
Customer Experience and Luxury Strategy in Cosmetics Design

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Abstract: We have conducted case studies that focus on the representation of luxury in cosmetics design for both domestic and foreign products and compared them based on the theory of customer experience proposed by Bernd H. Schmitt. In this study, we attempted to examine the representation of luxury in relation to cosmetics design, through the analysis of four brands using the customer experience framework as a basis for analysis. The three elements that are considered necessary for the representation of luxury in cosmetics design are as follows: (1) Brand image or company image that is easily identifiable. (2) Each element of design contains a story. (3) The design is innovative and has exclusivity. In terms of functionality and effect/efficacy, the options are without number. However, luxury cosmetics stand as absolute with irresistible appeal. Cosmetics are used on a daily basis to make women beautiful. Women also carry around makeup products in their purse, which may catch people's eyes. In light of this, the representation of luxury in a cosmetic design can be an extremely important element.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Cosmetics, Design, Luxury Strategy, Luxury Brand

1. Introduction

Philip Kotler, a worldwide marketing guru, defines a product as "anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or a need. Other names for a product would be a value package or benefit bundle." This means that products are packages of services that satisfy needs. Women who buy lipstick do not just buy color for their lips - they buy hope. Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon cosmetics company, famously said, "In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope"[1]. Dreams or dream factors are indispensable to the luxury strategy and luxury company[2][3].

There are a large number of cosmetics brands, both domestic and foreign, on the Japanese cosmetics market. They are sold according to various forms of distribution, including institutional product sales (direct selling system through manufacturers' own retail network), general product sales, and door-to-door sales. Cosmetic products are classified into roughly two categories: makeup and skincare. They are used every day to adorn the face and body with color, and to keep skin healthy. Therefore, what is a basic requirement of

cosmetics is functionality and ease of use. The representation of luxury, which is at the other end of the spectrum, is often thought of as a back burner factor when it comes to designing cosmetics.

Recently, however, some foreign cosmetics brands have placed more emphasis on the representation of luxury to the extent that this representation surpasses conventional design. If cosmetics can make a woman's dream of becoming beautiful come true, it naturally follows that more emphasis should be placed on the representation of luxury. And this can be a contributing factor to product differentiation from among the numerous cosmetics brands.

We have conducted case studies that focus on the representation of luxury in cosmetics design for both domestic and foreign products and compared them based on the theory of customer experience proposed by Bernd H. Schmitt. We further investigated how and what kind of design contributes to categorizing a cosmetic brand as a luxury brand or absolute brand replaceable by no other brands, and extracted those elements that products from the luxury brands had in common.

2. Cosmetics Design

2.1. Positioning of Cosmetics Design

Design, as discussed here, is not limited to so-called superficial design, such as the design of packages and bottles. The word “design” originates from “designare” which means to designate and to draw. Hence design has two aspects: (1) An analytical and creative aspect that addresses intent, plan or goal; and (2) an efficacy aspect that brings an idea into form such as for example, a drawing, model or sketch. With these aspects in mind, design encompasses every asset that creates brand value, or namely anything concerning mission, promise, positioning, representation, reputation, and quality [4].

In the case of cosmetics, a great deal of cost and time are invested in the development of new ingredients and new technology in the pursuit of greater efficacy than a competing brand. This is done in order to distinguish oneself from the competitors. Because this involves science-based chemistry, cosmetics can be continually improved. This is why new products from various companies are hitting the market month after month, year after year. However, technology-related differentiation may be simply proportional to the difference in the size of a company or the available funding for research and development. Therefore, it is crucial for some companies to employ a new strategy by changing the playing field, according to their financial and human resource situations. And this is where a concept called “dream” comes into the equation.

At present, technological development has reached a point of maturity, and low quality cosmetics that were once commercially available have been replaced by cosmetics that maintain a certain level of quality. This implies there is an ongoing reinforcement of the need to clearly differentiate by design.

2.2. Previous Studies on Cosmetics Design

Very few studies on cosmetics design as a theme have been carried out previously. The only instances one might recall are the handful of articles found in a fashion magazine called *VOGUE NIPPON* published around 2001 or 2002 that discussed aspects of cosmetic design. One of the trends then was the differentiation of cosmetics by package design. However, because the design discussed had nothing to do with the functionality, efficacy, or effect of the cosmetics, there was not much coverage in the general women’s magazines, beauty magazines or cosmetics industry journals. Such articles referred to design only as a part of the product description, if at all. Viewed in this light, consideration of the representation of luxury in cosmetics in terms of design can be of great significance.

3. Customer Experience in Cosmetics

3.1. Customer Experience and Cosmetics

Bernd H. Schmitt, a leading scholar and professor of experiential marketing at Columbia University in the United

States, defines experiences as private events that occur in response to some stimulation (for instance, something offered through marketing efforts before and after purchasing). The idea of customer experience does not refer to private experiences in the past, but refers to a value that appeals to a customer’s instinct and senses when moved by something at the customer’s point of contact with a company or a brand. In experiential marketing, products and services are not simply sold as things, but customer consumption is seen in the context of that individual’s lifestyle. During the contextualizing process, meaning is given to the consumer’s actions by appealing to the senses and emotions. Schmitt also classifies customer experience into five different modules as a strategic platform from which to develop marketing activities [5].

Schmitt discussed comprehensive experiences associated with customer consumption. The focus is not just on products and services, but also on the generation of customer experiences based on the consumption of these products and services. This idea originates in the way customers are seen. The idea stresses that the customers are seen as rational and sensible beings, and that customer consumption often depends on appeal to the emotions.

Schmitt’s five strategic experiential modules shown in Table 1 are based on cognitive science and social psychology [6]. “SENSE,” “FEEL” and “THINK” are equivalent to “sense,” “emotion” and “recognition,” respectively, which are psychological modules in cognitive science. “ACT” and “RELATE” are equivalent to “physical self” and “social self,” respectively, in social psychology. “Self,” which is used in social psychology, refers to the subject for which he objectively recognizes himself [7].

Table 1. Strategic Experiential Modules Provided by Bernd H. Schmitt.

Module	Contents of Customer Experience
SENSE	<i>Sensory experience value</i> that appeals to the five senses
FEEL	<i>Emotional experience value</i> that appeals to feelings and moods
THINK	<i>Intellectual experience value</i> that appeals to creativity and cognitive functions
ACT	<i>Behavioral experience value</i> that appeals to physical behavior and lifestyle
RELATE	<i>Relative experience value</i> that appeals to confirmative groups and cultural groups

Source: Schmitt, Bernd H. (1999) *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to SENSE, FEEL, THINK, ACT, and RELATE to Your Company and Brands*, Free Press.

One of the reasons we cannot make light of the concept of experience as an economic value is that the differentiating strategy, which targets functional benefits, cannot ensure continuous competitive advantage. Such a strategy easily allows competitors across the world to imitate, and technological innovation then results in the accelerating commoditization of products [8]. In this regard, an approach that incorporates customer experience as a differentiating strategy for cosmetics seems crucial. People experience and enjoy the texture, color, and fragrance of cosmetics daily when the five senses are engaged as cosmetics are applied over the skin. In this manner, it has strong characteristics of customer

experience, and therefore, experiential marketing should be stressed in this type of industry.

Despite the potential for product differentiation, only one study is available that addresses the customer experience of cosmetics. This study analyzed the premium features of COSME DECORTE AQ MELIORITY Cream based on the classification of customer experience [9]. The paucity of studies in this area is why a comparative examination of luxury strategies of multiple cosmetics brands using customer experience is of importance.

3.2. Previous Studies on Customer Experience in Luxury Brands

When considering the strategies of luxury brands, attempting to provide an explanation based solely on traditional marketing is insufficient. A detailed analysis that includes experiential marketing is required. On the basis of this concept, studies on various types of businesses have been previously conducted for brands such as Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Shoyeido Incense Co., and Toraya Confectionery [10][11]. There was also another study on the luxury brand strategy of CHANEL that specifically featured its cosmetic products [12]. However, none of these studies included analyses made from the point of view of customer experience.

Studies examining cosmetics as a luxury brand using experiential modules are few. This study, therefore, was executed to examine cosmetics from the aspect of cosmetics design.

4. Case Analyses of Major Luxury Brands

This section discusses and compares the differences between major foreign luxury brands and domestic brands. The focus will be on makeup products (lipsticks) and skincare products (creams), examining four products in total as shown in Table 2. To facilitate our process of examination, analytical principles from the customer experience framework will be utilized.

Table 2. Examining four products.

	Makeup products (lipsticks)	Skincare products (creams)
Foreign brand	CHANEL Rouge Allure (Chanel)	GIVENCHY Le Soin Noir (Parfum Givenchy)
Domestic brand	CHICCA Enticing Lipstick (Kanebo)	cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE / Crème Synergique (Shiseido)

The reasons for selecting these case examples are as follows: (1) The product has a high profile among luxury brands; (2) No previous case analyses of makeup or skincare exist; and (3) Comparison between foreign and domestic brands is possible. Reasons for selecting the customer experience framework are that we believe customers value cosmetics that have qualities that extend beyond the functional benefits in that they appeal to the sensibilities of users; these values are especially vital to luxury brands.

Here, we attempt to analyze the representation of luxury in luxury brands by analyzing and comparing four case examples.

4.1. Customer Experience in a Makeup Product

Two types of makeup product (lipstick), CHANEL Rouge Allure shown in Figure 1 and Kanebo CHICCA Enticing Lipstick shown in Figure 2 were analyzed.



Figure 1. CHANEL Rouge Allure
Source: CHANEL Home Page [13]



Figure 2. Kanebo CHICCA Enticing.
Source: CHICCA Home Page [14]

4.1.1. Analysis of CHANEL

As seen from the package design, the base package color for CHANEL Rouge Allure, released in 2006, is CHANEL black, a departure from the conventional packaging for a lipstick. Also, this lipstick was the first makeup product named after a fragrance. The price is currently 3,600 yen (Tax excluded), a comparatively normal price for an average lipstick. However, this lipstick yields a high-class image that is disproportionate to the price.

Table 3 shows the analysis of CHANEL Rouge Allure based on the perspective of customer experience. The package design was inspired by the mechanism of a ballpoint pen: a single one click operation that draws out the lipstick.

Table 3. Customer experience of Rouge Allure.

Module	Descriptions of customer experience
SENSE	Design in dignified black conjures images of CHANEL Package design different from conventional packaging Unique logo identifies CHANEL at a glance Elegant touch provided by special coating
FEEL	A feeling of sturdiness is experienced when returning the lipstick to the case
THINK	Intrigue at the one-click operation for drawing out the lipstick, which is completely different from the traditional cartridge case
ACT	A behavioral style toward makeup changes by owning the unconventional product
RELATE	A sense of connection with Chanellers who collect CHANEL goods by sharing the philosophy of CHANEL

This innovative package design overthrew the traditional lipstick case design. This unique approach is common to the philosophy of CHANEL, which also values the functionality of products.

The feeling of sturdiness you experience when putting the lipstick back in the case is said to have been inspired by the

feel experienced when closing the door of a Mercedes-Benz. The CHANEL black cap has a special coating that leaves no fingerprints.

4.1.2. Analysis of CHICCA

“Chicca” in Italian is an affectionate term that means cute. This Italian word is the origin for the lipstick’s brand name. CHICCA Enticing Lipstick was released in 2008 by Kanebo Cosmetics Inc., a company that had been incorporated into the Kao Group. Targeted mainly for Japanese women (aged 50 years or above), the concept of this lipstick is to draw out the loveliness and luminous beauty of adult women. Naturally, makeup products, including lipstick, are aimed at aging care. For the design of the package, a renowned Japanese industrial designer was hired. The lipstick is currently slightly higher priced at 5,000 yen(Tax excluded).

Table 4 shows the analysis of CHICCA Enticing Lipstick based on the perspective of customer experience. The package design of this lipstick is very simple and clear, conveying a calming, transparent feeling. Embellishing the case with a Swarovski jewel also adds a touch of loveliness to the design. By changing a woman’s way of thinking from using a makeup product to using an aging care product, a concept targeted for Japanese women aged 50 years and above was seamlessly created.

Table 4. Customer experience of CHICCA Enticing Lipstick.

Module	Descriptions of customer experience
SENSE	A Swarovski jewel sparkles on the smooth silver-white surface The brand name, CHICCA, is simply etched on the surface
FEEL	A smart design suggests a transparent feel, loveliness, and a sense of calmness
THINK	Functionality which achieves perfect texture and color with just one application
ACT	A change in usage from makeup to aging care A concept of “bringing out beauty from within Japanese women” creates a sense of connection with Japanese adult women
RELATE	

4.2. Customer Experience in a Skincare Product

Two types of cream, GIVENCHY Le Soin Noir shown in Figure 3 and Shiseido cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE / Crème Synergique shown in Figure 4, were analyzed.



Figure 3. GIVENCHY Le Soin Noir

Source: Parfum Givenchy Home

Page [16]



Figure 4. cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE / Crème Synergique

Source: Shiseido Home Page [16]

4.2.1. Analysis of GIVENCHY

As can be seen from Figure 3, the GIVENCHY Le Soin Noir container is made of very thick clear glass through which the cream inside is visible. The unique bottle-shaped container comes with a jet-black lid. The collaboration of the clear glass and black coloring succeeds in creating a dignified package design. The GIVENCHY logo etched on the glass surface produces a simple yet high-class image. The price is currently 38,000 yen (Tax excluded), which is more expensive than the ordinary cream, but it expresses the value that exceeds its price.

Table 5 shows the analysis of GIVENCHY Le Soin Noir based on the perspective of customer experience. The simple logo etched on the bottle-shaped container made of clear glass and only black in color creates a luxurious, high-class image. It can hardly be expected to be cream. The jet black cream, which cannot be found anywhere else, is the outcome of abundant study and research. The plankton, *Skeletonema costatum*, which inhabits deep ocean waters, has an extremely strong vital power. GIVENCHY discovered its skin beautifying effect, and after extraction from the ocean plankton and culturing, formulated this ingredient into a cream. The creation of this jet black cream also adds an element of intrigue to the functional aspect.

Table 5. Customer experience of Le Soin Noir.

Module	Descriptions of customer experience
SENSE	A Dignified bottle-shaped design with use of clear glass and rich black materials Simple logo etched on the glass
FEEL	Dignified feeling created by a black and clear bottle High class image created by a simple logo
THINK	Intrigue at jet black cream containing an ingredient extracted and cultured from ocean plankton
ACT	Promotes change in the users’ views from just having skincare to having confidence in their skin
RELATE	A sense of connection provided by GIVENCHY’s philosophy that “it’s not just for skincare, but for bringing out skin’s beauty”

4.2.2. Analysis of Cle De Peau Beaute Synergique

cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE / Crème Synergique shown in Figure 4 is a cream from the top-of-the-line cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE series developed using Shiseido’s comprehensive technology in 2008. This cream boasts a considerably high functionality in combating spots, freckles, and rough skin while restoring the skin’s natural radiance and resilience. Together with a French fragrance company, Shiseido developed a rose plant called Synergique, the extract of which is added to this cream leading to a distinctive and pleasing aroma. The price of this cream is currently 120,000 yen (Tax excluded), which falls in the highest price range for a skincare product.

Table 6 shows an analysis of cle de peau BEAUTE SYNERGIQUE / Crème Synergique based on the perspective of customer experience. The design is simple and consists of a gold logo printed on a high-class black package. The combination of black and gold creates the aura of a luxury brand, while at the same time the product excels at skincare functions such as whitening and the prevention of skin

roughness. The product also creates a sense of connection among users of prestige cosmetics.

Table 6. Customer experience of Crème Synergique.

Module	Descriptions of customer experience
SENSE	High-class black-themed design Simple gold logo
FEEL	High class image created by a gold logo and black-themed package design
THINK	Intrigue at cream formulated with a rose extract called Synergique co-developed by a French fragrance company
ACT	Changes in users' views and behaviors from maintaining current skin condition to whitening and preventing rough skin
RELATE	A sense of connection among users who have recognized the benefits of prestige cosmetics

4.3. Comparison and Consideration from the Aspect of Customer Experience

We analyzed makeup and skincare products of both foreign and domestic brands from the aspect of customer experience noted above. Based on our analysis, we now compare the customer experience for foreign versus domestic brands in each category, and examine the major differences.

Table 7 shows the major differences in the studied makeup products. Our findings suggest that foreign brand makeup products are different from domestic products in the following aspects: the product can evoke the company image from the package design, induces particular feelings that are synonymous with the brand philosophy, achieves innovative technology while maintaining the original brand image and functionality, influences users' behavior toward daily makeup, and generates a brand-based sense of special connection among users.

Table 8 shows major differences in skincare products. Our findings suggest that foreign brand skincare products are different from domestic products in the following respects: the brand logo can evoke the company image, product design induces particular feelings synonymous with the brand philosophy, and the product achieves innovative technology while maintaining skincare function, promotes change in users' views from just having skincare to having confidence in their behavior, and generates a sense of special connection among users through brand philosophy as a common ground.

As observed above, there are significant differences in terms of customer experience between foreign and domestic brands when they are compared. Domestic cosmetics (makeup and skincare products) place more emphasis on functionality and ease of use, and do not seem to focus on design based on customer experience, which includes package design. Mass production in Japan and cost reduction by the use of a mold for such production may be the reason behind this. Despite such circumstances, the highest class products have been developed for domestic brands. However, most of these products do not have bold and striking designs. And if at all, there is a profound difference in terms of the representation of product design compared to foreign brand products.

Table 7. Comparison of customer experience in makeup products.

Module	Comparative consideration of customer experience
SENSE	There is a difference as to whether the package design can evoke the company image
FEEL	There is a difference as to whether users' particular feelings toward a company's brand philosophy are evoked
THINK	There is a difference as to whether the product has achieved an innovative product while maintaining its original brand image and functionality
ACT	There is a difference as to whether the product influences users' behavior toward daily makeup use
RELATE	There is a difference as to whether the product generates a brand-based sense of special connection among users

Table 8. Comparison of customer experience in skincare products.

Module	Comparative consideration of customer experience
SENSE	There is a difference as to whether the brand logo can evoke the company image
FEEL	There is a difference as to whether the product design can evoke users' particular feelings toward the company's brand philosophy
THINK	There is a difference as to whether the product has achieved innovative technology while maintaining its skincare function
ACT	There is a difference as to whether the users' views have changed from just having a skincare product to having confidence in their behavior
RELATE	There is a difference as to whether the product generates a sense of special connection among users through brand philosophy as a common ground

5. Common Factors in the Representation of Luxury

Based on the case analysis presented in the previous section, Table 9 shows common factors in luxury brands from the perspective of customer experience. The representation of luxury, through product design (package, logo, etc.), adopted by a luxury brand can help customers identify the brand, and the brand image can induce particular feelings from within the customer. Innovation is paired with functionality based on the brand story, and changes in a customer's behavior style are initiated which originates in the luxury brand. A particular sense of connection and camaraderie among users who associate themselves with the philosophy of the luxury brand leads to formation of a unique social group. These are common factors in luxury brands. There are certain factors that represent luxury brands, and when all factors are satisfied, status as a luxury brand may be gained.

Table 9. Common factors in the representation of luxury.

Module	Comparative consideration of customer experience
SENSE	Identification of luxury brand by its design (package, logo, etc.)
FEEL	Inducement of particular feelings through image of luxury brand
THINK	Pairing innovation with functionality based on the brand story of the luxury brand
ACT	Changes in customers' behavior style which originates in the luxury brand
RELATE	Formation of a social group based on a unique sense of connection and strong camaraderie among users who associate themselves with the luxury brand philosophy

6. Conclusion

In this study, we attempted to examine the representation of luxury in relation to cosmetics design, through the analysis of four brands using the customer experience framework as a basis for analysis. The three elements that are considered necessary for the representation of luxury in cosmetics design are as follows:

- (1) Brand image or company image that is easily identifiable.
- (2) Each element of design contains a story.
- (3) The design is innovative and has exclusivity.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, being a luxury brand means the brand offers consumers a deep sense of satisfaction as an absolute brand replaceable by no other brands. A brand being easily identifiable is the major premise. Especially since cosmetics are something consumers use on a daily basis to look beautiful, products need to be designed such that they represent the luxury image of the brand or company behind it. Also important is to ensure this information is communicated seamlessly to consumers.

Next, the brand story, which contains the history and tradition of the luxury brand, the spirit and anecdotes of the founder, and the full commitment to product development, needs to be reflected in the color, shape and fragrance of the cosmetic product in such detail that it causes the consumer to experience a special feeling every time they use the product.

Another important element is that the design must be innovative, which is the mission of a luxury brand. Being profound and gorgeous alone does not make a product a luxury item. But by integrating modern technology and evolving, the exclusivity of a luxury brand can be exploited.

In terms of functionality and effect/efficacy, the options are without number. However, luxury cosmetics stand as absolute with irresistible appeal. Cosmetics are used on a daily basis to make women beautiful. Women also carry around makeup products in their purse, which may catch people's eyes. In light of this, the representation of luxury in a cosmetic design can be an extremely important element.

Based on the case analysis conducted in this study, each foreign brand has succeeded in covering these three elements. There is no doubt that anyone who sees these products recognizes them as luxury brands. On the other hand, domestic brand cosmetics usually lack one of these three elements, and even if they do possess all, each element is not linked to the others in a way that generates a synergistic effect. Therefore, we conclude that the domestic brands analyzed here have not created the absolute status of a luxury brand.

This study has examined only one typically used item from the categories of makeup and skincare products. Through future investigation into more items from these categories, it is possible to further narrow down the factors common to the representation of luxury in cosmetics design.

In addition to design, we believe examination of the representation of luxury in cosmetics is also possible by taking into consideration aspects of the brand story, the use of creators in commercialization, and the CSR activities of each

company. Through further study of these aspects, we hope to continue to offer new suggestions that will help in the development of cosmetics from the viewpoint of customer experience.

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