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## The Influence of Self-Congruity on Purchase Intention for Cosmetic Merchandises

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### Abstract

Self-congruity theory and purchase intention behavior are a unique combination to better understand the behavior displayed while buying cosmetic merchandises. The article is determined to discuss the effect of self-congruity on purchase intention. Self-congruity theory has been apply extensively in several studied; yet, the attention on cosmetic merchandises is quite limited. As there are four self-concepts that will reveal and predict consumer behavior in purchasing cosmetic merchandise. The four self-concept are actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, social self-concept, ideal social self-concept. Personal self-images that are congruent with product images are usually link with self-congruity. Meanwhile, purchase intention is the degree of possibility to purchase merchandise by consumers. Therefore it is interesting to examine the effect of self-congruity on purchase intention for cosmetic merchandises.

**Keyword:** Self-Congruity, Purchase Intention, Cosmetic product, Self-images, Consumer Behavior

### Introduction

In the modern environment, consumers are becoming more sophisticated. Consumers have their own self-images and prefer to portray it to differentiate themselves from others. Interestingly, self-concept is the force of self-images; thus, self-concept/product-image congruity is applicable to predict consumer behavior (Sirgy, 1982). Self-images are reflections of functional and symbolic meanings to better understand the consumer. In reality, individuals express self-images by consuming merchandises or services. Therefore, this scenario had established self-

images/product-images congruity theory (Sirgy, 1980). Thus, the merchandises or services consumed will usually be congruent with individual self-images. This phenomenon is explained by individual self-images that is congruent with typical product-image (Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, self-congruity will influence consumer purchase intention on merchandises or services as proven by Sirgy (1980). There is evidence that brand-self congruity impacts individual repurchase intentions of the luxury brand merchandises (Kim and Joung, 2016). This provides strong supportive evidence that consumers had intentions to purchase merchandises or services based on brand if the brand image was constant with their self-image.

Self-congruity theory is an established concept that has been accepted as an empirical application to explain consumer behavior. This concept has been implemented in several study such as automotive product (Ericksen, 1997; Wang, Yang, and Liu, 2009), retailing business (El Hedhli, Zourrig, and Chebat 2016; Kang et al. 2012; Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg 2000), luxury brand for certain merchandise (Liu et al. 2012; Rabbanee 2015), and tourism industry (Sirgy and Su, 2000; Zhang et al. 2014). Therefore, self-congruity performs a vital aspect to better understand consumer self-images. The self-images may convey deeply significant cultural elements. Culture influences consumption based on consumer experience and self-concept (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Hence, the aim of the current study is to review the influence of self-congruity as a force of self-concept in different cultures for cosmetic merchandises. Although, there are few studies have examined the influence of self-congruity on cosmetic merchandises. Consequently, the current study is expected to explain self-congruity and purchase intention. Secondly, it will discuss the effect of self-congruity on purchase intention for cosmetic merchandises. Notably, purchase intention is related to self-congruity (Sirgy, 1980). Individual that has a strong aspiration for merchandises self-congruence consume merchandises that will represent their self-concept (Fugate and Phillips, 2010). In this manner, there is significant for the current study to discover the influence of self-congruity to purchase intention for cosmetic merchandises.

## Literature Review

**Self-congruity** theory remains as typically aspect that suited to explain the consequence of self-image congruence on end user purchase behavior (Sirgy 1985). This concept is defined as a complete form of insight that identify the consumer desires for congruent, that similar with individual self-image or commonly recognized user image for merchandise that have been purchase (Liu et al. 2012; Sirgy et al. 1997). The study for self-congruity highlights on consumer behavior that concern on brand personality with four elements of self-concepts that helps to describe and predict behavior: (1) actual self-concept; the real self of a person, (2) ideal self-concept; self-desires that will transform individual existence differently from others, (3) social self-concept; in what manner that a person believes that other will recognize themselves, and (4) ideal social self-concept; in what manner that a person would love being recognized by his buddies (Hosany and Martin 2012; Sirgy 1982). However, most of the study in consumer studies focus on actual and ideal self-concept (Hosany and Martin, 2012). Both types of self-concepts have been studies in post-purchase behavior, merchandise preferences and purchase intentions. Accordingly, ideal self-concept has more predictive power towards purchase intention compared

to actual self-concept (Ericksen, 1997; Hosany and Martin, 2012). However, the generalization is rather limited because the samples used for his study were university students (Ericksen, 1997).

Furthermore, congruity was an outcome that usually experience by individual with greater satisfaction level, where the product image and personality perfectly match their self-image or self-concept (Coward, Fox, and Wilson, 2008). Nevertheless, the previous study is focused on innovativeness in the new merchandise purchase. That similar for trendy merchandise, fashion and textiles, technology savvy product and daily merchandise consume for health and beauty that suit the modern, sophisticated and stylish consumer. Therefore, purchase of new car model with enhances technology, latest version of smart phone, new jewelry or new pieces of clothing by famous fashion designer are related to a symbolic consumption. Each merchandise has its own identity with a symbolic meaning that will portray the person self-images (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). Self-image congruence refers to the perfect match between consumers' self-concept (actual self and ideal self) and the user image of a given merchandise or store. Therefore self-congruity is frequently apply as a concept to portray self-image congruence (Sirgy et al. 2008), this finding has been prove in few studies. That self-congruity had reveal significant relationship with consumers' brand merchandise and perceived quality for sports attire merchandises that targeted to youngster (Lu and Xu, 2015). Another study identify, that self-congruity influences perceived quality for ready-to-wear merchandises that targeted to generation Y consumers (Erdogmus and Budeyri-Turam, 2012).

Thus, over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in self-congruity studies that provide a clear insight for modern consumer in the new millennium. Identically, each person has their own unique self-image that reflects individual self-concept. This situation influences their preferences for merchandise. Remarkably the self-congruity concept is normally recognized as the "match" or "mismatch" between consumer self-image and a merchandise, product brand, or business image (Sirgy, 1986).

### ***Previous Studies on Self-Congruity and Purchase Intention***

Purchase intention and self-congruity is unique combination for consumer behavior. This review will provide a better a clear insight for both concepts. The review of selected study reveals that this theory had been studies in various research backgrounds such as health and cosmetic products (Pudaruth, Juwaheer, and Seewoo, 2015), branded and luxury merchandises (Rabbanee, 2015), retailing industry (Das, 2015), and tourism industry (Kang, Tang, and Lee 2012). Thus, self-congruity is an established theory that explains individual behavior through product purchase. The relationship between purchase intention and self-congruity is summarizing in Table 1. What is interesting to learn from previous study is that its consist of respondents from different cultures (Quester, Karunaratna and Goh, 2000), women (Nash et al. 2006), men from metropolitan cities (Souiden and Diagne, 2009), and Muslim consumers (Jihan, Hashim and Musa, 2014). However of the studies were conducted in the western culture while only few studies were conducted in the eastern culture. Certainly, this evidence identifies that culture nature's individual purchasing behavior. Overall, the study that applied self-congruity theory to test respondents' congruence towards the product that they consumed reveals that consumer purchasing behavior is influence by self-concept.

In brief, cosmetic product consumption behavior is link with consumer lifestyles and self-images (Maehle & Shneur, 2010; Nash et al. 2006; Rabbanee, 2015; Souiden, Jabeur, 2015).

Additionally, the factors that affect purchase intention for cosmetic products are religious commitment (Azmawani, Asrarhaghighi and Ab Rahman, 2015), concerns on the current environmental situation (Kim & Chung, 2011; Pudaruth et al. 2015), and preferences for organic merchandise and nature-based cosmetics (Jihan, Hashim and Musa, 2014). Accordingly, female and male consumers buying a merchandise to improve their social self-concept that will be recognized by others, besides help to build confidence level and self-images in their careers and lifestyles (Nash et al. 2006; Souiden and Diagne, 2009). In purchasing cosmetic products, religiosity influences product consumption especially for Muslim consumers (Alam et al. 2012). Halal product is religious requirement for Muslim consumer (El-Bassiouny, 2013). Halal product is associated with purity, cleanliness, and good quality; thus, halal product is also accepted by non-Muslims in Malaysia (Yuhanis and Chok, 2012). Green consumers purchase cosmetic products that are organic based and environmental friendly to devote their commitment in maintaining the ecological ecosystem (Kim and Chung, 2011; Pudaruth, Juwaheer and Seewoo, 2015). Self-congruity demonstrates positive self-images in symbolic consumption for luxury products (Rabbanee, 2015) and for brand's image that influences consumer's self-concept. It had significant impact on the relationship quality product (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012). These studies provide evidence that behavior is connected with cultural gist, sociohistorical influence and social dynamics that shape consumer experience and self-concept (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). The self-concept is like the mirror image of self-congruity, which will influence consumer's consumption for merchandise that is consistent with individual self-images. In addition, the studies provide evidence that self-congruity effects purchase intention (Sirgy, 1980). In consequence, the current study is proposed to discuss self-congruity and its link to purchase intention.

Table 1. Summary of previous studies on self-congruity

Authors/ Setting	Variables	Theory	Sample	Findings
Quester, Karunaratna, & Goh (2000) Product evaluation	1. Product images 2. Actual self- images 3. Ideal self- images 4. Culture dimension: Individualism- collectivism Masculinity Uncertainty avoidance	Self- congruity Self- images	Survey of 140 samples from Malaysia and 156 samples from Australia	Cross-cultural results for both samples used different for actual vs. ideal self-images in their product evaluation. There is a need to practice "Think globally and act locally".
(Nash et al. 2006) Cosmetics	1. Social measures: Health	N.A	Web-based survey of 152	Cosmetics provide favorable impact for a woman's earning potential, professional class,

	Confidence Earning potential Professional class		men and 171 women	health, and confidence. Ability to manipulate appearance to enhance positive self-perception and well-being. Thus it brings confidence to convey a good first impression.
Guthrie, Hye-Shin, & Jung (2008) Cosmetic usage	1.Facial images 2.Cosmetic usages 3.Brand personality 4.Brand attitude	N.A	Survey of 225 female respondents from the USA	Facial image and cosmetic usage determine brand perceptions. Thus, identifying the brand personalities that attract consumers will benefit companies and boost brand image.
(Souiden and Diagne 2009) Consumpti on of cosmetics	1.Social culture: Beliefs Lifestyles 2.Personal variables: Self-image Ageing effect Physical attractiveness State of health 3. Marketing Variables: Advertising Purchase situation Men attitude	N.A	Survey of 223 samples, 53.8 % Canadian and 46.2 % French. Two cities: Paris (France) and Montreal (Canada)	Canadians made a purchase to reveal their lifestyles that will enhance self-images, attractiveness and youthful appearance, while French men purchase cosmetics to be physically attractive. Both samples display different behavior.
(Parker 2009) Brand personality and user- imagery congruence	1.User-imagery 2.Brand attitude 3.Brand personality 4.Private brand 5.Public brand	Self- congruit y theory	Survey of 272 samples	User-imagery congruity prefers to consume public brands, while brand personality is more favorable on private brand. Both variables must be explained as separate constructs. It is worth to develop the self- congruity model for brand personality research.

(Maehle and Shneur 2010) Brand and personalities	1.Brand personalities: Sincerity Excitement Competence Sophistication Ruggedness	N.A	Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> round 56 samples 2 <sup>nd</sup> round 140 samples	Consumers favor more of brands that match their personalities. It revealed a possible hierarchy of brand personality dimensions' influence.
H. Y. Kim & Chung (2011) Organic personal care	1.Consumer value 2.Attitude 3.Perceived behavioral control 4.Subjective norms 5.Past experience 6.Purchase intention	N.A	Survey of 207 respondents	Environmental consciousness and appearance consciousness positively influence attitude toward buying organic personal care products. Moreover, past experiences act as a predictor of purchase intention.
Jihan, Hashim, & Musa (2014) Halal cosmetic	1.Halal cosmetic awareness	N.A	Focus group of 20 women respondents	The level of awareness towards halal cosmetics is still low. For instance, the content/ingredient of the product is the main factor in purchasing cosmetic products. If the product is based on natural resources, then it is safe to consume.
Azmawani, Asrarhaghig hi, & Ab Rahman (2015) Halal cosmetics	1.Knowledge 2.Religiosity 3.Attitude 4.Intention	N.A	Survey of 110 respondents	Positive relationship between attitude and intention to choose halal cosmetic products. However, there is more positive attitude on halal food compared to halal cosmetics.
Rajat Roy Fazlul K. Rabbanee (2015) Luxury brand	1.Avoidance of similarity 2.Status consumption 3.Socially desirable 4.Self-congruity 5.Self-	Self-congruity	Survey of 202 female respondents	Consumers' self-congruity with a luxury brand is positively influenced by social desirability, need for uniqueness, and status consumption. It enhances consumer self-perception and hedonism to reuse the shopping bag.

	perception 6.Hedonism			
Pudaruth, Juwaheer, & Seewoo (2015) Eco-friendly cosmetics	1.Lifestyles 2.Ethical consumerism 3.Economy 4.Personal benefit 5.Social influence	N.A	Survey of 150 women. Condenses a set of 35 attributes	Women lifestyles, self-image, health and economic conditions are elements that influence behavioral intention for eco-friendly cosmetic products.

**Purchase intention** is an acknowledged variable in marketing which explained consumer behavior in decision making. Purchase intention is influenced by cultures and subcultures in displaying consumption behavior (Sun et al. 2014). The terms and concept of intentions and attitudes are different. Intention can be precise as, "The person's motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior" (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Purchase intention is the degree of likelihood to consume merchandise or services by consumers. Intention is acknowledged as a wish to execute certain action; thus it usually known as consumer purchase intentions in consumer behavior and marketing (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010). In addition, the Theory of Planned Behavior is the suitable theory to predict purchase intention (Ajzen 1991). Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are antecedents of purchase intentions. These antecedents are related to the behavioral belief of consumer that will influence purchase intention. However, in this review, self-congruity influences consumer purchase intentions that are related to self-images.

Surprisingly, purchase intention influenced to self-congruity (Sirgy, 1980; Sirgy et al. 1997). Consumer purchase intention is directed by self-enhancement motivation and self-consistency motivation that are referred to as actual self-image or social self-image by Sirgy (1980). Following his enthusiasm Sirgy et al. (1997) suggest new method in exploring self-congruity. The finding divulges that brand preferences, product form preferences, brand attitude, program choice, and consumer satisfaction are predictive of self-image congruence that influence purchase intention. This new method is more applicable because it captures the experience of self-congruity, urges own self-images of product user images, and captures self-congruity experience holistically.

Thus, the consumers that consume cosmetic products will demonstrate their self-images that usually consistent with the product images. In fact, self-congruity and brand image had reveal a significant relationship on purchase intention for luxury brands as the product quality is examine with straight quality control (Yu, Lin and Chen, 2013). This phenomenon is solid as there is a strong evident for the relationship of self-congruity and intention to purchase the merchandise (Ericksen, 1997).

### **Self-congruity influences purchase intention**

Self-congruity theory is well established that has been applied in a study that focus on symbolic purchasing behavior (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy, 2012). Self-congruity act as a tools of motivation to help express unique self-individuality; that usually become the



motivation that guide the consumers to purchase merchandises and services. Based on the self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986), the consumers typically consume merchandise and services that reflect a person self-image. Recently, there are several studies that focus on self-congruity and purchase intention that provide better insight to understand the modern consumer in the new millennium. The result identify positive relationship for self-image congruity with brand preference for jewelry product, that show a consistent behavior for consumer self-images and high satisfaction experience (Jamal and Goode, 2001). The situation provides vital explanation for the jewelry brand as the ability of this merchandise to position product with the product message is consistent with consumer self-image that purchase the merchandise. Furthermore, buying the jewelry product is a tool of symbolic consumption behavior.

The is solid evident that, self-congruity influences purchase intention as revealed in finding of several studies (Jamal and Goode, 2001; Yu, Lin and Chen, 2013). This evident prove the relationship between self-image, product-image congruity and intention to purchase (Ericksen, 1997). Likewise, self-congruity construct had a strong support for symbolic consumption, which focuses on luxury merchandise and services and new model of innovative merchandise. Thus the important elements for the brand or merchandise are to better position their brand name that will accommodate consumer self-images congruence behavior.

## Conclusion

Self-congruity is usually linked to purchase intention that influences the consumer to buy a cosmetic product that is congruent with his /her self-image. That is consistent with previous study Khalid et al. (2018) that confirm the positive influence of self-congruity to purchase intention for several range cosmetic product such as organic based and halal cosmetic product. However, ideal self-images are good predictors to purchase intention. In which it as they relate to individual self-desires to be seen perfect in the eyes of others, thus increase his/her self-confidence. This is congruence with the result of a prior research that examine self-images as a piece of self-concept that interprets individual physical characteristics grounded on cosmetic products that they had purchase; it embraces different self-images that usually diverge for each person (Guthrie, Hye-Shin and Jung, 2008). Thus, a person who wishes for product-self-congruence will certainly purchase products or merchandise to portray their unique self-concept (Fugate and Phillips, 2010); hereafter, the behavior reveal will express their self-images. Furthermore, self-congruity influence the consumers' purchase intention in certain customs, Muslim consumer with greater religiosity commitment favor to consume halal cosmetics to meet the religion requirement, then the consumer that concerned for environment and will favor organic cosmetic to dedicate their concern for the world wellbeing, then, those consumer that are love socializing will purchasing a luxury cosmetics products to acquire recognition from the community. Hence, the rule of thumb to understand self-congruity is to gain a clear insight of consumer self-images. Thus, provide prove that the merchandise consumer consume is a mirror image of their self-images. In light of previous studies presented in Table 1, cultures do influence self-images based on an individual's sociohistorical influence and social dynamics; it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore as it exists in their lifetimes.

Overall, the consistent self-images with individual product-images will impact purchase intention of the cosmetic merchandises. In addition, high self-congruity will contribute to high satisfaction that leads to repurchase intention. These reviews provide significant insight to the

cosmetic industry and enrich the literature on self-congruity and purchase intention. Based on these review, each individual has different self-images. Despite that consumers are more attracted to ideal self-images; thus, the cosmetic firm must understand the consumer self-images so that they can position their cosmetic products to suit consumer self-congruity. This message will help in matching the product image congruence. This review would also help the cosmetic firm to gain a clear role of self-congruity that impact consumer purchase intention for cosmetic merchandises.

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