmizi, Rehman and Saif, 2009). Therefore, companies will have annual sales, midyear sales, Mother's Day sales, Father's Day sales, Valentine's Day, Fall Cosmetic Festivities and "Brand of the Day" sales. These sale events are typically broadcast by direct mail, department store magazines and other marketing channels so as to target customers. The purpose is to stimulate customers' purchase motivation.

#### **4. Customers with buying intention will improve the effectiveness of an in-store promotional strategy.**

From the interviews with several consumers (i.e., A1P1, A1P9, A1P10 and A1P11, see Appendix-III), there are several factors which can increase customers' buying intention. These factors are department store sale events, national holidays, traditional occasions, and special personal needs etc. In this section, there is a

discussion on what makes customers buy more than their original planned purchase.

#### **5. Customers who buy more during a department store sale event believe that product price discount or promotions are the best at that point during the year. Therefore, any promotional strategy or mix which meets customers' perception of "best buy" or "extra benefits" will generate more sales.**

From the interviews with several consumers (i.e. A1P8, A1P11 and A1P9-2, see Appendix-III), a promotional strategy that offers gifts for a targeted amount, spend one thousand and get one hundred free, store points boost, free gift with any purchase, buy one get one free, and so on, enables customers to feel they are getting extra value from their purchase. This actually fits customers' psychological expectation regarding the department store's anniversary sale events because they believe this event will provide the best value discount price and promotional mix. Because of the expectation from customers, when a promotional strategy meets customers' expectations, the effectiveness of the promotional strategy will be largely improved.

Besides the psychological effects from "extra benefit/extra value" and the increase in the effectiveness of the promotional strategy, some customers gain psychological satisfaction from the purchase process, or customers make the purchase because they are happy. Therefore, it is important to focus on making the customer happy when an in-store promotional strategy is designed. It is necessary to carefully design the set up and environment of the store to help create good shopping feelings for the customer

and this will then enhance their buying intention (Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer, 1999).

Regarding the customer's psychological satisfaction from the buying process, thought should be given to how a promotional strategy can be designed to increase customers' buying intention and behavior.

**6. In order to satisfy personal psychological needs, a customer may generate the intention to purchase something. Through the "proper" reminder of personal needs and the fulfillment of personal demands in the "happy shopping process", the effectiveness of the in-store promotional programmed will increase.**

From the interviews with several consumers (i.e. A2P1, A2P2, A2P4 and A1P7, see Appendix-III), it was found that, during the buying process, there will be an increase in the effectiveness of the promotional plan with a proper reminder for customer needs fulfilled, pleasure is provided to customers, and the friendly happy environment is not destroyed. Things, such as free products with purchase and sweet product introduction by sales representatives are all factors that can make customers feel "happy with pleasure". Therefore, it will help to increase customers' motivation to buy or to buy more products because they experience happiness when doing that.

During the interview process (i.e. AfP12, AfP11, AfP5, AfP9, AfP7 and AfP8, see Appendix-III), it was found that some consumers have doubts following their impulse purchases and have found themselves not interested in promotional strategies anymore. Sometimes, they

also try to avoid attending such events. Based on this finding, discussion point 7 is proposed.

**7. The negative experience gained from impulse buying will reduce the effectiveness of the same type of promotional strategy. In addition, customers may avoid attending future events related to the brand.**

According to the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) proposed by Oliver (1980), consumer satisfaction confirmation is the result of the comparison between their expectations before purchase and the perceived performance after purchase. Consumers will also use this confirmation to judge their satisfaction of products or services as the basis for their next purchase. Consumers will also form their expectations of the performance of the product or the service before their initial purchase. This expectation will influence the consumer's attitude toward the product or service and their tendency toward purchase. After purchase, consumers will acknowledge the performance of the product based on their real usage experience. When product performance exceeds expectation, it will form positive disconfirmation. When product performance equals expectation, it will form confirmation. When expectation exceeds product performance, it will form negative disconfirmation. Confirmation and positive disconfirmation will enhance consumer satisfaction. Consumers will have a higher desire to continue to use the same product when their satisfaction is high.

From the interviews, it was discovered that many consumers regretted their impulse

purchases in-store (i.e. AfP9, AfP7 and AfP8). Based on the interviews, there were two major conditions that caused this regret. The first condition was that the impulse purchase came from a bad buying experience in-store. For example, the customer was forced to buy the products because the sales representative was pushy and the customer regretted their impulse purchase in-store right after their purchase. The second condition was that the customer made the impulse purchase in-store but later found that the product performance was lower than their expectation, that is, there was negative disconfirmation on purchase expectation and perceived performance. This will affect the satisfaction of the consumer for the whole purchase process. It was also found that when customers make an impulse purchase because of negative emotions, it reduces their overall satisfaction. It causes consumer negative disconfirmation and their satisfaction afterwards if the in-store promotion strategy was overdone.

### CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, we found that there are major psychological perceptions when customers make their purchase decision and these will influence the effectiveness of an in-store promotional strategy. Based on the findings, together with the circular decision process, the study can be concluded as below:

The conclusions of the interviews are:

1. Customers with buying intention, when they come to a store, will react better to an in-store promotional strategy.

2. For those customers without buying intention, when they visit a department store, they display purchase behavior that is related to their emotional motivation when they respond to an in-store promotional strategy.

3. Emotional motivation is not necessarily positive and can be a negative emotion, such as the sense of embarrassment or impatience.

4. When customers have buying intention for brand preference and recognition, they will respond better to promotional strategies because of their trust in the brand or the sales representatives.

5. The negative buying experience caused by an impulse purchase will reduce the effectiveness of the same type of promotional strategy. This may also cause the customer to avoid future purchases from the same brand.

Using the results from this study into the circular decision process, as proposed by Court et al. (2010), it can be found that customers in the first phase, who had buying intention, when they visited a store, will increase the effectiveness of the promotional mix used in the second phase (active evaluation) and the third phase (moment of purchase) of the buying process. The most important factor used as a promotional tool, or to create a psychological feeling, in the second and third phases is the sales representative. The sales representative can bring positive feelings to the customers, such as happiness, honor, product uniqueness, trust, kindness and familiarity. However, at the same time, the sales representative may also cause feelings of impatience and embarrassment. A great

purchase experience will generate good product and brand recognition and also complete the fourth phase of the buying process. With the completion of the four processes, there is the chance to create customer loyalty and help to ensure repeat purchases. However, a bad experience and discontented feelings after purchase will put the whole buying decision process back to the first phase.

In-store shopping provides customers with the chance to fulfill all the processes in a short period of time (see Table 5). They can establish their

successful is customers' buying intention. Several things can be done in terms of in-store promotional strategies:

1. The customer with no buying intention
  - a. Increase the opportunities to list brands and products in a department store's magazine, especially during specific sales events. These disclosures should include new products and promotional items. The purpose is to increase brand perception.
  - b. The establishment of a member database to be used to send out brand information and

Decision process	With buying intention and without brand preference	With buying intention and with brand preference	Without buying intention and without brand preference	Without buying intention and with brand preference
Initial consideration set			+	
Active evaluation	+	+	+	+
Moment of purchase	+	+	+	+
Post purchase experience	+	+	+	+

Note: "+" means both observers agree with the category

**Table 5: In-store Decision Process with Four Types of Consumers**

needs at each touch point, collect information, evaluate the proposal, make a final purchase and even become loyal. The purpose of all in-store promotional strategies (including all types of advertisement, kind sales representatives, attractive promotional mix, layouts to fit the brand recognition and free products for fixed amount purchases) is to influence customers at each stage of the buying process to induce impulse purchases in-store. The target is to generate a good buying journey and form a loyalty loop.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the interviews, the most important factor to ensure a promotional strategy is

promotional information periodically. This will allow customers to keep receiving brand information, influencing their buying process. Customers will go to the shop to test the products or buy directly at the stage of purchase moment. This will also reduce the chance for customers to evaluate other brands and products in the store.

2. The customer who has buying intention but no brand preference  
The in-store buying decision of this type of customer can start from the beginning when shopping in-store and evaluating the products. It is important to focus the in-store promotion

strategy on influencing the evaluation because the “evaluation of alternatives” is the main factor affecting the customers’ purchase decision.

3. The customer who has buying intention and brand preference

The in-store buying decision of this type of customer considers the promotional mix and the purchase decision for one brand and does not compete with other brands. In this study, it was discovered that the source of purchase information and the complexity of the purchase information evaluation will influence the customer’s in-store impulse purchase behavior. For example, it was found from the interviews that customers with loyalty to a brand would listen to the suggestions from sales representatives and buy new products. This is because the trust in the brand has reduced the complexity of the purchase information evaluation. Thus, the suggestion from the sales representative has increased the effectiveness of the promotional strategy for this type of customer. Therefore, the recommendation of the in-store promotional mix together with a happy in-store purchase experience will lead customers directly to the stage of purchase decision.

This study has several suggestions for overall practical implementation: 1. Improve the training of sales representatives. 2. Categorize and identify loyal customers. 3. Ensure a pleasurable atmosphere during the buying process. 4. In order to reduce negative disconfirmation, it is important to have a proper recommendation from the sales representative and interaction with customers. 5. To divide the products into customer needs by reminder. The in-store

promotional mix helps the customer to think about the right product mix for their best use. 6. Use product tests to attract customers to return to the shop again to buy or experience new products.

There are so many shops in a department store and many kinds of promotional mix. Customers will not be able to know all the new brands and products. Therefore, the promotional strategy will not always be able to encourage customers to buy on impulse. The most popular free gifts for customers are experimental products (Yang et al., 2007). Most brands spend a lot of their budget on sample products because they want to extend the buying process and create brand awareness and loyalty. A sample product creates another touch point for the brand, extending the in-store buying process and becoming the buying intention for the next buying process.

From interviews with customers, this study found that customers have the possibility to buy products because of the promotional strategy with or without buying intention at the beginning. Therefore, it is necessary to design a promotional strategy that stimulates all stages of the purchase decision. Based on the interview results, the different psychological activities associated with each feeling during the purchase process can be concluded. According to the 11 types of the most popular promotional strategy posted by BIG research and the strategies mentioned by the study participants (store layout, buy one get one free, price discount, gifts, store points, brand of the day, special promotional events, seasonal promotions, sample products and sales

representatives), several have been selected and summarized in Table 5 for practical use.

### Theoretical Implications

This study found that the in-store buying decision process is the same as the circular decision process theory published by Court et al. (2009). Except for the focus on a pleasant buying process to form loyalty and the next buying intention of customers, this study found that it is notable that dissatisfaction experience from the buying process will influence next purchase journeys. Based on the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) by Oliver (1980), customer satisfaction is confirmed by expectations before purchase and perceived performance after purchase. This confirmation will be used to judge their satisfaction with products or services and become the basis of the next purchase.

This study found that customers will have a sense of dissatisfaction because of negative disconfirmation following their in-store buying behavior. They felt regret with their buying behavior and also didn't want to buy again. However, some customers felt regret whilst still at the store after they had made a purchase. This is called "expected regret", i.e., they have been pushed too hard by the sales representatives and made the purchase because they felt embarrassed or wanted to end the buying process as soon as possible. Most times, they do not even need the products and will not come back again. In addition, buying behavior caused by negative emotions will reduce customer satisfaction, and an over aggressive in-store promotional strategy will also reduce customer satisfaction. Therefore, when the marketer is

designing an in-store promotional strategy, it is important to put customers' reality and satisfaction first following a purchase. The psychological feedback after a purchase will affect the brand image and further influence the effectiveness of the next in-store promotional strategy. It will create a negative effect if the in-store promotion strategy has been overdone, such as pushy sales representatives or over-promised product functions.

In the marketplace, with so many brands promoting all kinds of products, consumers respond to promotional mixes based on their own, or friends, buying experiences and they all have their own evaluation of a brand. Therefore, it is not possible for a promotional strategy to work every time and to attract customers to buy straight away. It is important not to push customers to make a decision right away (forced impulse buying) because even if customers do not buy anything, they will know the brand and have good awareness of the brand.

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The participants interviewed in this study had a similar background. However, the buying characteristics and preferences of local metropolitan females may differ in other areas. Moreover, limitations in ex post facto method such as lack of control of the independent variable, direction of causality difficult to establish and correlation does not equal cause. Finally, this study was focused on the promotion of in-store general cosmetic products. Therefore, the results cannot be used to make general assumptions. Future studies could use the experimental method with electroencephalography (EEG) and traditional



questionnaire to measure and test consumers' mental activities and behavior responses in the in-store promotional situations.

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Coding	Category	Coder A	Coder B
A1	With intention	10	9
A2	Without intention	11	12
B1	Sales person,	13	13
B2	Buy one get one free	2	2
B3	Spend one thousand dollars and get one hundred free	3	4
B4	Buy more to get additional gifts	3	2
B5	Special occasions	8	8
B6	Branding day	3	3
B7	Product labels	1	0
B8	Experiential	5	6
B9	Layout	1	1
B10	Discount	1	1
C1	Perception of Happiness	9	8
C2	Perception of Cheapness	9	8
C3	Perception of Honor	2	2
C4	Perception of Uniqueness	6	5
C5	Perception of Trust	5	6
C6	Perception of Kindness	2	1
C7	Perception of Familiarity	4	5
C8	Perception of Embarrass	2	3
C9	Perception of Impatience	1	2

A: category of buying intention; B: category of promotional mix; C: category of emotion

**Table 2: Results of Coders A and B Coding Categorization of Buying Intention**

## Appendix-II

Promotion mix /Emotion	Code	Sales person	Buy one get one free	Spend NTD 1000 and get NTD 100 free	Buy more to get the additional gifts	Special occasions	Brand loyalty	Product labels	Experiential	Layout	N	%
		B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9		
Happiness	C1	5	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	18	<b>21.1</b>
Cheapness	C2	0	2	3	5	4	0	0	0	0	8	<b>24.6</b>
Honor	C3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	5.26
Uniqueness	C4	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	8	<b>12.3</b>
Trust	C5	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	6	<b>15.8</b>
Kindness	C6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3.51
Familiar	C7	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	8.77
Embarrassment	C8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	5.26
Impatience	C9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3.51
Total		21	3	4	6	6	8	1	6	2	56	100
%		<b>36.8</b>	5.26	7.02	<b>10.53</b>	<b>10.53</b>	<b>14.04</b>	1.75	<b>10.53</b>	3.51	100	

**Table 4: The Major Psychological Perceptions to Enhance Promotional Strategies During Purchase Process**

<b>In the store shopping</b>			
<b>Situation</b>	<b>Promotion Mix</b>	<b>Perception</b>	<b>Critical Statement</b>
(A1)with Buying intention	(B1)Sales person	Happiness Honor	A1P1: "It will create a sense of pleasure during buying process, therefore, I will make the purchase if the saleswoman provides good service."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B2)Buy one get one free (B5)Special Occasions, (B3)Spend one thousand and get one hundred free	Cheap	A1P9: "I have some favorite products that I use them all the time. Therefore, I will wait for their promotion and buy sufficient amount for later to use. If they also have additional promotion package for certain amount money spent, I will try to reach that amount of sales and get the promotion package."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B3)Spend one thousand and get one hundred free (B2)Buy one get one free (B5)Special Occasions	Cheap	A1P10: "I always go to shopping during department stores' anniversary on sale event because you can easily find the best deal. When they have the promotion, such as spent one thousand and get one hundred free, I will always buy something."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B5)Special Occasions, (B4)buy more to get the additional gifts	Happiness Cheap	A1P11: "I will go to shopping in department store for special occasions, such as Mothers' Day. I will go to buy a gift for my mother. If they have special promotion, I will buy more to get the additional gifts."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B5)Special Occasions, (B3)spend one thousand and get one hundred free	Cheap	A1P8: "I always go to department store's anniversary on sale event because I believe the discount and promotion are the best during the year. If they have spend one thousand and get one hundred free event, I will buy something, too."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B5)Special Occasions, (B4)buy more to get the additional gifts	Happiness Cheap	A1P9-2: "It feels good to bring back home an electronic rice cooker as a promotional gift from department store's anniversary on sale event. I spent the money to get what I need and also get one extra electronic rice cooker for my mother."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B4)Buy more to get the additional gifts	Happiness Cheap	A1P7: "I feel very happy when I spend some money. I will buy more to get some free products. Those free products typically are small package and are very convenient for travel use."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B1)Sales person, (B6)Branding loyalty	Familiar , Trust	A1P5: "I will go to buy from those sales representatives I know because they will provide better services. They know what products I need because they have records on what I have bought before. They will also introduce some new products and I typically will buy because I trust them. I already get used to buy from them and will buy anything they recommended."

(A1)with Buying intention	(B5) Special Occasions (B1)sales person	Honor Trust Familiar	A1P9-3: "This is the event of "Brand of the day". They will ask their VIP customers to come to shop and provide some foods and drinks to treat us. This makes us felt very different. The key point is the feeling. It makes us felt like friends and our relationship is no long selling and buying. When she asks me to support her, I will buy 30 sets if I only need 20 sets."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B1) Sales person, (B5)Special Occasions	Unique Cheap	A1P4: "During the mid-year celebration event, I went with my friend to shopping. The sales representative showed us the magazine mentioned that Miss Xu is also use this brand and this product. My friend started to negotiate price with sales representative. At the end, I felt very embarrassed. therefore, I bought the product for myself. After that, when we went to their annual celebration event, we passed by the same shop and my friend wanted to have a look. I had bad experience and did not want to go with her, so I went to another store to avoid the same thing happened again."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)sales person	Happiness Kindness	A2P1: "You will feel the pleasure when you are making some purchase. Typically, if the sales representative is not behaving very badly, I will buy something."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)sales person, (B7)product labels	Happiness Unique	A2P2: "It will create the feeling of happiness when you purchase something for girls. When I approach a shop, I will definite buy something if the sales representative provide good service and introduce me good products. The difference is only how much I spend on each purchase. The discount promotion is not the main reason to attract me to purchase. Their product must have some special features. If I did not buy anything, it must be the service provided by the sales representative is not good."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)sales person	Happiness	A2P4: "I like to shop with friends. The process of price negotiation brought me a lot of pleasure."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)sales person (B8)Experiential	Embarrass Trust	A2P2-2: "I went with my friend to buy some cosmetics products and he had a lot of requests and questions. He finally didn't buy anything and I felt embarrassed not buying anything. The sales representative also recommended me some products, therefore, I bought some products and spent five thousand NTD because I felt very embarrassed."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)Sales person (B8)Experiential	Unique, Happiness Kindness	A2P6: "The sales representative introduced me pressed powder foundation and regular powder foundation and she did a good job on those product introduction and service. That's why I felt I have to buy something from her."

(A2)without Buying intention	(B8)Experiential, (B1)sales person	Embarrass Impatient Trust	A2P4-2: "The problem was that my friend kept trying to cut price and the whole thing lasted for more than one hour. I felt very embarrassed about my friend's behavior and it was useless for me to sit there and do nothing. Therefore, I made the decision to buy the essence fluid to end the whole thing. It was really an embarrassing situation for me and my friend to spend more than one hour on product introduction and testing and my friend was also trying to cut price."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B8)Experiential, (B1)sales person (B5)Special Occasions (B10)Discount	Cheap	A2P6-2: "I went to MAC's shop during anniversary event of department store. There were a lot of people in the shop during the event. I was interested in their pressed powder foundation and would like to stop by and took a look. I had no intention to buy before I went. When I arrived the shop and found out they had promotion going on. I was impetuous and bought the whole set. This cost me around 4 to 5 thousand NTD. Typically, I won't go to look at the brands I don't familiar with."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1)sales person	Familiar Trust	A2P8: "I am very loyal to brands because I will get used to use products from specific brand. When I buy from someone I knew, I will not negotiate the price or ask for more free samples because I feel embarrassed. I will also buy products they recommended because they know what I need."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B8)Experiential, (B1) sales person	Unique	A2P3: "If you buy any CD product and you will get a foundation powder sample. When I go to the shop to get it, they will give some free testing service. It is good service and then I buy the foundation powder after the test."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B9) layout, (B1)Sales person (B8)Experiential,	Happiness, Unique	A2P12: "I will go to buy the products which I don't familiar, because the layout is really attractive and product is very unique. Of course sales representative also much recommended and very nice."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B6)Brand loyalty	Familiar, Unique	A2P10: "I won't go to any store which I don't familiar with. Even the layout is great. I will go to take around with the brand I like. And, if there is something good and new arrival, I will take some."

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**After shopping**


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Situation	Promotion Mix	Perception	Critical Statement
(A1)with Buying intention	(B10)Limited amount	Buy something but not really need.	AfP12 "I used to love shopping in department store. Whenever they have promotional event, I will go to take a look no matter what product or brand and I will buy some products sometimes. The result is that I left a lot of products aside and a lot of products I don't need. Right now, I will not go to shopping those promotional events unless those products are really cheap or the brands I know well."

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(A1)with Buying intention	(B11) Discount	Not useful	AfP5: "In the past, we are that type of people who do impulse buying because we will go to the shop has a lot of people and buy those products people are buying. We thought those products must be good. However, the products are not really and may not fit to our needs. This is kind of waste money."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B10) layout, (B1) Sales person	It is not as good as exceptive	AfP12: "Because the layout is really attractive for me to come in and buy some products. The sales representative also suggests me to use it. When I go back and use it, I found that it is not very good and different than what sales representative told me. Therefore, I will not come back to that shop again."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1) Sales person	It is not as good as exceptive	AfP9: "I used to have a lot of experience about wrong product introduction by sales representatives. Then I found the products I bought were all not the same as they introduced. Therefore, I don't go to those stores now."
(A2)without Buying intention	(B1) Sales person, (B12)Discount	Price discount too much cause the quality suspect	AfP4: "We spent a lot of time to negotiate price with sales representative that time. The price was reduced from NTD12,000 to NTD 4,000 with extra free products and then I bought that product. I have never used that product because the price reduction was very big and I am worry about the quality of the products."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B2) buy one get one free (B10) Limited amount	It is not as good as exceptive	AfP9: "P8 and I used to have impulse purchase. We will go to buy something if there is discount or a lot of people. We don't do it anymore now. We are only looking at those brands we like."
(A1)with Buying intention	(B2) buy one get one free (B10) Limited amount	It is not as good as exceptive	AfP8: "Agree with what AfP9 said." AfP7: "Agree with what AfP9 said."

**Table 6. Content Analysis of Critical Statements**