

## COSMETIC FOR MODERN CONSUMER: THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONGRUITY ON PURCHASE INTENTION



Nor Rahimy Binti

Khalid<sup>1\*</sup>

Che Aniza Binti Che

Wel<sup>2</sup>

Syed Shah Alam<sup>3</sup>

Suraya Akmar Binti

Mokhtaruddin\*

<sup>1,2</sup>UKM-Graduate School of Business, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>Email: [norrahimykhalid@yahoo.com](mailto:norrahimykhalid@yahoo.com) Tel: 0133807997

<sup>2</sup>Email: [surayaakmar76@gmail.com](mailto:surayaakmar76@gmail.com) Tel: 0194770059

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Email: [aniza@ukm.edu.my](mailto:aniza@ukm.edu.my) Tel: 019-2869712

\*Email: [drsyed2005@gmail.com](mailto:drsyed2005@gmail.com) Tel: 019-2614919



(+ Corresponding author)

### ABSTRACT

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Self-congruity theory is remarkable link with attitude and purchase intention to determine the consumer behavior in purchasing cosmetic products. This study will determine the impact of self-congruity and attitude on purchase intention. The application of self-congruity theory is extensively studied; however, the focus on cosmetic products is rather limited. A total of 171 data were collected from respondents for this study that has experience in purchasing cosmetic product. The finding from the Smart PLS had identified that self-congruity and attitude significantly influences consumer purchase intention for cosmetic product. Therefore it is enthralling to deliberate the implication of self-congruity and attitude on purchase intention for cosmetic products.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Self-congruity theory is important for extensive study that explains consumer self-images. Self-congruity theory is perfect to interpret the effect of self-image congruence on consumer behavior (Sirgy, 1985). Therefore, consumers purchase a brand as tools for self-expression. Thus this theory will help consumer to reveal self-individuality; that will guide consumer purchase behavior. This was proving by Sirgy (1986) that the self-congruity theory link to consumer behavior that purchase products that consistent with their own self-image. Self-congruity theory has been adopted in many settings such as automotive (Ericksen, 1997; Wang *et al.*, 2009) retailing (Sirgy *et al.*, 2000; Kang *et al.*, 2012; El Hedhli *et al.*, 2016) luxury brand (Liu *et al.*, 2012; Rajat and Fazlul, 2015) and tourism (Sirgy and Chenting, 2000; Zhang *et al.*, 2014). Based on these studies, self-congruity will help to enhancing consumer self-images. Another study confirm that self-congruity is related to symbolic consumption (Aguirre-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2012). Hence, self-congruity is related to self-images and symbolic consumption that influence consumer purchase intention.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to identify the impact of self-congruity on purchase intention for cosmetic products. Despite this, very few studies have investigated the impact of self-congruity on products. Most study focus on branding (Aguirre-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, this paper is intended to define self-congruity and its association with purchase intention. A person with a greater desire for product self-congruence used products to

reveal self-concept (Fugate and Joanna, 2010). Thereby it is remarkable for this paper to explore self-congruity and purchase intention for cosmetic products.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-congruity theory is perfect to explain the effect of self-image congruence on consumer behavior (Sirgy, 1985). These theory are in line with previous studies, that defined it as a comprehensive perception in the mind of a consumer that is congruent with his/her self-image or product user image (Sirgy, 1997; Liu *et al.*, 2012). Self-congruity study emphasizes on consumer responses to the match between brand personality and self-concepts (Sirgy, 1982; Hosany and Drew, 2012).

Individual will experience higher congruity as a result of higher satisfaction where product image and personality perfectly suit their self-image or self-concept (Cowart *et al.*, 2008). However, this study is on innovativeness in the new product purchase that is suitable for fashion, innovative technology and lifestyle products that meet sophisticated consumer. Thus, purchase new smart phone with extra functions or newly-launched branded apparel link to a symbolic consumption. Every pieces of item has a symbolic implication that will suit individual self-images (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). Self-image congruence is a statement of consumers' self-concept (actual self and ideal self). Therefore self-congruity is commonly used to display self-image congruence (Sirgy *et al.*, 2008) this sight has been test in some studies. Self-congruity provide valid evident with consumers' brand association and perceived quality for sportswear products among teenagers (Lu and Yingjiao, 2015). Self-congruity influences perceived quality for generation Y consumers on ready-to-wear products that form stylistic identity (Erdogmus and Isil, 2012).

Thereby, recently there are increasing trend on self-congruity studies to understand the sophisticated consumer. Nowadays, individual self-image is a reflection of individual self-concept that influences his/her choice of product. Notably that self-congruity is generally characterized as the "match" or "mismatch" between consumer self-image and a product, brand, or company image (Sirgy, 1986).

### 2.1. Studies on Self-Congruity and Purchase Intention

There has been a review of selected study on purchase intention and self-congruity. The review reveals that self-congruity theory had been applied in various research settings such as cosmetic products, luxury products, retailing, and tourism (Khalid *et al.*, 2017). Thus, self-congruity has been applied as underpinning theory that deliberates consumer behaviour through purchase decision making. The relationship between purchase intention and self-congruity also discuss in Khalid *et al.* (2017) that confirm this relationship base on several study reviewed. The study on self-congruity was initiate from the western culture that cover perspective on diverse cultures (Quester *et al.*, 2000) women (Nash, 2006) and men from metropolitan cities (Souiden and Mariam, 2009). Definitely, it is confirmed that culture influence individual consumption behavior. Markedly, the studies on self-congruity theory identify that consumer self-concept impacts consumption.

Notably, cosmetic product consumption is link with consumer lifestyles and self-images (Nash, 2006; Maehle and Rotem, 2010; Rajat and Fazlul, 2015; Souiden and Jabeur, 2015). Furthermore, other factors that influence the purchase of cosmetic products are religious compliance (Azmawani *et al.*, 2015) environmental concerns (Kim and Chung, 2011; Pudaruth *et al.*, 2015) and reference on nature-based cosmetics (Jihan *et al.*, 2014). Hence, consumers purchase a product to improve their social self-concept to gain recognition to form confidence and self-images in their life (Nash, 2006; Souiden and Mariam, 2009). There are motive in purchasing products, such as religiosity influences for Muslim consumers (Alam, 2012) Halal product for Muslim consumer as religions requirement (El-Bassiouny, 2013) environmental friendly product that are eco-friendly and organic to dedicate their commitment in environmental sustainable (Kim and Chung, 2011; Pudaruth *et al.*, 2015). Thus there are many factors that influence purchase intention base on individual culture. Individual self-concept is the reflection of self-congruity that

consumers will purchase a product that is congruent with their self-images. Furthermore, the studies prove that self-congruity influences purchase intention (Sirgy, 1980). Thus, this paper is intended to identify how self-congruity influence purchase intention.

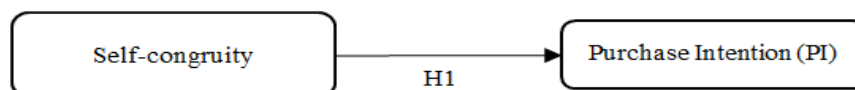
Purchase intention is familiar term in marketing which described consumer consumption behavior. Intention is defined as, “The person’s motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior” (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Thus purchase intention is the level of possibility to purchase a product. Intention is known as a desire to perform an action; therefore, it is often understood as consumer purchase intentions in the study of consumer behavior and marketing (Schiffman and Laslie, 2010). The suitable theory to predict purchase intention is Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The antecedents of purchase intentions are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control that will influence consumption. However, for the current study, self-congruity influences consumer purchase intentions.

Thereby, consumers that purchase cosmetic products will reveal their self-images that are congruent with product images. It is proven that, self-congruity and brand image had a positive impact on purchase intention for luxury brands as the product quality is under a straight control (Yu *et al.*, 2013). Consumers are concern on brands as it reflects the product quality. This situation is real as there is a relationship between self-congruity and intention to purchase (Ericksen, 1997).

## 2.2. Self-Congruity Influences Purchase Intention

Self-congruity is a familiar theory that has been applied in identity and symbolic consumption research (Aguirre-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2012). Self-congruity is the motivation to express self-images and become a driving force that stimuli consumers to purchase goods and services. Referring to the self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986) consumers normally consume products that consistent with their own self-image. Therefore, in recent years, studies that focus on self-congruity and purchase intention is increasing to enhance the understanding of sophisticated consumer. Self-image congruity has a strong connection with brand preference for jewelry, as it congruent with consumer self-images and high satisfaction experience (Jamal and Mark, 2001). This arises because the jewelry brand is successful position their product and the product message is congruent with consumer self-image. In fact purchasing jewelry is a part of symbolic consumption.

Self-congruity is an important aspect that influences purchase intention as demonstrated in a few studies (Jamal and Mark, 2001; Yu *et al.*, 2013). This provide solid evident that there is a relationship between self-image, product-image congruity and intention to purchase (Ericksen, 1997). Moreover, self-congruity is solid and vital construct for symbolic consumption studies that are related to luxury and trendy innovative products. Thus the key success factor for the brand is to position products or services that perfectly match consumer self-images congruence. Therefore the following hypothesis was develop:H1 There is positive relationship between self-congruity and purchase intention



## 3. METHOD

The constructs is measures to investigated models and the questionnaires were mainly adapted from previous studies, with minor wording changes to tailor them to the consumer that purchase cosmetic product. Items for Self-congruity (SC) were adapted from Das (2015) Purchase Intention (PI) items were adapted from Riquelme *et al.* (2012). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale that determine by 1=*strongly disagree* and 7 =*strongly agree* respectively. (Refer to Table 1).

The sample for this study is consumer that purchase cosmetic product in Malaysia. That determine by a filter question in the questionnaire. The target respondent was identifying by experience in purchasing cosmetic product. The sampling applied for this study is convenience sampling therefore the respondent was approach to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were handed over by hand, through e-mail, and blast on social media in the collection process. There are 171 respondents that complete the questionnaire for this study. The respondents profile is summarized in Table 2

Table-1. Constructs and measurement items

Construct	Items	Sources
Self-congruity	1. The cosmetic product is consistent with how I see myself	Das (2015)
	2. The cosmetic product reflects who I am.	
	3. The image of the typical other that use cosmetic product is consistent with how I see myself.	
	4. The cosmetic product is a mirror image of me.	
	5. I am quite similar to the typical people who use cosmetic product.	
Purchase Intention	1. I intend to purchase cosmetic products	Riquelme <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	2. I think about cosmetic product as a choice when buying something	
	3. I am willing to pay more for cosmetic products.	
	4. I am willing to shop around to buy cosmetic products	

Table-2. Respondent Profile

Respondents' Demographic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	49	28.7
	Female	122	71.3
Marital status	Single	96	56.1
	Married	75	43.9
Education level	Secondary	20	11.7
	Diploma	27	15.8
	Bachelor Degree	82	48
	Master & above	42	24.6
Income level (RM)	No income	16	9.4
	1000-2000	60	35.1
	2001-3000	26	15.2
	3001-4000	26	15.2
	4001-5000	18	10.5
	5001-6000	14	8.2
Age	Over 6000	11	6.4
	Mean	25	
	Standard Deviation	0.696	

Source: Compiled by author from SPSS analysis

#### 4. MEASUREMENTS MODEL

Convergent validity is the degree to which multiple items measuring the same concept are in agreement (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). The convergence validity of the measurement is usually ascertained by examining the loadings, average variance extracted and also the composite reliability. The result revealed that 9 indicators as shown in Table 3, had loading above the cut off value of 0.7. Outer loading below 0.07 should be removed (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs exceeded 0.5. The value of 0.50 or higher indicates that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The composite reliability (CR) were all higher than 0.7 that consider satisfactory reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Therefore we can conclude that convergent validity is achieved.

The result for discriminant validity test was show on Table 4. As recommended by Fornell and David (1981) the AVE of each construct should be higher than the correlation with any other constructs of the model. As shown in Table 4, all constructs meet this criterion indicating the constructs have discriminant validity. The loading of measured variables should be higher than cross loading at least 0.1 to indicate adequate discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 loadings of all constructs satisfy this criterion. Thus the discriminant validity is accomplished.

Table-3. Items Loading

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.789	0.691	0.899
	PI2	0.828		
	PI3	0.836		
	PI4	0.870		
Self-congruity	S1	0.887	0.820	0.958
	S2	0.923		
	S3	0.915		
	S4	0.923		
	S5	0.880		

Source: Compiled by author from Smart PLS 3.0 analysis

Table-4. Discriminant Validity

	PI	SC
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.831	
Self-congruity (RS)	0.686	0.906

Source: Compiled by author from Smart PLS 3.0 analysis

### 5. STRUCTURAL MODEL ESTIMATION

The causal relationship among constructs in the model (path coefficients and the R<sup>2</sup> value) is show with structural model. The R<sup>2</sup> and the path coefficients (beta and significance) indicate how well the data supported and hypothesized model. Table 5 and Figure 2 show the result of the structural model from PLS output. Self-congruity positively influence purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.686, p < 0.01$ ) explaining 47% variance, self-congruity was positively influence purchase intention. Therefore H1 was supported.

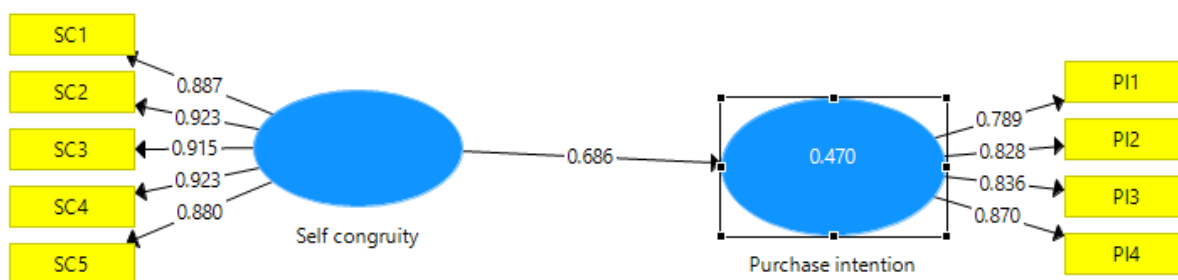


Table-5. Result of the hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Deviation	T- value	P value	Decision
H1	□ C > PI	0.686	0.047	14.471	0.000	Supported

Source: Compiled by author from Smart PLS 3.0 analysis

### 6. CONCLUSION

Self-congruity has been associated with purchase intention, where it effects the consumer decision making to purchase a cosmetic product that is congruent with his/her self-image. This is supported by the finding of this study that self-congruity has a positive relationship with purchase intention. This is consistent with the findings of a previous study which shows self-images as a part of self-concept that portrays individual characteristics based on cosmetic products that they consume; it embraces unique self-images that may differ on each individual (Guthrie et

al., 2008). An individual who desires for product-self-congruence will consume products to reveal his/her self-concept (Fugate and Joanna, 2010) hence, this behavior will convey their self-images. Moreover, self-congruity affects the consumers' purchase intention in different ways, where Muslim with higher religiosity commitment prefer halal cosmetics, those who are concerned towards the environment will choose either eco-friendly or nature-based cosmetic, individuals who are socially conscious will favor luxury cosmetics and consume cosmetic products to gain recognition in their careers and life-styles.

Overall, the current study confirms that self-images that are congruent with individual product-images will influence purchase intention of the cosmetic products. This finding would offer some practical implication for the cosmetic firm to further understand the role of self-congruity that influenced consumer decision making process of purchase intention for cosmetic products. Thus there are great opportunities to capture the market for sophisticated consumer in the new millennium that concern on their self-images.

The current study contributes in the existing literature by provides vital prove for consumer behavior in understanding their self-images that influence purchase intention. This study confirms that self-congruity influence consumer purchase intention for cosmetic product. There are many aspects that influence consumer purchase intention such as religiosity, concern on environmental and lifestyles, that link to individual self-images. Therefore self-images impact self-congruity that will influence consumer purchase intention. Thus, consumer purchases a product that congruent with their self-images. The study is unique as it uses self-congruity as underpinning theory that investigated consumer behavior for cosmetic product. Even though the study focuses on cosmetic product, there are other research areas that should be discovered. The future research may explore the effect of culture and Theory of Planned Behavior to provide a clear sight on consumer purchase intention.

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