

YOU ARE WHAT YOU BUY ?

by

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ABSTRACT

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Marketing

(ABSTRACT)

The basic purpose of this study was to discover through the use of a projective technique whether the brand purchased by a consumer affects others' perceptions of her image. Several theoretical concepts formed the basis for this study. An understanding of the theory behind symbols was needed in order to understand the way in which products and brands can become symbols for consumers. Product and self-image theories help to explain the relationship between the two images and how congruency between the two can affect consumers' perceptions. The concept of culture was introduced as an added variable in order to discern if culture has an effect upon self-image and/or the perception of product/brand images.

The research proposed that privately consumed women's personal care products would have an effect on personal image perception. It also proposed that consumers in different cultural areas would perceive others differently based on brands purchased and consumed.

The propositions were tested using a projective technique in conjunction with semantic differential scales. The study was conducted in two different geographic areas in order to test the cultural proposition. The findings suggest that the brands purchased by a consumer do affect others' perceptions of her personal image. There was only some support for the proposition that the respondents in different geographic areas would have differences in perception of a person's personal image based on brands used.

Contributions for this study are relevant for both marketing theorists and marketing practitioners. From the results of the study and the limitations of this study, there are areas for further research. It is suggested that the framework for this study be expanded by increasing the sample size, increasing the number of cultures used, using more diverse cultures for comparison, using different privately consumed products, and by including males as respondents.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
Theoretical Concepts In Relation to Marketing	3
Symbols/Symbolism	3
Product Image	3
Self-Image	3
Congruency	4
Culture	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Chapter Previews	5
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Overview	6
Symbols/Symbolism	6
Definitions of Symbols	7
Characteristics of Symbols	8
Uses of Symbols	9
Examples of Symbols	11
Relevant Streams of Research Concerning	
Symbols	12
Symbolic Interactionism	13
Symbolic and Hedonic Consumption	14
Symbols and Consumer Research	16
Product Image	17
Self-Image	19
Congruency	21
Culture	25
Summary	28
III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	30
Overview	30
Hypotheses	31
Focus Group	32
Product Selection	33
Brand Selection	34
Cultural Areas	34

Measures	35
Sample Design	36
Data Collection Procedures	36
Research Design and Statistical Analysis	38
 IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS	 40
Overview	40
Response Rates	40
Hypotheses	41
Image Hypothesis	41
Culture Hypothesis	44
Additional Analysis	44
ANOVA	44
Profiles	46
Frequencies: Products	52
Frequencies: Demographics	59
Summary	59
 V. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY	 66
Overview	66
Summary	66
Interpretation of Major Findings	67
Image	67
Culture	68
Contributions to Marketing Theory and Practice	70
Marketing Theory	70
Marketing Practice	71
Limitations	75
Directions for Further Research	76
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 79
 <u>Appendix</u>	 <u>page</u>
A.	86
Listing of Attributes and Semantic Counterparts	87
Listing of Brands	88
B.	89
Instructions for Research Assistants	90
Questionnaire	91

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 101

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
1. Test for the Perceived Differences Between Images Using Duncan's Multiple Range Test (excluding C40*)	42
2. Test for the Perceived Differences Between Images Using Duncan's Multiple Range Test (including C40)	43
3. Paired t-Tests Used in Testing for Differences Between Cultures	45
4. Analysis of Variance Used to Determine Influences of Culture and/or Image on Responses (excluding C40)	47
5. Analysis of Variance Used to Determine Influences of Culture and/or Image of Responses (including C40)	48
6. Frequencies for Brands of Soap Used by Respondents .	54
7. Frequencies for Brands of Shampoo Used by Respondents	55
8. Frequencies for Brands of Facial Moisturizer Used by Respondents	56
9. Frequencies for Brands of Razors Used by Respondents	57
10. Frequencies for Brands of Facial Cleanser Used by Respondents	58
11. Frequencies for the Age Groups of the Respondents .	60
12. Frequencies for the Marital Status of the Respondents	61
13. Frequencies for the Occupations of the Respondents .	62
14. Frequencies for the Educational Levels of the Respondents	63
15. Frequencies for the Income Levels of the Respondents	64

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>page</u>
1. Profile of the Health Conscious Image Using Attribute Averages	49
2. Profile of the Middle Image Using Attribute Averages	50
3. Profile of the Affluent Image Using Attribute Averages	51

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Living in a world where there is a great proliferation of products and an even greater array of brands to choose from, different consumers use different criteria on which to base product and brand choice. As early as 1959, Sidney Levy recognized that products have psychological attributes that consumers consider, either explicitly or implicitly, in order to determine if the attributes "fit" their self-image (Levy,1959). Since then, much research has been done on product image, self-image, and the congruency between the two (Dolich,1969; Evans,1959; Grubb,1965; Grubb and Hupp,1968; Holbrook and Hughes,1978; Reynolds and Gutman,1984).

Marketing consists of four areas which may be used to establish the symbolic aspects or image of the product. Price, promotion (including packaging), means of distribution, and the product itself can all be coordinated and integrated to relay both the physical and non-physical attributes of the product to the consumer. A high price may convey that the product is exclusive while a low price may help to create a "cheap" image for the product. The people

used in advertising a product may create a symbolic personality that consumers will identify with and try to emulate. If a product is available only in "exclusive" outlets, the product itself may be seen as being exclusive and not available to the mass market.

Each of the four areas works to establish the image of the product. The formation of the product into a symbol or the formation of the symbolic aspects of the product occurs in much the same way as the formation of any symbol. The symbolic aspects of products are learned by groups through the process of socialization.

From the research on product image, self-image, and congruency, a question arose as to how consumers perceive others on the basis of the products and brands that the others buy and consume. It has been suggested that certain products and brands bought and consumed by a person will affect others' perceptions of that person (Haire, 1950; Webster and VonPechman, 1979; Holbrook and Hughes, 1978). This study put forth this suggestion once again and tested it using a group of products not used before.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS IN RELATION TO MARKETING

Symbols/Symbolism

A symbol can be viewed as anything which has meaning (Spencer,1979). Marketers make use of symbols in order to build product and brand images that will differentiate products/brands and meet the psychological needs of the market segments (Reynolds and Gutman,1984; Levy,1959). Symbols are learned by groups of people through the socialization process whereby individuals learn the "rules of behavior for a given social group as well as acquiring the motivation to perform properly" (Spencer,1979:85).

Product Image

A product image is a "set of meanings and associations that serve to differentiate a product or service from its competition" (Reynolds and Gutman,1984:27). After consumers have learned symbols through socialization, marketers can use the symbols to build images for their products and brands.

Self-Image

Much of the research done on product image has been in conjunction with research on self-image. Self-image is "that organization of qualities that the individual attributes to himself" (Kinch,1968:233).

Congruency

The self-image is important to marketers since the greater congruency it has to the product image, the greater the probability of positive product evaluation and purchase (Bennett and Kassarian,1972; Levy,1959; Grubb and Hupp,1968; Grubb and Grathwohl,1968; Dolich,1969; O'Brien, Tapia and Brown,1977). Congruency is the degree of consistency between a person's self-image and the psychological image of a product based on its physical and non-physical attributes (Birdwell,1968; Grubb and Grathwohl,1967; O'Brien, Tapia and Brown,1977).

Culture

Culture is the "acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate behavior" (Spradely and McCurdy,1980:2) and was an added variable in this study. It has been accepted that socialization and therefore, symbols, may differ between cultures. These differences may result in product/brand images differing between cultures.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to discover through the use of a projective technique whether the brand purchased by a consumer affects others' perceptions of her image. This projective technique involved "an experimental design to compare the...reactions of respondents to otherwise identical lists of items" (Holbrook and Hughes, 1978: 323). Privately consumed products were used in this study in order to ascertain if these types of products have an affect on personal image. The added variable of culture was used to determine if there were differences in the way consumers in different cultural areas view others based on products/brands purchased and consumed.

CHAPTER PREVIEWS

Chapter II discusses symbols, symbolization, product image, self-image, product/self-image congruency, and culture. Chapter III describes the research design and methodology that was used in this study. Chapter IV reveals the findings of this study and Chapter V discusses the implications and limitations stemming from the study.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW

Chapter II presents the theoretical concepts relevant to product and self-image. Symbols, product image, self-image, product/self-image congruency, and culture are discussed in relation to this study. Symbols are important in viewing the way in which consumers may view products as symbols. These symbolic aspects of products are what form the product image. Most of the research done on product image has been in conjunction with self-image and the degree of congruency between the product and the self-image. The possibility that culture may affect self-image and the perception of product images initiates a discussion of culture in relation to the preceding topics.

SYMBOLS/SYMBOLISM

Anthropologists state that every culture has the characteristics of a code and that the codes involve symbolic meanings assigned to things. People learn the symbolic meanings and use the meanings to order their lives (Spradley and McCurdy, 1980). The importance of symbols in everyday life leads to a review of the literature on what symbols are, the

theory behind symbols, uses of symbols, how symbols relate to marketing, and particularly how symbols relate to product and self-image.

Definitions of Symbols

"A symbol is something which stands for something else" (Millar and Millar, 1976:22). Symbols can be defined as 1) something which represents another thing, 2) outward signs, emblems, or objects that refer to objects, people, ideas, principles, etcetera, or as 3) graphic characters or figures used in writing or mathematics (Stein, 1957). They

"represent something beyond the immediate situation, and they are capable of conveying meaning to someone who has learned what they represent. A symbol can be anything. It is any object, event, relationship, or any other thing to which people attach meaning and by which they communicate meaning with one another." (Henslin, 1975:105).

At the most general level, a symbol can be any thing that has meaning (Spencer, 1979). Seen in this light, products can be viewed as symbols for consumers.

Characteristics of Symbols

Much of the literature dealing with symbols specifically defines what is meant by a "symbol" and then further elaborates the meaning by discussing various characteristics that symbols possess. The following list of characteristics that come from the various definitions is not considered to be exhaustive but are pertinent to this study.

1. Symbols are learned through experience and our experiences begin at a very early age (Millar and Millar,1976; Condon,1975).
2. Symbols act as a form of communication (Britt,1978; Henslin,1975).
3. Symbols must have an agreed upon meaning and acceptance within a social or cultural group (Turner,1978; Henslin,1975; Spencer,1979).
4. Symbols are used to communicate self-image (Henslin,1975).
5. Symbols differ from person to person and group to group (social or cultural) (Millar and Millar,1976; Henslin,1975).
6. One symbol can have many meanings (Millar and Millar,1976; Henslin, 1975).

Many of the characteristics discussed concerning symbols can be traced back to socialization. There is a need for symbols to be accepted within some social or cultural group for them to have meaning (Turner,1978; Henslin,1975; Spenc-

er,1979). The socialization process will affect what symbols are accepted by members of groups (Spencer,1979). Interactions with others and observations of others within a group (cultural or social) reveal to the individual which symbols to accept and what they mean.

Symbols may change for groups of people because of changes in developmental levels, values, and lifestyles. As people move through the socialization process and get older, they encounter new situations and groups. As people go through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood, their relevant symbols change (Spencer,1979).

Symbols can be categorized by their physical characteristics. Some are outward signs or emblems, others are graphic characters or figures such as the ones used in mathematics and writing (Stein,1957). Product image is built both with signs and emblems (trade marks) and graphic characters as in the writing style used for the product name.

Uses of Symbols

After examining definitions and the theory surrounding symbols, it is important to review the uses of symbols. The over-riding use of symbols is to help establish order within the world and efficiency within people's lives (Spradely and McMurdy,1980). As mentioned in the list of characteristics,

symbols often function as a means of reducing the number of referents needed to express a concept (Britt,1978). This helps in ordering the world since many of the symbols are understood by everyone in a culture and help to explain what responses are appropriate for what symbols. The best example of a symbol creating order is a traffic light. The lights symbolize "stop", "slow down", and "go". If the meanings of the colors were not accepted by the culture, chaos would result on the streets. Only three colors are necessary to avoid this chaos.

An example in a marketing context can be seen in either the Good Housekeeping seal or the UL approval stamp. If these symbols are salient to the consumers, both help to order the consumer's world because they separate products into "good" and "bad" or "safe" and "unsafe".

In the traffic light example, not only do the lights help order traffic, the symbolic colors also reduce the number of referents needed to communicate the meanings within a culture. Having only three symbols for most traffic regulation is more efficient for people since they do not need to learn new symbols when traveling from one place to another within a culture.

Theoretically, certain seals or stamps of approval or acceptance reduce the number of product attributes that con-

sumers need to examine before determining if a product is "safe" or "good". They also reduce the amount of the consumer's time that would be spent in obtaining information on the product.

Besides order and efficiency, the other major use of symbols is for the purpose of communication (Britt, 1978; Henslin, 1975). Communication is usually verbal or non-verbal. Verbal communication is done through the vocal symbols of spoken language. Non-verbal symbols are written languages, body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Product and brand images are built primarily through non-verbal communication by the use of symbols.

Examples of Symbols

Examples of symbols might be helpful in identifying the broad range of symbol utilization. When vocalized, words are examples of verbal communication symbols. The sounds made to speak a word have no meaning, but the word itself symbolizes a thing or idea. The written language is the most often used example of a non-verbal symbol, but non-verbal symbols could also be body language, gestures, or facial expressions. In the United States, a "thumbs-up" gesture relates the idea that everything is going well - either for the person gesturing or for the person viewing the gesture.

Raising a thumb does not mean anything by itself, but people have attached meaning to it and now it is a symbol.

The above examples are few of the many that could be presented here. Consumer goods such as cars, clothes, and jewelry are used by some people as symbols of status or age (Levy,1959). Symbols can also be used to identify roles that people are occupying. Bookbags and backpacks symbolize that a person is a student, while briefcases and portfolios are symbols of professionals (Levy,1959). Bizarre haircuts symbolize the fact that some people want to differentiate themselves from the mainstream of the culture. Parents often use belts or switches as symbols of authority to instill obedience in children.

Relevant Streams of Research Concerning Symbols

The number of symbols and the number of ways that they are used has attracted attention from sociologists, social psychologists, and marketers, as well as others. Three streams of research that are relevant here because of their basis in symbolization are symbolic interactionism, symbolic consumption, and hedonic consumption.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is the "peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings" (Blumer, 1962: 180). The interaction is referred to as "peculiar" because of the fact that "human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions" (Blumer, 1962: 180). The "response is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions" (Blumer, 1962: 180). Blumer proposes that "human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (Blumer, 1962: 180). Humans are therefore "inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior" (Blumer, 1962: 180).

The underlying premise for social interactionism is that people have a self that they can act toward. Realizing that people do possess a self that they are able to act towards is the start of understanding how other's actions are interpreted by and act upon the self. Other's actions and responses are interpreted by the self and give the self indications as to how to respond, react, or deal with differing situations. The individual then "pieces together and guides his action by taking account of different things and interpreting their

significance for his prospective action" (Blumer,1962:187). If the situations or objects are not significant to the individual, he will not indicate anything to the self and no interpretation will occur.

From a consumer behavior standpoint, social interactionism reveals three basic assertions. They are:

- 1) The individual's self-concept is based on his perception of the way others are responding to him.
- 2) The individual's self-concept functions to direct his behavior.
- 3) The individual's perception of the responses of others toward him reflects the actual responses of others toward him.(Kinch,1963:481).

The importance of these assertions for this study are that it is recognized that others do affect a person's self-image, that the self-image acts to direct behavior, and that the actual (as opposed to perceived) responses of others to the self are reflected in the perception of these responses. The assertions that others affect self-image and that the self-image directs behavior suggests that others may be instrumental in directing a person's behavior.

Symbolic and Hedonic Consumption

Both symbolic consumption and hedonic consumption are concerned with individuals as consumers. Symbolic consump-

tion focuses on the assumption that some consumers view products as symbols and "imbue them with attributes that extend beyond their immediate physical nature" (Hirschman,1984;4). Hedonic consumption also sees consumers viewing products as subjective symbols but instead of focusing on the product and its attributes, this research focuses on the consumer's "images, fantasies, and emotional arousal" when using the product (Hirschman,1982:46).

Marketers have capitalized on the connection between consumers and the symbolic aspects of products in many different ways. One marketing use of symbolism is to communicate psychological attributes of the product in order to create a brand image for differentiation purposes (Reynolds and Gutman,1984). The psychological attributes help add value to the product if the consumer perceives the symbolism in the way the marketer intended.

The above examples are concerned with the consumer packaged goods area, but hedonic consumption has traditionally dealt with intangible consumer goods such as the performing arts (concerts, ballet) (Hirschman,1982). The hedonic consumption theory could be expanded and researched using packaged and durable goods. These products may also create images, fantasies, and emotional arousal when consumed.

Symbols and Consumer Research

The research that has been done on the symbolic aspects of consumer goods has dealt with tangible goods. Haire used a projective technique to find out if the use of instant coffee symbolized something about the user (Haire,1950). The technique involved two shopping lists differing only in that one included instant coffee and the other included regular drip coffee. The participants in the study were asked to study the list and to project themselves into the situation. They were then asked to write a description of the woman who would buy the products on the list. The two lists resulted in two profiles of the women who would purchase the items in each list. The instant coffee purchasers were seen as being lazy and poor planners, while the other purchasers were seen as being concerned about their families and planning purchases (Haire,1950). This "shopping list" study was replicated in 1970 and resulted in very similar findings (Webster and VonPechman,1970). There were still differences in the profile of each "shopper", although not as dramatic as in 1950. But convenience foods in general (ex: instant coffee) were viewed much more favorably than in 1950. Holbrook and Hughes replicated the Webster and VonPechman study using semantic differential scales in conjunction with the projective technique in order to simplify the coding proce-

ture (Holbrook and Hughes,1978). The findings of this study affirmed the Webster and VonPechman conclusion that convenience foods were viewed favorably.

Research has also been done on the type of person who would buy a Chevrolet as opposed to a Ford based on the symbolic attributes of the product in relation to personality variables (Evans,1959). The study had limited success, however, because the distinction between the two "types" was not clear. This may have been because the brand categories used were so broad.

Most of the research has focused on tangible products and trying to discover the type of person likely to buy one brand over another. The psychographic profile of a person using a brand often gives the marketer insight into which of the psychological attributes are considered important by consumers (Levy, 1959).

PRODUCT IMAGE

Product image consists of a "set of meanings and associations that serve to differentiate a product or service from its competition" (Reynolds and Gutman,1984:27). There are attributes that products possess that are not physical in nature (Haire,1950; Webster and VonPechman,1968; Reynolds and Gutman,1984). The non-physical, symbolic attributes

that products possess are the "meanings and associations" that are used to differentiate products.

The underlying motivation for using strategies that establish a product image is to differentiate products that are not significantly different from each other as far as physical attributes are concerned (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984). Product images may also be used to meet the psychological needs of consumers in different market segments (Levy, 1959). Many consumer goods and services are essentially the same as far as physical attributes are concerned so that marketers must rely on something else to differentiate their products. Pricing, promotion, product, and distribution strategies are planned and implemented in order to convey the image of the product to the consumer.

Once a product has an established image and is a symbol to some group of consumers, these consumers can either use the products and product images to communicate something about themselves or to establish a self-image (Soloman, 1983). Once a consumer is familiar with the appropriate behavior, he will use products to communicate his familiarity. If he is unfamiliar with the appropriate behavior, he will scan the environment for cues and symbols as to what is appropriate and adopt those symbolic behaviors (Soloman, 1983).

Product image has been of interest to marketers as early as 1950 (Haire,1950). The main streams of current research in the area of product image are symbolic consumption and hedonic consumption. Symbolic consumption focuses on consumers' viewing of products as symbols by adding attributes to the products that are not physical in nature (Hirschman,1984). Hedonic consumption does not reject the theory of symbolic consumption but focuses on the use of the product and the symbolization when used instead of the product itself (Hirschman,1982).

Product image research is closely related to the consumers' self-image. Since consumers use product images to either communicate a role or establish themselves in a role, the roles can be viewed as images that consumers wish to communicate or establish.

SELF-IMAGE

The self-concept or self-image has been defined as "that organization of qualities that the individual attributes to himself" (Kinch,1963:481). The qualities include both the adjectives that a person would use to describe himself and the roles that a person sees himself in (Kinch,1963). More specifically, the self-image consists of what a person knows about himself, what he thinks of himself, how he values him-

self, and how he attempts to enhance or defend himself (Hall and Lindzey,1957).

One framework for viewing self-image research has revealed that a person may have at least three distinct self-images (Landon,1974; Sanchez,O'Brien, and Summers,1975). There is an actual self-image that consists of how an individual currently sees himself (Landon,1974), an expected self-image that a person sees himself as being able to obtain in the future (Sanchez,O'Brien, and Summers,1975), and an ideal self-image that a person aspires to create (Landon,1974). The formation of these self-images rests on the theory that the "individual's conceptions of himself emerges from social interaction and, in turn, guides or influences the behavior of that individual" (Kinch,1963:481).

Obviously, even though self-image is discussed as an aspect of an individual, others are important in the development of the self-image (Grubb and Grathwohl,1967). The development is internal, but throughout the formation of the self, an individual's self-image "grows from reactions of parents, peers, teachers, and significant others" (Grubb and Hupp,1968:59). An individual will want positive reaction from his significant references and act accordingly (Grubb and Hupp,1968).

Much of the research on self-image has been in conjunction with product image and how the use of products serves to communicate or establish self-image (Landon,1974; Sanchez,O'Brien, and Summers, 1975; Grubb and Grathwohl,1967; Grubb and Hupp,1968; Sirgy,1982; Reynolds and Gutman,1984). By using symbolic products "a person is attempting to communicate to his significant references certain things about himself" (Grubb and Hupp,1968:59). The choice of products and even more specifically, the choice of brands, purchased by an individual are often the only explicit signs that others use to evaluate the image of the person (Grubb and Grathwohl,1967).

Research involving self-image and product image usually centers on the degree of congruency between self-image and product/brand image (Grubb and Grathwohl,1967; Grubb and Hupp,1968; Landon,1974; Sanchez,O'Brien, and Summers,1975). In view of this, the area of self-image/product image congruency will be discussed next.

CONGRUENCY

Congruency between the self-image and product image as discussed here will refer to the degree of consistency between a person's self-image and the psychological image of a product based on its physical and non-physical attributes

(Birdwell,1968; Grubb and Grathwolh,1967; O'Brien,Tapia, and Brown,1977). Since much of the marketing research done on self-image involves the matter of congruency between self-image and product image, it is important to review the theory behind congruency and the marketing research that has been done in this area.

The two underlying assumptions for discussing congruency are that consumers are able to and do perceive products as symbols and that consumers have a self-image to which they relate the product symbol (Dolich,1969). The main thrust of the argument for congruency is that products serve as symbols to communicate something to others about the user. The user attempts to choose products which will communicate her self-image to the people she feels are important. If the communication is successful, the consumer's important people will react in a way desired by the consumer and the consumer's self-image will be maintained and enhanced (Grubb and Hupp,1968; Grubb and Grathwohl,1967; O'Brien, Tapia, and Brown,1977). Even when the products are privately consumed and not conspicuous to others, they may still impact self-image. Consumers may try to be consistent in building their self-images and purchase privately consumed goods that are congruent with their self-image (Dolich,1969). This would be expected based on cognitive balance theory which suggests

that individuals structure perceptions of people and objects so that they fit or balance with the self-image (Heider, 1958).

Marketers hope that by creating products or brands with certain images consistent with the members of the target market's self-images, the probability of positive product evaluations and purchase of the product will increase (Bennett and Kassarian, 1972; Levy, 1959; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1968; Dolich, 1969; O'Brien, Tapia, and Brown, 1977). Unfortunately, marketers have not been able to discover whether the real, expected, or ideal self-image has more influence when choosing and purchasing products (Dolich, 1969).

Most of the research done on congruency has dealt with products that are conspicuously consumed. Evans did a study in order to classify Ford and Chevrolet owners by self-image (Evans, 1959). As mentioned previously, the study had limited success since the distinctions between the self-images of the car owners were not clear. The broad brand categories chosen may have affected the results since Birdwell obtained significant relationships between self-image and car makes using eight different car makes and semantic differential scales to measure both product and self-image (Birdwell, 1968). The car makes used were Renault, Thunderbird,

Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Corvette, Cadillac, Ford Convertible, and Rambler. Congruity was found between product and self-image and Birdwell proposed that the high degree of congruency may lead to the conclusion that cars are often extensions of the owner's self-image. Grubb and Hupp also studied self-image but this time in relation to Volkswagon versus Pontiac GTO ownership (Grubb and Hupp,1968). "Consumers of the two different brands of autos perceived themselves significantly different and held definite stereotype perceptions of the owners of each make" (Grubb and Hupp,1968:60). Given the research done on self-image in conjunction with car makes, differences in the way consumers are perceived by others based on brand choice are expected to exist.

Dolich conducted research using both conspicuously consumed products (beer and cigarettes) and privately consumed products (bar soap and toothpaste) in order to find if congruence between product and self-image existed (Dolich,1969). His research supported psychological theories "that individuals tend to relate the brand symbol to self concepts" (Dolich,1969:84). Differences between conspicuously consumed and privately consumed products in relation to self-image were not found to exist (Dolich,1969).

The fact that Dolich found privately consumed products to be congruent with self-image indicates that privately consumed products (as opposed to conspicuously consumed and intangible products) may also be important to self-image. This study proposed to supplement the limited existing research on image in conjunction with privately consumed products.

CULTURE

The relevance of culture to this study has been revealed through the discussions on symbolism and product image. Symbols are formed throughout the socialization process and they are what marketers utilize in order to create product images. The socialization of individuals and the symbols learned through socialization may be affected by culture.

The marketer has some control over the image projected by his product as long as the marketing strategy is implemented and controlled properly. What is uncontrollable are the differences in self-images that are a result of cultural differences between or among groups of consumers and the symbolization that exists within the culture. The socialization process occurs within all cultural groups, but aspects such as values and symbols tend to differ between cultures and will influence the members' self-images.

Culture is the "acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate behavior" (Spradely and McCurdy,1980:2). Each culture has symbols used to help order life and enable members to interpret situations. The symbols are learned through socialization within a culture, so culture is learned (Spradely and McCurdy,1980).

The arbitrarily learned symbols that are ingrained in each culture affect the individual's self-image. Along with differing symbols, values may also differ between cultures and affect the self-images of the individuals within the culture.

Significantly within the United States, research done on culture has considered the American culture and its people as a whole (Fawcett and Thomas,1983; Gabriel,1974; Smith and Smith,1973). However, there is research currently being published that indicates that there are differences in the culture and in the people within the United States (Garreau, 1981; Mitchell,1983). Thus research needs to be done that looks at these possible cultural differences within the United States.

Joel Garreau, a newspaper reporter, began looking at differences within the United States by doing a content analysis of newspaper articles from different newspapers around the country. From this analysis, he developed an article on

the "nine nations" of North America. The article attracted enough attention from other reporters, as well as readers, that Garreau began formulating the "nine nations" article into an idea for a book. To collect more data on each of the "nations", he traveled across the country, conducted interviews, and collected statistics when available (Garreau, 1981).

In his book, Garreau separated North America into nine "nations" based on differences in history, attitudes towards the land, prejudices, economics, and futures (Garreau, 1981). There is the civilized New England nation, the floundering Foundry, the progressive Dixie nation, the exotic Islands, the growing MexAmerica, the escape of Ecotopia, the vast Empty Quarter, the agricultural Breadbasket, and the wilderness of Quebec. Garreau also has a classification of "aberrations" that include New York City, Washington D.C., Alaska, and Hawaii. These are places that are considered as having behavior "in the weird-to-incomprehensible range by the standards of the rest of this diverse continent" (Garreau, 1981: 99).

Dixie and New England are the two areas to be used in this study. Differences would be expected to result in product image perception and self-image between the two areas according to Garreau's classifications and characteristics

of the areas (1981). Consumers in New England may be more open to new products and have more positive self-images since they pride themselves on being civilized, educated, and liberal. Dixie's consumers may be more critical of products and have less positive self-images because of the area's reputation for being backward, emotional, and conservative.

Cultural differences have long been considered in marketing products to foreign countries (Slater,1984), but recently companies within the United States have begun segmenting markets on the basis of both geographic and attitudinal differences (Jereski,1984). General Foods and Dr Pepper are both using psychographics in order to segment their markets (Jereski,1984).

SUMMARY

The literature review on symbols, product image, self-image, product and self-image congruency, and culture have pointed out the importance of the non-physical attributes that products possess. However, little research has been done on finding out what affect these attributes have on others' perceptions of the person buying and using the product. The most widely known marketing research done in this area is Mason Haire's shopping list study along with Webster

and VonPechman's and Holbrook and Hughes' replications of the original study.

Since many products are so similar and brands rely on image to sell the product, there is a need for more research in the area of product image and how it relates to consumers' self-images. There seem to be definite gaps in previous research concerning the issue of privately consumed products in relation to self-image and image perception. The possibility of cultural differences affecting self-image and image perception has also been ignored except in the context of using ethnic differences as an indication of cultural differences, therefore this study examined image differences based on privately consumed products between two different cultural groups.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the research design and methodology used in this study. The hypotheses tested, a description of the focus group used to obtain attributes of image, the way in which image was measured, the rationale for the products and brands chosen, the sample design, the research design, and the proposed statistical analysis are included. A brief description of the procedure is included in the following paragraph as an overview of the methodology.

In order to gain more information on the way consumers perceive others based on the product brands bought and consumed, research involving a projective technique incorporating semantic differential scales was used. Each respondent was requested to consider three lists of products where only the brands differed among the lists. They were then asked to project themselves into the situation and to rate the woman who uses the products on several different attributes.

HYPOTHESES

Research involving product and self-image indicates that consumers will choose products with images that are congruent with their own self-images. If the product images are understood by consumers, a person purchasing a certain brand will be perceived by others as having certain qualities or attributes. The first hypothesis to be tested by this research is:

Ho1: The ratings of the image of the women who would use one set of products with a specific image will not be significantly different from the ratings of the images of the women who use the other sets of products with different images.

If the null is not upheld, products purchased may have an effect on the way that others perceive us and on the image we project to others.

Culture may also affect the images of products because of differing symbols. Differences would be expected to result between the two groups chosen for this study according to Garreau (1981). The second hypothesis to be tested, then, is:

Ho2: The ratings of the women for each product set will not differ between the groups of respondents in the two cultural areas.

FOCUS GROUP

Because of an interest in qualitative types of research and a desire to obtain attributes directly relevant to this study, the author decided to conduct a focus group interview session to obtain the attributes of image instead of relying solely on existing measures. The focus group of five graduate students (all female) was conducted in order to discover how women described each other to a third person. All women were used because according to cultural theory, men and women are socialized differently. The use of all women helped to control for this variable. Four of the women were in their early twenties while the fifth was in her early thirties. The ages of the focus group participants were relevant since the respondents used for this study were of similar ages. The focus group took place in the author's home. The participants were asked what attributes or characteristics they would use to describe another woman to a friend. This brought out attributes that were thought to be important in describing a person's image. These attributes were then transformed into adjectives and phrases used for developing semantic differential scales. (see Appendix A)

PRODUCT SELECTION

The products used for this research were chosen from the women's personal care category. These are privately consumed, consumer packaged goods, whereas many of the products used in image research have been either conspicuously consumed products (e.g. cars) or intangible products (e.g. concerts). Little research has been done on privately consumed products perhaps because they are not thought to be influential in developing or maintaining self-image. The author believes that these products are important to self-image based on cognitive balance theory. This study using privately consumed products will add to the existing research on conspicuously consumed and intangible products in relation to self-image.

Only five products were chosen in order to have small groups of products which would facilitate ease of data collection and answering on the respondents' part. Also, it was decided that a larger number of products might confuse the respondents to the point that they would be unable to perceive a clear image of the woman in question. The five products are soap, shampoo, facial moisturizer, shaving razor, and facial cleanser. These are all privately consumed, women's personal care products.

BRAND SELECTION

The brands chosen for each product were based on developing three "categories" of products. The categories were based on distribution and price. The first is a health conscious (HC) category with products made of all natural ingredients. These brands are usually higher priced than the middle (M) category and are available in a very limited number of specialized outlets. The second category is a "middle of the road" (M) one where the products are in the medium price range and are widely available in many types of distribution outlets. The third is an "affluent" (A) category where products are higher priced than both the health conscious (HC) and the middle (M) categories and may be somewhat limited in availability. A list of the brands used is included in Appendix A.

CULTURAL AREAS

The two cultural areas used in this study were Berea, Kentucky and Cuba, New York. According to Garreau's classification, Berea lies in Dixie while Cuba lies in New England. As previously discussed, differences would be expected to exist between the two areas because of the different characteristics that each area possesses. Both are fairly rural areas with small populations. These two areas were

chosen because of the availability of contacts to assist with the data collection.

MEASURES

The list of adjectives obtained from the focus group were limited in number, so several that were used in Holbrook and Hughes' study on structured rating scales in conjunction with projective techniques were also used (Holbrook and Hughes, 1978). The complete list of attributes and their semantic counterparts are listed in Appendix A.

The use of these attributes as structured rating scales employing semantic differentials did not take away from the projective technique. It was still an indirect method used to delve into perceptions regarding self-image with the scales providing ease of coding the information obtained. It was also more systematic than the traditionally used open-ended questionnaire (Holbrook and Hughes, 1978). The questionnaire along with all directions can be found in Appendix B.

SAMPLE DESIGN

The subjects used for the research were women between the ages of 20 and 40 with no additional parameters set as to occupation, marital status, economic status, or education. The age specification was considered an important parameter since those women either younger or older than the specified age range may not have been familiar enough with the product images to respond. The procedure involved using samples in two different geographic areas to see if there were any differences in ratings as a result of cultural background differences. One area was Cuba, New York and the other was Berea, Kentucky.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Questionnaires were sent to one person familiar to the researcher in each area who was instructed to approach 50 prospective respondents over the course of one week and request their cooperation. A convenience sample was used since the contact person in each area was unfamiliar with sampling theory. The convenience sample simplified the procedure for the contact people. Access in Cuba was through YMCA women's classes. Access in Berea was through a convenience sample of townspeople. The completed questionnaires were then returned, coded and analyzed. Instructions

for both the contact people and the respondents are included with the questionnaire in Appendix B.

General demographic information on marital status, income level, occupation, and education was gathered for general descriptive purposes.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The design of the research was a 2 x 3 analysis of variance (ANOVA) design with two levels of culture and three levels of image as shown below.

		CULTURE	
		Cuba	Berea
I M A G E	HC		
	M		
	A		

An aggregate average for all persons on each brand group (HC,M,A) was obtained first. The aggregate averages were then separated by geographic area and an analysis of vari-

ance done in order to determine if culture and/or image affected responses.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the research findings of the study. The hypotheses are restated and the statistical procedures used to test the hypotheses are presented. Interpretations of the results are discussed in Chapter V. The additional analysis performed with the research data is also presented in this chapter.

RESPONSE RATES

Fifty questionnaires were sent to both Berea, Kentucky and Cuba, New York. Of these one hundred, thirty completed questionnaires were returned from Berea for a 60% response rate and twenty-one from Cuba for a 42% response rate. The twenty-one from Cuba included four where the respondent was over the age limit of forty. These four were separated as a group from the other responses in order to view any differences in responses stemming from the age difference. Excluding the questionnaires where the respondents were over forty years of age, the response rate for Cuba was 34%.

HYPOTHESES

Image Hypothesis

The first hypothesis stated that the ratings of the image of the women who would use one set of products with a specific image would not be significantly different from the ratings of the images of the women who use the other sets of products with different images. Using an average of the nineteen attributes for all of the respondents on each image (HC, M, A), Duncan's Multiple Range test was performed in order to see if any of the image groups was significantly different from the others. Duncan's test is analagous to Fisher's Least Significant Difference test which shows which means differ from the others when using more than two groups. Tables 1 and 2 show that the health conscious (HC) image was significantly different from both the middle (M) and affluent (A) images. The hypothesis was upheld as far as the differences between the middle and affluent categories were concerned. The results in Table 1 include only the respondents from Berea and Cuba that were within the age restriction. Table 2 results also include the Cuban respondents who were over forty years old.

TABLE 1

Test for the Perceived Differences Between Images Using Duncan's Multiple Range Test (excluding C40*)

<u>IMAGE</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	
I1=HC	2.9500	x
I2=M	2.4711	y
I3=A	2.6105	y

($\alpha = .05$)

Means with the same letters are not significantly different.

*C40 denotes the group of respondents including only those from Cuba who were over 40 years old.

TABLE 2

Test for the Perceived Differences Between Images Using Duncan's
Multiple Range Test (including C40)

<u>IMAGE</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	
I1=HC	2.9789	x
I2=M	2.5825	y
I3=A	2.7070	y

($\alpha = .05$)

Means with the same letters are not significantly different.

Culture Hypothesis

The second hypothesis stated that the ratings of the women for each image category would not differ between the groups of respondents in the two cultural areas. In order to test this hypothesis, paired t-tests were performed on the mean responses to each of the image categories between the two cultures. The results of these paired t-tests are presented in Table 3. The null hypothesis was upheld for the health conscious and affluent categories, but a difference was revealed between the ratings for the middle category from Berea and those from Cuba.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

ANOVA

As stated in Chapter III, the design of this research was a 2 x 3 analysis of variance design with two levels of culture and three levels of image. Table 4 shows the results of the ANOVA procedure using the towns of Berea and Cuba as the levels of culture. The results of the ANOVA support the theory that brand image does affect the responses of others towards the person using the brand. They do not, however, support the supposition that culture affects the responses of others towards a person using certain brands.

TABLE 3

Paired t-Tests Used in Testing for Differences Between Cultures

$$H_0^1: \mu(HCB) = \mu(HCC)$$

$$t(\text{obs}) = 0.084$$

$$t(\text{crit}) = 1.645$$

$$\alpha = .05$$

Decision Rule: If $|t(\text{obs})| > t(\text{crit})$, reject H_0 .

Decision: Do not reject H_0^1 .

$$H_0^2: \mu(MB) = \mu(MC)$$

$$t(\text{obs}) = -2.384$$

$$t(\text{crit}) = 1.645$$

$$\alpha = .05$$

Decision Rule: If $|t(\text{obs})| > t(\text{crit})$, reject H_0 .

Decision: Reject H_0^2 .

$$H_0^3: \mu(AB) = \mu(AC)$$

$$t(\text{obs}) = -1.145$$

$$t(\text{crit}) = 1.645$$

$$\alpha = .05$$

Decision Rule: If $|t(\text{obs})| > t(\text{crit})$, reject H_0 .

Decision: Do not reject H_0^3 .

KEY

HCB = Health Conscious-Berea; HCC = Health Conscious-Cuba
 MB = Middle-Berea ; MC = Middle-Cuba
 AB = Affluent-Berea ; AC = Affluent-Cuba

Table 5 presents the results of the ANOVA procedure performed on the data including Cuban respondents who were over the age limit. The inclusion of these four respondents did alter the results. With the additional four respondents, there is support for both the theory that brand image affects others' perceptions of a person and the supposition that culture also affects others' perceptions of a person based on the brands used by the person.

Profiles

In order to make it possible to visualize the profile of the woman who would use each set of products, the average of each of the nineteen attributes for an image group was plotted on a graph. The averages for each attribute are given in terms of an average of the Berean and Cuban (under 40 years old) responses together, a separate average for Berea, and a separate average for Cuba. These profiles are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

As shown by the profiles, the health conscious image has an overall image centered on the mean of 3. The attributes that have very divergent averages are fashion conscious/not worried about fashion, practical/frivolous, thrifty/wasteful, and urban/rural. The middle image has a more positive profile with no real extremes resulting on any of the attri-

TABLE 4

Analysis of Variance (excluding C40)

SOURCE	DF	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F(obs)	Pr>F(obs)
Model	5	5.90	1.18	2.50	.0345
Error	108	50.94	0.47		
Corrected Total	113	56.84			
R^2		CV	Y Mean		
	.1040	25.65	2.68		
SOURCE	DF	ANOVA SS	F(obs)	Pr>F(obs)	
Culture	1	0.48	1.02	.3151	
Image	2	4.61	4.89	.0093	
Culture x Image	2	0.81	0.86	.4258	
HYPOTHESIS		F(obs)	F(crit)*	DECISION RULE	DECISION
Ho: no effect due to culture		1.02	3.92	**	Do not reject Ho.
Ho: no effect due to image		4.89	3.07	**	Reject Ho.
Ho: no interaction effect		0.86	3.07	**	Do not reject Ho.

* $\alpha = .05$ ** Decision for all Ho's: Reject Ho if $F(\text{obs}) > F(\text{crit})$.

TABLE 5
Analysis of Variance (including C40)

SOURCE	DF	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F(obs.)	$F_1 > F(obs.)$
Model	8	8.55	1.07	2.70	.0082
Error	162	64.13	0.04		
Corrected Total	170	72.68			

R^2	CV	\bar{y} Mean
.1180	22.83	2.76

SOURCE	DF	ANOVA SS	F(obs.)	$F_1 > F(obs.)$
Culture	2	2.61	3.30	.0394
Image	2	4.69	5.92	.0033
Culture x Image	4	1.25	0.79	.5328

HYPOTHESIS	F(obs)	F(crit)*	DECISION RULE	DECISION
Ho: no effect due to culture	3.30	3.00	**	Reject Ho. ¹
Ho: no effect due to image	5.92	3.00	**	Reject Ho. ²
Ho: no interaction effect	0.79	2.37	**	Do not reject Ho. ³

* $\alpha = .05$

** Decision rule for all Ho's: Reject Ho if $F(obs) > F(crit)$.

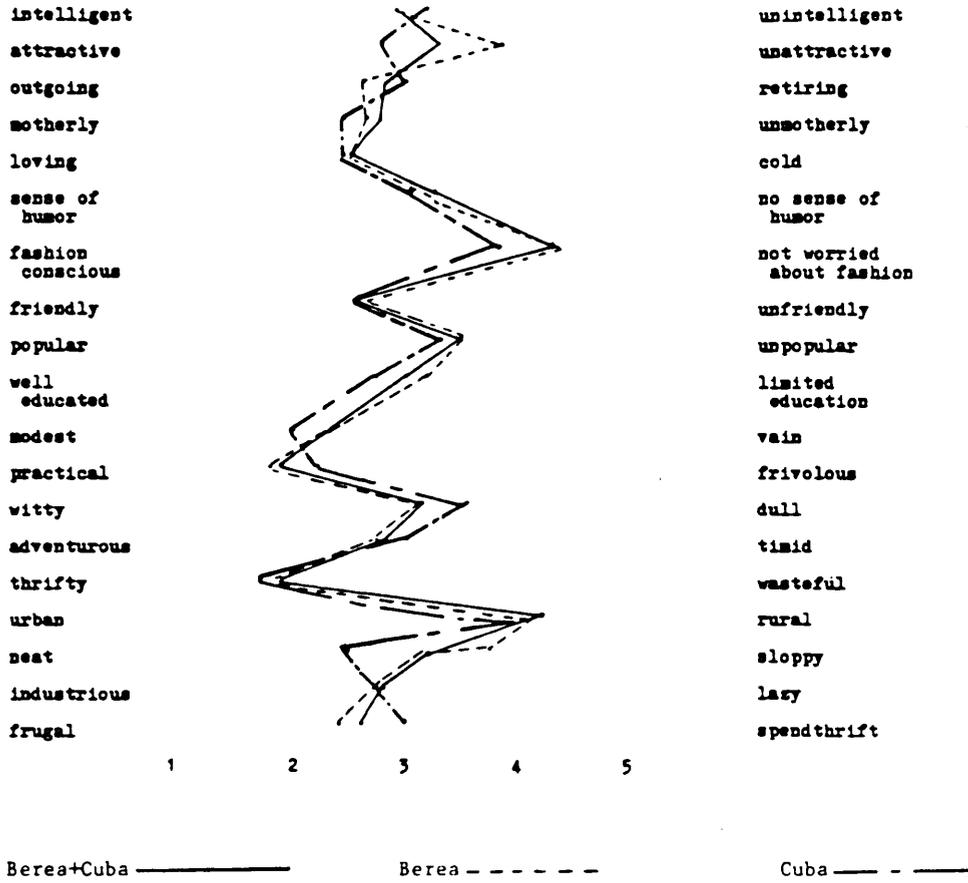


Figure 1: Profile of the Health Conscious Image Using Attribute Averages

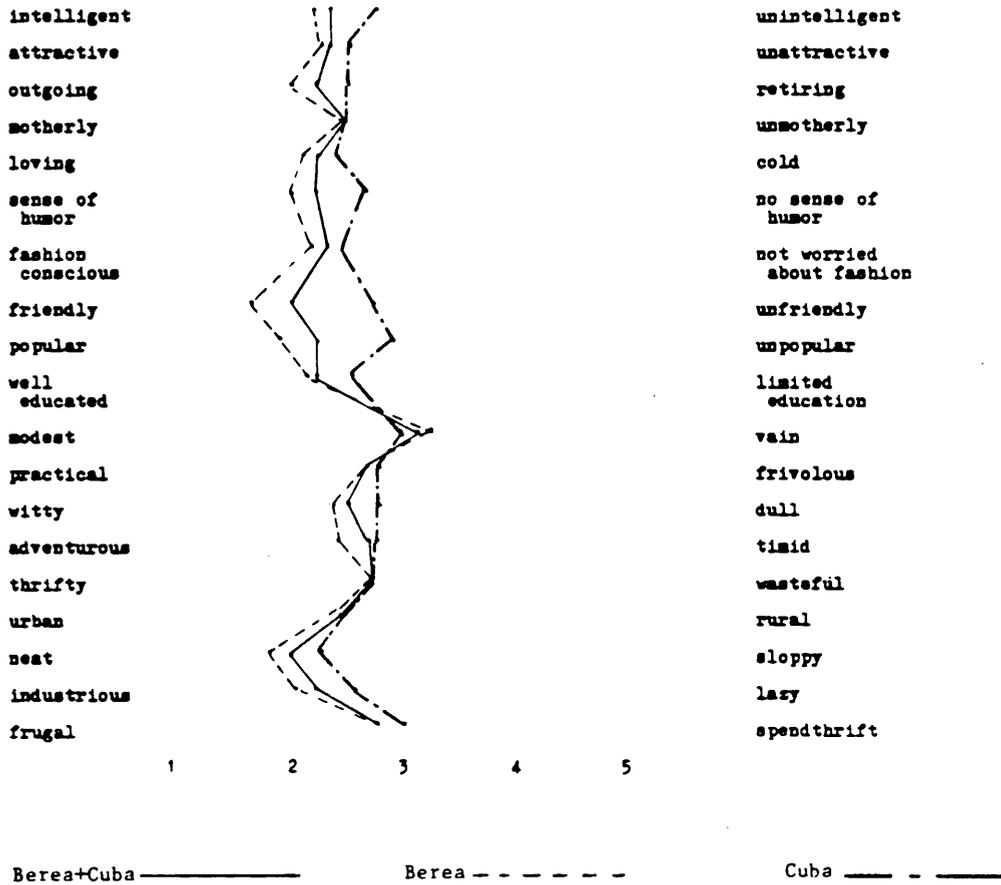


Figure 2: Profile of the Middle Image Using Attribute Averages

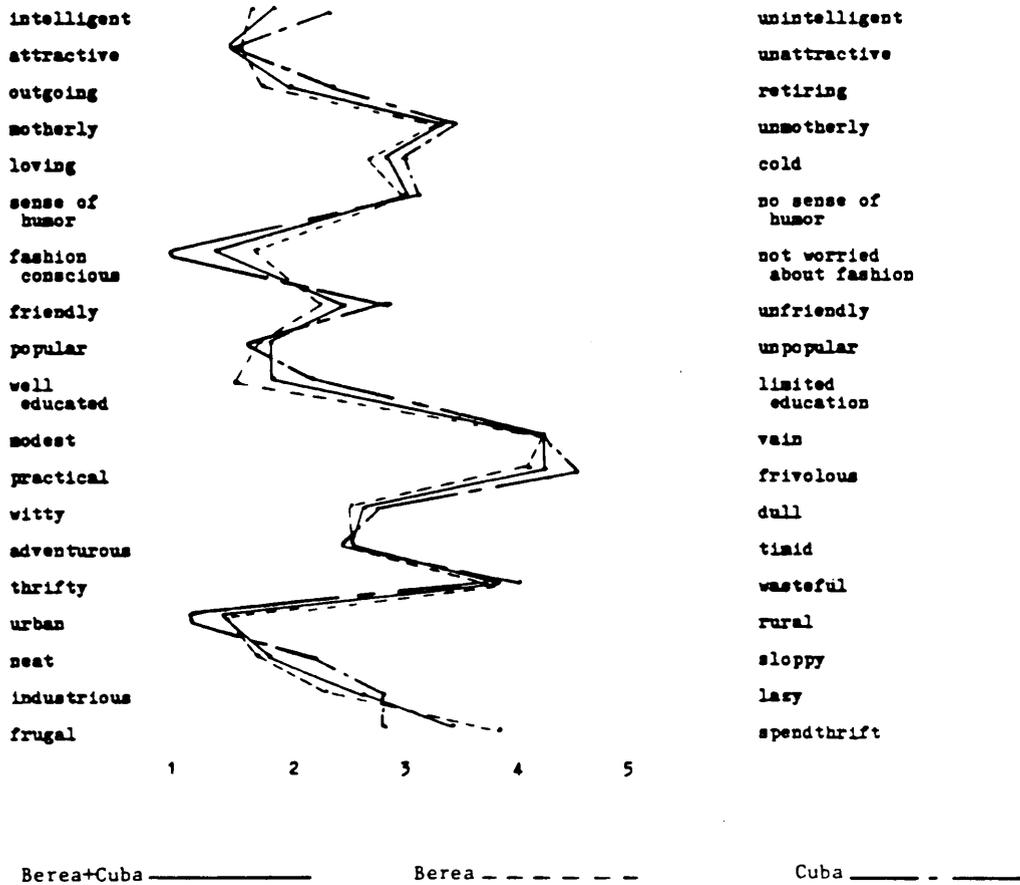


Figure 3: Profile of the Affluent Image Using Attribute Averages

butes. The affluent image is more positive than the health conscious group also, but many of the attributes' averages seem to be in the extreme range. The extremes for the affluent group are attractive/unattractive, motherly/unmotherly, fashion conscious/not worried about fashion, well educated/limited education, modest/vain, practical/ frivolous, thrifty/wasteful, urban/rural, and neat/sloppy.

Although previous analysis did not find significant differences between the average ratings for the middle and affluent images, the profiles reveal that the two images are very different when considering some of the attributes on an individual basis. The affluent woman is perceived as being more fashion conscious, popular, educated, vain, frivolous, adventurous, and urban than the middle image woman. The middle image woman, on the other hand, is perceived as being more motherly, modest, and practical than the affluent woman.

Frequencies: Products

Before reaching the section of the questionnaire requesting demographic information, respondents were requested to specify the brand they personally used for each of the products used in the study. This information was gathered in order to determine if most of the respondents fell into one

of the image categories (HC, M, A) or if they were fairly evenly distributed across the categories.

Classification of the respondents was based on brands used personally. Classification of the brands was based on the same criteria that were used in establishing the image categories. Using price and availability, most of the brands fell into the middle category and therefore, most of the respondents are considered as being in the middle image category.

The frequencies for the brands used by the respondents are presented in Tables 6 through 10. The most popular soap was Dial. The most widely used shampoo was Flex. The majority of the respondents did not use any facial moisturizer, but the most used brand was Oil of Olay. The Bic disposable razor is number one in frequency of use for the razor, although most of the respondents from Cuba used electric razors. As well as most of the respondents not using any facial moisturizer, most did not use a facial cleanser/astringent either. The most popular brand of astringent that was used was Sea Breeze.

TABLE 6

Frequencies for Brands of Soap Used by Respondents

SOAP	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Camay	2	2	0	0
Caress	3	3	0	0
Coast	2	1	1	0
Dial	11	7	4	0
Dove	6	5	1	0
Estee' Lauder	1	1	0	0
Irish Spring	1	0	1	0
Ivory	5	2	2	1
Liquid 4	3	0	3	0
Phisoderm	1	0	1	0
Pure and Natural	1	0	1	0
Safeguard	6	4	1	1
Shield	1	1	0	0
Soapure	1	1	0	0
Soft Soap	1	0	1	0
Tone	4	3	0	1
Zest	1	0	1	0
No Particular Brand	1	0	0	1

TABLE 7

Frequencies for Brands of Shampoo Used by Respondents

SHAMPOO	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Agree	1	0	1	0
Body On Tap	1	1	0	0
Clairol	1	0	0	1
Denorex	1	0	1	0
Finesse	3	1	2	0
Flex	9	7	2	0
Halsa	2	1	1	0
Head and Shoulders	1	0	1	0
Herbal Essence	2	1	1	0
Ivory	1	0	1	0
J.C. Penny- Foaming Mousse	1	1	0	0
Jhirmack	1	1	0	0
Johnson's Baby Shampoo	2	1	1	0
Klorane	1	1	0	0
Loreal	1	1	0	0
Nexus	5	5	0	0
Permasoft	2	2	0	0
Pert	1	1	0	0
Frell	2	0	2	0
Silkience	1	0	1	0
Style	2	2	0	0
Suave	6	3	3	0
Vidal Sassoon	2	1	0	1
No Particular Brand	2	0	0	2

TABLE 8

Frequencies for Brands of Facial Moisturizer Used by Respondents

FACIAL MOISTURIZER	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Avon	2	2	0	0
Cere's	1	1	0	0
Deep Magic	1	0	0	1
Dewkiss	1	1	0	0
Espre	1	1	0	0
Estee' Lauder	2	2	0	0
Golden Harvest Aloe Vera	1	1	0	0
Johnson's Baby Lotion	1	1	0	0
Lady Finelle	1	0	1	0
Mary Kay	2	1	1	0
Moisture Whip	1	1	0	0
Noxema	2	2	0	0
Oil of Olay	15	6	7	2
Ultima II	1	1	0	0
Vaseline	2	2	0	0
None	17	8	8	1

TABLE 9

Frequencies for Brands of Razors Used by Respondents

RAZOR	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Atra (Gillette)	3	3	0	0
Bic Disposable	30	18	11	1
Daisy	2	2	0	0
Good News	1	1	0	0
Electric	8	1	4	3
Personal Touch	5	3	2	0
Schick	1	1	0	0
None	1	1	0	0

TABLE 10

Frequencies for Brands of Facial Cleanser Used by Respondents

CLEANSER/ ASTRINGENT	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Albolene	1	1	0	0
Alcohol	1	0	1	0
Apree	1	0	1	0
Avon	4	2	2	0
Cere's	1	1	0	0
Estee' Lauder	1	1	0	0
Fostex	1	1	0	0
Lady Finelle	1	0	1	0
Mary Kay	3	2	1	0
Merle Norman	1	0	0	1
Neutrogena	1	1	0	0
Noxema	7	6	1	0
Oil of Olay	1	1	0	0
Phisoderm	1	1	0	0
Sea Breeze	10	5	4	1
None	16	8	6	2

Frequencies: Demographics

Demographic information including age, marital status, occupation, education, and income was requested in order to obtain a general description of the respondents. Frequencies for the demographics are presented in Tables 11 through 15.

From the frequency tables for the demographics, it was revealed that most of the respondents were in their early twenties and married. The majority were employed in either service occupations (e.g. waitresses, hairdressers) or clerical positions and earned less than \$ 20,000 a year. As far as the educational level is concerned, all of the respondents completed at least high school, with an equal number having some college education.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research findings in relation to the hypotheses stated in Chapter III along with the additional analysis done. The null hypothesis for image was partially upheld in that the middle and affluent groups were not significantly different. It was not upheld in that the health conscious image group was significantly different from both the middle and affluent groups.

TABLE 11

Frequencies for the Age Groups of the Respondents

AGE	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
20-24	25	19	6	0
25-29	13	10	3	0
30-34	4	0	4	0
35-40	5	1	4	0
> 40	4	0	0	4

TABLE 12

Frequencies for the Marital Status of the Respondents

MARITAL STATUS	TOTAL	BEREA	CUEA	CUBA-40
Single	16	11	5	0
Married	29	16	10	3
Divorced	6	3	2	1

TABLE 13

Frequencies for the Occupations of the Respondents

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
College Recruiter	1	1	0	0
Factory Work	4	1	3	0
Government Employee	2	0	1	1
Housewife	4	0	3	1
Management	1	1	0	0
Office/Clerical	10	6	3	1
Professional	1	1	0	0
Sales	4	3	1	0
Service	15	12	2	1
Social Work	3	1	2	0
Student	5	4	1	0
Unemployed	1	0	1	0

TABLE 14

Frequencies for the Educational Levels of the Respondents

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
Some High School	0	0	0	0
High School	19	8	7	4
Some College	19	12	7	0
2-year College	4	3	1	0
4-year College	5	3	2	0
Some Graduate School	4	4	0	0
Graduate School	0	0	0	0

TABLE 15

Frequencies for the Income Levels of the Respondents

INCOME	TOTAL	BEREA	CUBA	CUBA-40
\$ 0,000- 9,999	23	13	9	1
10,000-19,999	20	12	6	2
20,000-29,999	6	3	2	1
30,000-39,999	2	2	0	0
40,000-49,999	0	0	0	0
50,000 & over	0	0	0	0

The null hypothesis for culture was upheld for the health conscious and affluent images, since there were no significant differences between the cultures in their responses to these groups of brands. The hypothesis was not upheld for the middle image group since significant differences did exist between the two cultures' responses to this image.

Chapter V
DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This chapter presents a summary of the research project, an interpretation of the major research findings, contributions to marketing theorists and practitioners, limitations of the study, and a discussion of directions for further research.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to discover through the use of a projective technique whether the brand purchased by a consumer affects others' perceptions of her image. This study proposed that privately consumed products (as opposed to conspicuously consumed or intangible products) have an effect on personal image perception. It was also proposed that persons from different cultural areas may view others differently based on brands purchased and consumed.

Utilizing a 2 x 3 ANOVA research design with two levels of culture and three levels of image, a survey was conducted of women in two different geographic areas. Subjects were presented with three lists of products (where only the brands differed) and asked to rate the woman who would use the products on nineteen attributes.

INTERPRETATION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Image

Hypothesis 1 dealt with the effect of brand image on others' perceptions of a person's image. It proposed that there would be no difference between the ratings of the women who would use each set of brands. The health conscious image was the only image group that differed significantly from the others. The mean rating for the health conscious group was more negative than the other two groups. The more negative ratings for the woman who would use the health conscious brands may be a result of the respondents' self-image incongruity with the image of the person who would use these brands. The incongruity could exist because the respondents seemed to be more of the middle image group than either the health conscious or affluent. The more negative ratings could also be because of the respondents' lack of knowledge about or contact with persons in this image group.

From the information gathered on the products the respondents actually use and the demographics, it would seem probable that the middle category would have the most favorable rating. The congruency between the seeming "middleness" of the respondents and the favorable ratings on the middle image would be expected since these are the types of brands that the respondents may use to project their own self-imag-

es. They (the respondents) may see themselves in a positive light and therefore, may see the women who would use similar brands in a similar positive light.

The middle and affluent image groups did not differ significantly and both were more favorable than the health conscious image. The favorable ratings for the affluent group could be tied back to viewing the self-image not as a single entity, but as being comprised of the actual, expected, and ideal self-images. The perception of the woman using the affluent brands could have been congruent with the respondents' expected or ideal self-image and, therefore, received more favorable ratings than the health conscious group. The more favorable ratings for the affluent group may also have been a result of the respondents' lack of contact with and knowledge about persons in this affluent image group.

Culture

Hypothesis 2 dealt with the effect of culture on the responses of the subjects to each brand group. It proposed that there would be no differences in the brand image group ratings between the respondents in the two different cultural (geographic) areas. This hypothesis was upheld in that the responses from Bereans and Cubans were not significantly

different for the health conscious and affluent image groups. The lack of difference between Berea and Cuba on these images may be due to the small sample size or the similarity of the areas. Both towns are relatively small and rural. Even though Garreau (1981) suggests that there should be differences based on geographic location alone, the basic cultural background of the respondents may have been similar enough to preclude any differences.

The hypothesis was not upheld in that the two cultural groups were significantly different for the middle image category. This may be because the health conscious and affluent groups are very specific segments of the population, whereas the middle category is extremely broad. The images consumers hold of the health conscious and affluent groups could be extremely similar between cultural areas because of limited, but similar, exposure to these images. The middle category, on the other hand, encompasses a large and somewhat diverse section of the population. What is considered as a "middle" consumer in Cuba may differ from a Berean's perception because of the diverse nature of the middle group. The difference in perception could be due to cultural differences or it could be due to the differences within the middle group itself.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO MARKETING THEORY AND PRACTICEMarketing Theory

The results of this study contribute support to congruency theory in the area of consumer behavior. Some consumer behaviorists deal with self-image and its relationship with products and product/brand image. The finding that many of the respondents used the middle image brands and rated this group favorably, lends support to the consumer behavior theory that greater congruency between self-image and product/brand image results in more positive perception of the product/brand and a greater likelihood of purchase (Bennett and Kassarian, 1959; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1968; Dolich, 1969; O'Brien, Tapia, and Brown, 1977).

Since research has historically dealt with conspicuously consumed and intangible products when examining image congruency, this study shows a new direction that consumer behaviorists could pursue. The results indicate that privately consumed products do affect the perception of a person's image. This area is one that is rich in possibilities for further research by marketing theorists as will be discussed later.

Marketing Practice

The areas of image and culture are also important to the practicing marketer. Marketers already make use of brand images in order to differentiate similar products. This study supports the effectiveness of this practice by showing that different brands of privately consumed products are perceived by consumers in different ways. The products used in this study were similar in a physical sense, but the brand related certain information about the user to the respondents. The less positive ratings for the health conscious image may suggest that marketers of these products associated with an all natural, health conscious lifestyle need to be concerned with creating more positive awareness and perception of these brands.

The resulting lack of difference between the middle and affluent groups may suggest that marketers of the more affluent brands are creating brand images that are perceived as being less distinct than intended by the marketer. This is not to say that these affluent brands are being viewed negatively, but that they are not perceived as being as exclusive as marketers would like them to be perceived. It was expected that the affluent category would have much more positive ratings than the health conscious or middle categories because of the possibility that the higher prices of

these brands would relate a higher degree of quality. However, the expectation may have been supported because of the chance that the respondents rated the affluent category close to the middle category in order to create a closeness between the real self-image and the expected or ideal self-image.

In relation to culture, this study seems to lend little support to the notion that marketers should be concerned with the way in which brand images are perceived by consumers in different areas of the country as far as the products used in this study are concerned. The promotions for the products may have different tones and information for the different geographic areas or may be the same, but the basic image perception of the brand seems to be affected little because of the geographic location of the consumer.

As discussed previously, the cultures did differ on the responses to the middle image category. Again, this could be due to the size of the "middle" group and its diversity. This area of difference could lead to more specific segments within the middle group that marketers may want to target. The difference in responses between the groups for the middle category could also be due to cultural differences between Berea and Cuba. Because of the small sample size, the results of this study are far from conclusive; therefore,

marketers may still want to further pursue culture as a possible way in which to further segment markets.

The information resulting from this study also revealed that the middle image brands were rated favorably and that the respondents themselves used mainly middle image brands. This congruency between the positive perception of the woman using the brands and the seeming positive self-images of the respondents supports the marketing practice of developing brand images to be congruent with consumers' self-images.

As mentioned previously, the fact that the products used for this study were privately consumed indicates that marketers of these products may want to consider the image of their products and the perceived image of the consumers who purchase their products. Since there is support for considering privately consumed products as important to self-image and image perception, the brand image of some of these products may be very important to the consumers and affect their purchase behavior.

Lastly, this study sets forth a way in which practitioners could discover the perceived image of the consumers who use their products. Through the use of projective techniques using semantic differential scales, practitioners could gather information from a large number of consumers in a wide physical area and still enjoy the relative ease of coding and analyzing the data.

The information gathered from such studies could be useful in many different ways. The information could reveal negative aspects of the brand image perception that were not previously apparent. For example, a certain soap marketed towards housewives could fail because the women perceived the soap as being masculine. The indirect projective technique may be better equipped to delve into these negative aspects than standard types of surveys or panel discussions.

Knowing the perceived image of a brand could also relate information to the marketer that could help in guiding future promotional campaigns. As in the case of existing negative perceptions, marketers would have an idea of what problems existed and needed to be rectified. With very positive aspects of a brand's perception resulting from such a study, marketers would know which aspects to build upon for an even more positive image.

Obtaining information on the perceived image of the consumers who use certain brands may also reveal existing market niches or segments that are not currently being covered by existing brands. The information could reveal that a consumer image thought to be in existence by the marketer is in fact being overlooked by the market. This could create possibilities for the research and development of a product brand that could be congruent with the image of the overlooked group of consumers.

LIMITATIONS

Although the data collection and analysis were both performed with little difficulty, there were resulting limitations. The first limitation of the study was that the questionnaire was not pre-tested. A pre-test might have revealed that the middle and affluent categories were similar enough to each other in respondents' perceptions to necessitate changing the brands in the affluent category to even more exclusive and hard to find brands.

A second limitation of the study was the sampling plan and the resulting response rates. Only two cultures were used because of the availability of a contact person in each area. The reliance on contact people and the use of only two cultures may have limited the study. The use of contact people made it necessary to use a convenience sample which affected the randomness of the study.

The use of only two cultures limited the breadth of the study. The analysis of variance done with the data which included the Cuban respondents over forty revealed different results than the analysis of variance done using only the respondents within the age limits. Additional cultures may also affect results.

The resulting response rates from the data collection done in each of the two areas may also be considered a limi-

tation. Although three-fifths of the questionnaires from Berea were returned and nearly two-fifths from Cuba were returned, the remaining respondents could have possibly affected the results of the study. The response rates as percentages are somewhat deceptive since the small sample size would lend itself to changes in the results if increased by very many respondents.

A final limitation of the study may have come from the age limitation placed upon the respondents to be used for this study. Respondents ages were limited to 20 to 40 years old. The four respondents from Cuba who were above the age limit seemed to be familiar enough with the brands to be able to complete the questionnaire with no difficulty.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In light of the limitations of this study and from insight gained during the research process, the author has suggestions for further research that could be done within the framework set forth in this study. A larger sample size used in conjunction with more cultures, and perhaps more diverse cultures, would provide more information on which to base the assumption that image perception of brands and cultural background affect the way in which we judge the image of others. Future researchers may also want to look at the

differences between images on the basis of each attribute rather than looking at the average of all of the attributes.

The products used for this study were limited to women's personal care products. This could be expanded into both other privately consumed products and conspicuously consumed products.

Not only could the category of products be expanded, but males could be included in the research design. Males could be used exclusively in a study or males and females could be used in the same study in order to discern if there are differences in responses based on the sex of the respondent.

The possibilities for expansion of this study are many and varied. The use of the semantic differential scales with the projective technique enabled the data to be handled in a more manageable fashion and was more systematic than the traditionally used open-ended questionnaire. With easier data collection and coding available, the projective technique is perhaps a very effective way to indirectly delve into perceptions regarding self-image.

The major contribution of this study to future research efforts is that the products used were privately consumed and not conspicuously consumed or intangible products which have historically been used in product/brand image research. This study has shown that consumers may base perceptions of

others' self-images on those goods that are not conspicuous or "out on display" for all to see. These privately consumed products may turn out to be very important in maintaining and relating a person's self-image.

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Appendix A

LISTING OF ATTRIBUTES AND SEMANTIC COUNTERPARTS

1. intelligent/unintelligent
2. attractive/unattractive
3. outgoing/retiring
4. motherly/unmotherly
5. loving/cold
6. sense of humor/no sense of humor
7. fashion conscious/unconcerned about fashion
8. friendly/unfriendly
9. popular/unpopular
10. well-educated/limited education
11. vain/modest
12. practical/frivolous
13. dull/witty
14. adventurous/timid
15. thrifty/wasteful
16. urban/rural
17. neat/sloppy
18. lazy/industrious
19. frugal/spendthrift

The first eleven resulted from the focus group and those remaining are from Holbrook and Hughes' study (Holbrook and Hughes, 1978).

LISTING OF BRANDS

Health Concsious

Pioneer Outmeal Soap

Golden Harvest Wheat Germ and Honey Shampoo

Pioneer Aloe Vera Moisturizing Creme

Razor- none used

Jardin Natural Astringent

"Middle of the Road"

Safeguard soap

Finesse Shampoo

Oil of Olay Moisturizer

Bic Disposable razor

Sea Breeze Astringent

Affluent

Estee Lauder Basic Cleansing Bar

Estee Lauder Swiss Hair Care

Clinique Moisturizer

Personal Touch razor

Almay Purifying Pore Lotion (astringent)

Appendix B

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Please distribute these questionnaires to 50 prospective female respondents between the ages of 20 and 40. You may choose any 50 that are convenient for you to approach. This should be done over the course of one week. You may either wait for the respondents to finish and collect the questionnaire at that time or request that they return the questionnaire the following day.

If asked the purpose of the research, please refer the person to the cover page of the questionnaire and explain that it is for obtaining information to be used in a graduate research project at Virginia Tech. Assure all participants that all information collected will be kept confidential and will be used only with this project.

After one week, please return all questionnaires to the designated address. Include both completed and unused questionnaires. If you or any of the participants are interested in the results of this study, please let me know and a copy (or copies) will be sent to you. Thank you for all of your valuable help.

Sandra L. Hatter, ,

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire is part of a graduate research project on products and their relationship to personal image. All information will be kept confidential and used only in conjunction with this project. Thank you for your time and cooperation!!

Sandra L. Hatter
Marketing Department
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Please read the list of products below. Project yourself into the situation until you feel you can characterize the woman who would buy and use the products.

PRODUCTS

Pioneer Oatmeal Soap

Golden Harvest Wheat Germ and Honey Shampoo

Pioneer Aloe Vera Moisturizing Creme

Razor- none used

Jardin Natural Astringent

Using a scale of 1 to 5, please circle the number which you feel represents the woman using the above products on the different attributes listed on the following page.

intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	unintelligent
attractive	1	2	3	4	5	unattractive
retiring	1	2	3	4	5	outgoing
motherly	1	2	3	4	5	unmotherly
loving	1	2	3	4	5	cold
sense of humor	1	2	3	4	5	no sense of humor
fashion conscious	1	2	3	4	5	not worried about fashion
unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	friendly
popular	1	2	3	4	5	unpopular
well-educated	1	2	3	4	5	limited education
vain	1	2	3	4	5	modest
practical	1	2	3	4	5	frivolous
dull	1	2	3	4	5	witty
adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	timid
thrifty	1	2	3	4	5	wasteful
urban	1	2	3	4	5	rural
neat	1	2	3	4	5	sloppy
lazy	1	2	3	4	5	industrious
frugal	1	2	3	4	5	spendthrift

Please read the list of products below. Project yourself into the situation until you feel you can characterize the woman who would buy and use the products.

PRODUCTS

Safeguard soap

Finesse shampoo

Oil of Olay Moisturizer

Bic Disposable razor

Sea Breeze Astringent

Using a scale of 1 to 5, please circle the number which you feel represents the woman using the above products on the different attributes listed on the following page.

intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	unintelligent
attractive	1	2	3	4	5	unattractive
retiring	1	2	3	4	5	outgoing
motherly	1	2	3	4	5	unmotherly
loving	1	2	3	4	5	cold
sense of humor	1	2	3	4	5	no sense of humor
fashion conscious	1	2	3	4	5	not worried about fashion
unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	friendly
popular	1	2	3	4	5	unpopular
well-educated	1	2	3	4	5	limited education
vain	1	2	3	4	5	modest
practical	1	2	3	4	5	frivolous
dull	1	2	3	4	5	witty
adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	timid
thrifty	1	2	3	4	5	wasteful
urban	1	2	3	4	5	rural
neat	1	2	3	4	5	sloppy
lazy	1	2	3	4	5	industrious
frugal	1	2	3	4	5	spendthrift

Please read the list of products below. Project yourself into the situation until you feel you can characterize the woman who would buy and use the products.

PRODUCTS

Estee Lauder Basic Cleansing Bar

Estee Lauder Swiss Hair Care

Clinique Moisturizer

Personal Touch razor

Almay Purifying Pore Lotion (astringent)

Using a scale of 1 to 5, please circle the number which you feel represents the woman using the above products on the different attributes listed on the following page.

intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	unintelligent
attractive	1	2	3	4	5	unattractive
retiring	1	2	3	4	5	outgoing
motherly	1	2	3	4	5	unmotherly
loving	1	2	3	4	5	cold
sense of humor	1	2	3	4	5	no sense of humor
fashion conscious	1	2	3	4	5	not worried about fashion
unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	friendly
popular	1	2	3	4	5	unpopular
well-educated	1	2	3	4	5	limited education
vain	1	2	3	4	5	modest
practical	1	2	3	4	5	frivolous
dull	1	2	3	4	5	witty
adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	timid
thrifty	1	2	3	4	5	wasteful
urban	1	2	3	4	5	rural
neat	1	2	3	4	5	sloppy
lazy	1	2	3	4	5	industrious
frugal	1	2	3	4	5	spendthrift

Please write in the brand name of each of the products below that you, yourself, buy and use.

Soap _____ Shampoo _____

Facial Moisturizer _____ Razor _____

Astringent/Facial Cleanser _____

The following questions are to help in identifying general characteristics of the women who have participated in this study. Again, all information will be kept confidential and used only in conjunction with this study.

Age: _____

Marital Status:(check one) _____single _____married _____divorced

Occupation: _____

Education: (check one)
Highest Level Completed

- _____ some high school
- _____ high school
- _____ some college
- _____ two year college (Associate degree)
- _____ four year college
- _____ some graduate school
- _____ graduate school

Income: (check one)

- _____ \$0 - 9,999
- _____ \$10,000 - 19,999
- _____ \$20,000 - 29,999
- _____ \$30,000 - 39,999
- _____ \$40,000 - 49,000
- _____ \$50,000 and over

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR TIME, COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION.
IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!!!

**The vita has been removed from
the scanned document**