

Consumers' Perception Towards Miraculous Claims of Brands with Aesthetic Appeal

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Abstract

Often, consumers are targeted with large claims of various brands that boast of miraculous results for products with an aesthetic appeal. This paper uses the exploratory design with mixed methodology to explore the ranks of miraculous claims out of the inventory of products and then uses the factor loading method to gauge the perception of the consumers. The key factors were identified after conducting a review of literature, and then the factor loadings were applied to derive the ranking and obtain the variance of the factors of perception. The results of this study provide a framework to work upon the marketing aspect of miraculous claims made by brands that may be in congruence to the aesthetic appeal for the brand managers and researchers. The study shows that Technical Product Specifications and Evidence were the most effective in enhancing consumers' beliefs, and this factor leads to a positive perception in the minds of the consumers about products with an aesthetic appeal.

Statement of Contribution: The paper empirically gauges the factors influencing respondents' perception of the products with miraculous claims with an aesthetic appeal. This study would help product managers and researchers in designing marketing communication strategies that would lead to the creation of a positive perception about the brands in the minds of the consumers, which might positively influence their purchase decision of such products.

Keywords: consumer perception, consumer attitude, miraculous claims, aesthetic appeal, cosmetic products

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Product design and product appearance have a positive effect on building the defined consumer perception. Companies that are able to communicate a certain meaning can create a competitive advantage in the market and increase the product's chance of success in the market place. Such conscious efforts of the companies in the market place create consumers' perception, which plays a very significant role for the success of the product in the market. From time to time, many research works have been conducted to find out various parameters which define the consumers' perception, for example, the consumers' perception on food quality (Grunert, 2005; Knox, 2000), consumers' perception towards brands (Kithung'a, 2001), consumers' perception on meat (Verbeke, Van Oeckel, Warnants, Viaene, & Boucque, 1999; Verbeke, Sioen, Pieniak, Camp, & Henauw, 2004), consumers' perception on advertising, celebrities, packaging, culture, and many more. However, hardly any study on consumers' perception towards the miraculous claims made by products with an aesthetic appeal in order to gain an edge in the market place have been conducted.

In view of optimizing the benefits of brand perception and also to create a niche in the market, companies often claim about the 'miraculous' performance of their products. These claims are directly linked with the emotional appeal of health, wealth, and aspirations of men and women, even children. The claims of increasing memory with 'brahmi,' increasing fairness by 'alovera,' based on clinical results often attract customers towards the product(s).

Various brands are trying to attract the customers by claiming the miraculous results shown by their products and services, such as Horlicks claims that their product helps children to grow "taller, stronger and smarter". In another example, the advertisement of Sauna Slim Belt on television claims that by using this product, individuals can lose weight within a few months. The claims are established via demonstration by endorsers, certifications from various institutions, comparison with medicines and machinery. Another brand, Fair & Lovely claims that by applying their cream, darker skin tone can be lightened to give way to fair skin. Brands have made various claims that target the health, beauty, as well as the personality of the targeted consumers. However, the consumers have their own beliefs and convictions based on their perceptions regarding such products (with aesthetic appeal) claiming to provide various

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miraculous results after use.

The present research study specifically discusses the variable factors - such as perception of people towards the miraculous claims made by various brands. Based on content review and empirical investigation of the sample brands, the study explores new areas and provides inputs regarding the miraculous claims made by the companies as well as the choice set decision of the consumers for taking the decisions based upon their perception towards the products. For this purpose, five products were selected as a sample (which are advertised heavily), and they were empirically tested as per the perception of the respondents towards the claims of their performance. The sampled products were cosmetic products - Fair and Lovely, Mederma, Olay, Dr Batra Hair Treatment, and Head and Shoulders. The choice of the cosmetic products was done on the basis of the argument that the aesthetic appeal of the products' performance is based upon the latent desire of both men and women to appear attractive.

Literature Review

The choice of variable factors towards the perception of the products is an important aspect of this study. The literature review not only helped in terms of strengthening the plot of the study, but also helped in identifying the commonly accepted variables for the choice set of the perception. As per our knowledge and available data, no direct literature on consumers' perception towards miraculous claims could be found. However, there are a number of studies on factors of consumer perception which are relevant to the present research. Verbeke, Van Oeckel, Warnants, Viaene, & Boucque (1999) conducted a study on consumer perception, facts and possibilities to improve acceptability of health and sensory characteristics of pork. The study focused on pork consumption, pork perception, facts and possibilities to improve pork acceptability through influencing health and sensory characteristics. The study emphasized on quality disclosures as an important factor in creating perception.

Barrett, Lye, & Venkateswarlu (1999) documented the process of consumer attitude formation towards brand extensions by testing and creating an argument of generalizing and acceptance of Aaker & Keller's (1990) model of consumer brand extension attitude formation. The study worked upon the multicollinearity effect of the subsequent tests on Aaker and Keller's model by focusing upon the basis of attitude formation such as Quality, Transfer, Complement, Substitute, and Difficulty in making the product class extension in attitude formation. Another research by Lye, Venkateswarlu, and Barrett (2001) described how a brand in terms of prestige, functionality, and extension categories influenced brand perception and assumed quality of prestigious brands for its future purchase.

Kithung'a (2001) in his book on brand associations and consumer perceptions of value of products revealed that the price of a product has a positive relation with consumer perception. He talked about linking a brand with a celebrity, and transferring the association for building perception towards reliability, strength, and performance. He provided a framework for brand association with regards to attributes - price, application, and so forth, and perceived value based upon the information and positive attitude towards a product. Yang and Jun (2002) conducted a study on consumer perception of e-service quality, and stated that there are some primary service quality dimensions such as Security, Ease of use, Reliability, and Access, which lead to perception.

Verbeke et al. (2004) carried out a research work on consumer perception versus scientific evidence about health benefits and safety risks from fish consumption to investigate the gap between consumer perception and scientific evidence related to health benefits and safety risks from fish consumption. According to the study, scientific evidence and facts disclosure of the product create a strong belief among the consumers. Grunert (2005) in his study on food quality and safety that affect the consumers' perception proposed a model of two major dimensions that are horizontal and vertical. The models simply stated that Quality, Safety, Health, Cost, Technical Product Specifications, Future Purchase, and Experience are some of the parameters that act as willing measurements to central issues in consumer perception. In another study on consumer perception, Chang and Chen (2009) detailed the interface of consumer perception with the Quality, Security, and Loyalty in electronic commerce. The study provided a model for switching costs and customer loyalty, stating that the customers' perception is positively affected by Quality, Security/Safety, and Cost.

Brunel and Kumar (2007) discussed the aesthetics of products such as Size, Colour, Facts, and Information, and their converging effect on the perception towards brand personality. Matai and Bhat (2013) in their study towards the factors of consumer purchase decision of consumer durables, especially colored televisions, said that Reliability and Cost were the core factors that had relevance at all five levels of a product.

Based on the literature review, certain dimensions and factors for consumer perception can be identified as Quality, Safety (Safety/Security/Health), Cost (Price of the product), Technical (Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts), Future Purchase (Belief/Reliability), Experience, Access (Access in terms of ease of use), and Substitute. All these eight factors have different interpretations for different consumers with regards to brand perception, but they qualify in terms of their role in creating brand perception.

Research Methodology

The primary aim of the present research was to discover and interpret the various factors that lead to the formation of consumer perception, and rank them as per the consumers' preference towards the miraculous claims made by brands with an aesthetic appeal. The research design adopted was exploratory in nature. The following objectives were outlined for the research:

- 1) To study the consumers' perception towards the various miraculous claims made by the identified products/brands.
- 2) To identify various parameters/factors of consumer perception with regards to miraculous claims of the identified products/brands and their relation with each other.
- 3) To rank the identified factors and see which one is the most dominant overall as well as at the product/ brand level.

The research was conducted in two phases during the period from December 2011 until October 2012. In the first phase of the research, based upon the literature review from January - February 2012, brands with miraculous claims were identified through a market survey. The research team visited the retail malls of Jammu, Chandigarh, Noida, and the NCR region and randomly asked the respondents to rank the selected 15 brands that have an aesthetic appeal and claim to provide miraculous results. The selected brands were : Fair & Lovely- fairness cream, Olay Total Effects – fight 7 signs of ageing, Dr Batra's – hair loss treatment, Head & Shoulders shampoo – dandruff free hair, Mederma – scar free, Sauna Slim belt – fat remover, Drishti eye drops – removes spectacles (Patanjali Ayurveda), Sugar Free Natura – freedom from calories, Ambica Hair Oil – stops hair fall and starts hair regrowth in 21 days, Dettol – be 100% sure, Endura Mass – gain weight instantly, Lavanaya Ayurveda – cancer treatment, Body Grow – fast muscle building, Horlicks – taller, stronger, smarter, and Green tea – weight loss. Based on the ranking received from the survey of 230 respondents within the age group of 18-35 years, the top five products/brands were selected for further study.

In the second phase, the factors influencing consumer perception towards miraculous claims were identified with reference to the selected five brands . The brands selected were : Fair & Lovely fairness cream, Olay Total Effects, Dr Batra's – hair loss treatment, Head & Shoulders shampoo, and Mederma – scar treatment cream. These products were ranked as the top five brands with high aesthetic appeal and miraculous claims. In this phase, that is from mid of March 2012 until October 2012, the research team used accidental sampling method at convenient locations such as retail stores, chemist shops and grocery stores, and so forth. The questionnaire was designed by including the factors selected on the basis of literature review and on the basis of the respective claims made by the brands. 200 respondents (40 for each product/brand) responded to the questionnaire for the products/brands on a 5 point Likert Scale - *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1). The reliability of the questionnaire was tested, and the Cronbach's alpha score was found to be 0.806. Furthermore, the data was tabulated and the statistical techniques such as correlation, chi-square test, principal component analysis, and measure of variance were applied for the ranking of the identified factors based on the responses received from the users of the selected products.

Before analysis, it is necessary to discuss the identified brands and the claims made by the said brands.

a) Fair & Lovely : Fair & Lovely (F&L) is a product of Hindustan Unilever Limited, the largest company in India in FMCGs, and has its headquarters in Mumbai. Fair & Lovely claims to be world's number one fairness cream. The brand is known for innovating further to pioneer the development of cutting-edge fairness solutions. It claims to not containing any bleach or harmful ingredients, instead, it provides visible fairness in a safe and reversible process. The miraculous claims made by Fair & Lovely Winter Fairness cream is that it "lightens the skin tone and makes a person fair, even in the winters". The advertisement claims that the usage of cold creams in the winter robs the skin of its fairness. However, by using Fair & Lovely Winter Fairness cream, women can get fairer skin, even in winters. The increase in fairness can also be measured on the fairness scale that is provided with the cream. The other claim made by F& L is that if an individual can find a fairness cream priced ₹ 300 - ₹ 350 (per 100 gms) that gives a better fairness than F&L, then F&L will give ₹ 5 crore to the claimant! F&L also claims that their product does not have any kind of

harmful chemicals that have an adverse effect on the user's skin. The cream has Tri-fair vitamin complex and active moisturizers that provide a radiant fairness along with soft and supple skin.

b) Olay Total Effects : Olay is an American skin care line. It is one of the multi-billion dollar brands of Procter & Gamble. Olay originated in South Africa in 1949 as Oil of Olay by Graham Wulff, an ex-Unilever chemist from Durban. Olay Total Effects was launched in 1999. It combines 7 anti-aging skin care therapies into one formula for visibly younger-looking skin. In India, Olay Total Effects is being endorsed by Bollywood actresses such as Kajol, Karishma Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit Nene, Sonam Kapoor, and Sushmita Sen. Miraculous claims made by Olay Total Effects are that it 'Fights 7 signs of ageing' - dark spots, sagging skin, dull skin, lines and wrinkles, dry skin, patchy skin, and open pores. It has a unique formula for providing visibly younger-looking skin. Olay carries out over 400,000 safety and quality tests to ensure an excellent experience for women around the world.

c) Mederma : Mederma is a product by Merz Pharmaceuticals of Frankfurt, Germany. Founded in 1908, Merz Pharma is an international healthcare company. Mederma is a topical product used to improve scar appearance. A 1996 study into the therapeutic values of onion and garlic found that they may act as an anti-inflammatory and bacteriostatic and in 2002, researchers found that Mederma improved collagen organization after injury in rabbits. Based on basic research and animal testing, Mederma gel claims that it is effective on humans. The miraculous claim made by Mederma is that it removes old and new acne scars, surgery scars, scars from burns or cuts, and scars from stretch marks. Mederma's marketing claim is that it makes scars 'softer, smoother, and less noticeable'.

d) Dr Batra's Hairfall Treatment : Dr. Batra's Positive Health Products Limited was established in 2001 for the manufacturing of cosmetic products based on homeopathic treatment. It has 88 clinics in India. Dr Batra's claims to provide treatment for various chronic diseases and conditions like Acne, Asthma, Bronchitis, Migraine, Obesity, Psoriasis, Sinusitis etc. including Hair Loss. Dr Batra's Hairfall Treatment claims to be a winning combination of homeopathy, trichology, and technology. They claim to have successfully treated more than 2,50,000 hair loss cases. Miraculous claim of Dr. Batra's Hairfall Treatment is : 'no more woes over baldness; freedom from..... HAIRLOSS'.

e) Head & Shoulders: Head & Shoulders is a brand of anti-dandruff shampoo produced by Procter & Gamble. Head & Shoulders claims to be an anti-dandruff, scalp treatment shampoo. It claims to be rich in Zinc Pyrithione (ZPTO), which is highly effective in fighting and preventing dandruff. In India, Head & Shoulders is endorsed by Bollywood stars like Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan. Miraculous claim made by Head & Shoulders is 'Up to 100% Dandruff Free Hair'.

Analysis and Discussion

The identified factors that influence the consumers' perception of a brand/product are as follows :

1) Quality: It describes the perception of the consumer towards quality performance of the product. Perception of quality can be described as a product giving the expected results, and confirming the claims made by itself at a consistent level. The users were asked to rate the quality of the product/brand as perceived by them.

2) Safety (Safety/Security/Health): The factor of safety was another claim made by the various brands. The respondents were asked to rate their perception regarding the safety of the selected products/brands.

3) Cost (Price of the product): Price is the cost to be paid by the consumer and was used as one of the factors of perception that users may have regarding the claims made by the products/brands based upon the pricing of the product. Furthermore, it is perceived to be proportionately related to the quality of the product.

4) Technical (Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts): It was identified in the literature review that the products/brands which exhibit technical specifications and provide evidence for the claims made by them create a positive perception for themselves in the minds of the consumers. Also, the technical factor was chosen so as to determine the perception of the consumers regarding the technical specifications/evidence provided by the brands/products for the claims made by them.

5) Future Purchase (Belief/Reliability): The factor of future purchase was chosen to determine the faith and conviction consumers put in a brand/product.

6) Experience: As a future purchase is the outcome of the faith reposed in a product, the perception is also based upon a consumer's experience while using a product/brand. The experience is the reinforcement of the belief and reliability to create the perception towards the product/brand.

7) Access (Access in terms of ease of use): The brand's claims are well crafted if the consumers have an understanding of the easy usage of the product. The access is defined not only as the functionality of the brand, but also the users' ability to use it easily, which reinforces the claims made by the brands.

8) Substitute: Many times, the available substitutes are too weak or non promising in the market that the product/brands gain upon their failure and vice versa. The substitute leads to collaborative gain or loss in terms of creating the perception towards any miraculous claims.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of the Selected Factors for the Perception Towards Miraculous Claims of the Products/Brands								
	Quality	Safety	Cost	Technical	Future Purchase	Experience	Access	Substitute
Quality	1							
Safety	0.599*	1						
Cost	0.378	0.333	1					
Technical	0.584	0.461	0.421	1				
Future Purchase	0.452	0.319	0.268	0.347	1			
Experience	0.563	0.422	0.401	0.570	0.443	1		
Access	0.351	0.341	0.045*	0.254	0.238	0.268	1	
Substitute	0.089#	0.207	0.145#	0.003#	0.113#	0.197	0.221	1

Source: Authors' estimates based on the data available from the sample
 Note: The figures are significant at the 0.01 level except * read as significant at 0.05 level and # as insignificant

The correlation matrix presented in the Table 1 shows that Quality as factor influenced the respondents' perception for the selected brands/products, and had a strong relationship with the factor Safety as well as with the Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts. The Quality perceived in the product enhanced the respondents' experience with the product and also increased the chances of Future Purchase of the product, since the positive reinforcements strengthened the reliability of the product. The Experience of using the product had a strong correlation with the Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts. The detailed technical description and evidence provided with a product ensured the positive experience for the product towards the claims the product is making. The Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts factor also had a correlation with the factor Safety and perception towards Cost (the price paid by the consumers to purchase a product). Though Quality of a brand had a comparatively low correlation with Cost, that is, customers' confidence to pay a price was strengthened by the evidence provided for the miraculous claims made by the brand/product. The factor Substitute was not found to be influencing future purchase decisions of the respondents, and therefore, was found to be insignificant. Also, the factor Substitute had a very low correlation with other factors. Based on the correlation matrix, it can be inferred that the chosen factors - with the exception of the factor Substitute - affected the perception of the consumers towards the miraculous claims made by the selected brands/products. The correlation between Cost and Future Purchase was positive, but low. This is due to the fact that a repeat purchase in certain categories was not easily perceived by the respondents. For example, irrespective of the respondents' perception about the miraculous claims made by Dr Batra's Hair Treatment, the possibility of going for a second round of treatment, for hair transplant/ weaving was very low, as the cost of treatment was quite high. However, the possibility of going in for a substitute in case of F&L or Olay Total Effects was much higher than it was in case of Dr Batra's Hair Treatment.

The study has defined one of its objectives to identify the various factors that are related to and contributed to the

respondents' perception of the miraculous claims made by the chosen brands/products. Based upon the correlation matrix, the factors - Quality, Safety, (Safety/Security/Health), Cost (Price of the product), Technical (Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence/Facts), Future Purchase (Belief/Reliability), Experience, and Access (Access in terms of ease of use) formed the essential aspects of perception, and they reciprocally formed the perception of the respondents towards the miraculous claims made by the selected products/brands.

In the next stage, the factors chosen were ranked on the basis of factor loadings with the help of principal component analysis. Each and every product was analyzed individually as well as collectively. With reference to the Table 2, in case of F&L, it was found that most of the consumers checked that Technical Product Specifications/Scientific Evidence, which means that while purchasing F & L, the respondents checked the details about the composition of the cream to gain information about the components that were used to manufacture the cream. This single factor explains 42.9% of the entire variable. The second preference was provided to the Evidence - that is the testimonials provided by previous users of the cream. After that, Access to the product in terms of Quality, Future Purchase, Substitute, Safety, and Cost respectively were perceived to be important factors.

In case of Olay Total Effects, the perception of Future Purchase based on the reliability and consistency of performance of the product was a major factor. After Future Purchase, whether the product will be repurchased or not depended upon the Cost the customer has to pay for the product. The Cost factor was important as Olay Total Effects (OTE) is a product which comes at a premium pricing. After that, the Experience with the product was given preference. As OTE is an expensive product, the respondents were of the opinion that they would go in for repurchase of the product only if their experience with the said product was good. The respondents did consider the Technical Specifications as a convincing factor to form a perception regarding the claims made by the product (whether it really fought 7 signs of ageing and improved their skin). It is interesting to note that in case of Olay Total Effects, the factors - Quality and Safety were ranked low. This may be accounted to the premium positioning of the product, where the concern is towards reliability based upon the product's experience. In case of Mederma also, the factor Future Purchase (based on customers' beliefs and reliability) was ranked highest followed by Experience (an easiness in using the product and its accessibility). The case of Mederma and Olay Total Effects is related to a segment of consumers who required effective solutions for their issues (in a short period of time), and their price perception accentuated the acceptance of the product towards experiential communications, unlikely Fair & Lovely.

Dr Batra's Hair Treatment consisted of both treatment services and supplementary products. In this case, the factor Future Purchase based on reliability and belief of the consumer was ranked highest followed by Quality (refer to Table 2). The respondents' incitement towards Future Purchase and Quality was based upon Experience and Technical Specifications. The respondents also rated the availability of Substitute for the brand as one of the parameters

Table 2: The Product/Brand Wise and Overall Ranking of the Factors of Perception Towards Miraculous Claims Based Upon the Principal Component Analysis

Sr. No.	Products/ Brands→ Factors↓	Fair & Lovely		Olay Total Effects		Mederma		Dr. Batra's Hair Treatment		Head & Shoulders		Overall	
		Factor Loading	Rank	Factor Loading	Rank	Factor Loading	Rank	Factor Loading	Rank	Factor Loading	Rank	Factor Loading	Rank
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1.	Quality	0.38	4	0.32	5	0.43	6	0.62	2	0.05	7	0.35	4
2.	Safety	0.08	7	0.15	6	0.18	7	0.21	7	0.05	8	0.14	8
3.	Cost	0.05	8	0.71	2	0.45	5	0.13	8	0.30	5	0.32	5
4.	Technical	0.61	1	0.52	4	0.58	4	0.50	4	0.41	4	0.55	1
5.	Future Purchase	0.23	5	0.90	1	0.71	1	0.67	1	0.46	3	0.47	3
6.	Experience	0.51	2	0.56	3	0.59	2	0.43	5	0.55	1	0.48	2
7.	Access	0.44	3	0.11	7	0.59	3	0.27	6	0.22	6	0.30	6
8.	Substitute	0.12	6	0.11*	8	0.01	8	0.55*	3	0.54	2	0.14*	7

Source: Compiled by the Authors. The factors are significant at the 0.05 level except *

influencing their perception, but the same was found to be insignificant. However, the brand's Cost perception was ranked low. Hence, it may be inferred that the consumers did not perceive price performance to be complimenting the claim made by the brand.

In case of Head & Shoulders shampoo, the consumers' ranked Experience to be the most important factor followed by Substitute and Future Purchase. The consumers' perception was based upon experiential learning out of the product that leads to reliability and belief, which can lead to repeat purchase. The factor Substitute in this case had a high ranking. This may be due to various 'me too' products available in this category. However, here also, the respondents perceived that the product's claims are justified based upon the Technical Specifications and Evidence (testimonials from other users) to confirm their belief in the product.

Table 3: Variance of Respective Ranks of Products/ Brands with an Aesthetic Appeal With Overall Rank for the Factors Influencing Respondents' Perception Towards Miraculous Claims

Sr. No.	Products/ Brands→ Factors↓	Fair & Lovely	Olay Total Effects	Mederma	Dr. Batra's Hair Treatment	Head & Shoulders
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1.	Quality	0	-3	-3	-3	-3
2.	Safety	0	-1	0	-3	1
3.	Cost	-2	2	2	2	0
4.	Technical	0	-1	-2	2	-3
5.	Future Purchase	-3	3	0	-3	0
6.	Experience	3	-1	3	0	0
7.	Access	1	-1	-1	4	5
8.	Substitute	1	2	1	1	0

Source: Compiled by the Authors

The overall assessment of the perception of the respondents according to the claims made by the brands having an aesthetic appeal revealed that the consumers perceived the Technical Product Specifications and Evidence to be the number one criteria that strengthened their belief regarding a brand/product. This includes description title number, expiry, logo, copyright, and also the break up regarding the composition of the product along with the evidence that the product/brand provided significant results (as per the testimonials from previous users). Technical Product Specifications explained 44.5% of the whole data at the overall level. Experience (previous) was also taken into consideration as it was ranked second, which implies that if the experience with the product was good, then most likely, the consumers may go in for the same product in the future. Therefore, positive and experiential learning is another dimension in terms of creating a positive perception towards the miraculous claims that confirms the reliability and hence, decides about the future purchase of the product. Overall, it can be inferred that Quality was also one of the factors the consumers perceived in such claims and the confirmation that the miraculous claims made by a brand/product are true ensures consistency in the purchase of the product.

As per the Table 2 and as per the discussion of the products at the respective factors' level and the overall level, it is evident that the perception of the respondents towards miraculous claims made by the selected brands/products was also based upon the Cost of the product/brand - that is - the Price a consumer has to pay for the product. The consumers do emphasize upon seeing the evidence related to Technical Specifications and Experience based evidence. The perception of the respondents was also based upon the belief and reliability of a product that is formed on the basis of evidence, which is confirmed by the conviction of future purchases. With reference to the previous literature, we may find this in congruence with the process of building brand loyalty. The miraculous claims of brands with an aesthetic appeal create a perception in the minds of the respondents based upon Experience. It was found that Cost may become one of the significant factors of importance if the product has a high price and falls in the premium segment. Interestingly, the respondents did not focus upon the claims of Safety in using such products. Perhaps, the factor of Safety is taken for granted by the respondents based upon the Technical Specifications and a belief based upon the learning curve of the consumer. One may emanate that in such cases of aesthetic appeal, the consumers may have a

hidden desire for self-enhancement, and hence they may be attracted by the demonstration of the products, and they might also go in for repeat purchases only based upon their aspirations. Therefore, such inferences are pertinent, but are beyond the scope of the present paper.

The Table 3 provides an insight into the variance of the position of the products, and the overall score of the brands. The positive value signifies that the products/brands gave more emphasis to the factors as compared to the overall results, while negative value suggests that the products/brands need to work in the areas for creating a perception towards the claims made by them. As per the Table 3, the perception of the brands in the minds of the respondents is strengthened by the factor Technical Specifications followed by the Experience of the consumer, which reinforces the future purchase. In case of Fair & Lovely, the brand can focus on reliability aspects of the appeal. Except Fair & Lovely, all the other chosen products/brands may work upon the area of Quality for instilling confidence in the minds of the consumers regarding the miraculous claims made by them. In case of Olay Total Effects and Mederma, as per the Technical Specifications and Scientific Evidence provided by the products, it seems like the consumers were not quite convinced about the claims made by these products. Hence, respondents needed more evidence (testimonials from previous users) and technical description about the composition of the product. For Dr Batra's Hair Treatment brand, the focus is desirable in the provided service for ensuring the Safety and Quality of the services. The brand's focus is more upon the degree of easiness in the availability and usability of the product. Also, the consumer's perception for the claim was based upon the Experience of the product. In case of Head & Shoulders, the product Quality and Technical Facts are low on the perception parameter of the claims made by them. The respondents mentioned the requirement of including (more) Technical Specifications and Evidence to substantiate the claims made by the product, as currently, the brand is more focused upon the accessibility and usage of the product.

The factor which was mostly considered to verify the miraculous claims made by the products/brands is the Technical Product Specifications or the scientific evidence provided by the companies. If substantial evidence regarding the claims made by the products/brands is available, it helps to positively influence the perception of the customers towards the product. The consumers gave a high rank to Experience as a factor of perception since if the previous experience with the product is positive, then there are more likely chances that the next time, the customer will prefer to purchase the same product. In all cases (except one), it was observed that the factor Experience was given the 1st-3rd rank, which clearly signifies that if a consumer has a positive experience with a product, then the next time, he will prefer the same brand, but if the experience is negative, then the consumer will search for a substitute brand/product (Table 2). Quality and Cost were placed at the 4th and 5th position respectively. It can be seen that the respondents were willing to pay a premium if they got the desired results (as expected) from the products/brands purchased by them. In most of the results, it was found that Quality is always ahead of Cost. It must also be understood that Cost is again a very intriguing aspect. Price of the product was rarely a barrier for the respondents' intensity of need and conviction about the efficacy of the product. The Access of the product was not a relevant parameter as per the respondents; even if the product was quite difficult to use, the respondents were willing to take a risk, and invest in the product (if the claims made by the brands/products are strong). Also, since the claims were miraculous in nature, that is reason why the Safety parameter was rated low, which signifies that if the respondents were getting the expected results, then they were ready to overlook the Safety parameter. It may also be conceived that the respondents were assured about the Safety parameter after going through the Technical Specifications and Evidence provided by the brands/products to substantiate their claims.

The paper has limitations of verification and validation of data against various consumers' behavior perspectives towards brand loyalty and attitude development. However, it does leave the scope of working upon the aspects of consumer perception towards the claims made by products with homogeneous nature, with users as well as non users as well as with each identified factor level.

Conclusion

The paper provides inputs for the factors of consumer perception towards miraculous claims of selected brands. The Technical Specifications and Evidence provided by the brands/products to substantiate their miraculous claims as well as the positive experiences of the consumers with the selected brands/products were the most important parameters influencing the respondents' perception of the products/brands. Cost, Access, and Safety came at a later stage of perception of the consumers for these brands. While purchasing product/brands with an aesthetic appeal, claiming to

provide miraculous results, the respondents mainly relied upon products' Technical Specification, Experience, and the products' Future Availability while forming their perception about the selected products/brands. If the product/brand is able to fulfill at least these factors, then the consumer can be easily attracted towards purchasing the said products. However, the findings of the present study and the factors identified are not exhaustive. The paper only provides a concept for companies to work upon while designing marketing strategies related to miraculous claims of brands with aesthetic appeal.

Managerial Implications

The present study has set a stage for understanding the relationship between products' advertising claims and customer loyalty, and has also depicted parameters influencing brand attitude. Marketing managers often speculate about the viability of the various dimensions that would attract the consumers towards claims made by their brands. The analysis provided in the present paper does provides insights into how the customers form perceptions about products with an aesthetic appeal, and what factors influence their perceptions. This study can be helpful in designing marketing communication strategies for the miraculous claims the brands may have with respect to aesthetic appeal. The study, with the help of various brands, has shown that the users' perception is largely built on the basis of demonstration and experience curve of the users, which install a belief for the future use of the product. Hence, marketing managers, while designing the communication strategy for their products, need to focus more upon the quality of the products.

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