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COLOGNE BRAND PREFERENCES OF TEENAGERS IN THE PHILIPPINES : MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Studies focusing on the constantly changing buying behavior and product preferences of a booming teen market are rare and this is particularly true in the Philippines. To address this gap in the literature, this study focused on the supermarket brands of cologne preferred by teens in the Philippines such as Lewis & Pearl (L&P), Johnson's Baby Cologne, Juicy, Bench, Ellips, Fiona, Bambini and Baby Flo which are manufactured by various competing companies. Essentially, this study presented and described the profile and buying behavior of cologne users and non-cologne users and determined whether preferential differences existed between these brands. The respondents consisted of 473 teens all over the Philippines stratified in terms of general location via the three major groups of islands in the

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Philippines: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Respondents came from selected schools in Quezon City in Metro Manila, Sariaya in Quezon Province, Cebu City, and Digos City to represent the Greater Metro Manila Area, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, respectively. Findings showed that almost all of the respondents used cologne at varying degrees. In general, teens use several scents and brands of cologne and continually shift from one scent/brand to another scent/brand. This made it difficult for any company to capture loyal consumers. The most popular brands used by teenagers were Bench (61.7%), Lewis and Pearl (59%), Juicy (42%), Afficionado (32%), Fiona (19.3%), Penshoppe (18%), Bambini (12.6%), Ellips (11.3%) and Zen Zest (7.5%). Fragrance or scent is the top priority of teenagers in choosing a cologne brand, followed by brand name, affordability, bottle design and endorser. The spray bottle type of colognes is preferred even if cologne spray bottles are priced higher than the splash cologne bottle type. Managerial implications of these findings for market players, marketing scholars and prospective investors are presented.

Keywords: Brand Preferences, Cologne, Buying Behavior, Teenagers, Philippines

Ⅰ. Introduction

The Philippine supermarket cologne category was valued at Php2.6 billion in 2008 and Php2.9 billion in 2012. It is noteworthy to point out that several cologne brands such as Lewis and Pearl (L&P), Johnson's Baby Cologne, Baby Flo and Bambini registered declining sales while those for other cologne brands namely, Bench, Fiona and Juicy were growing. These seven major brands compete in both the baby and teen cologne categories. Johnson's Baby Cologne which caters to the baby market segment is the market leader but with a substantial drop in market share from 42% to 27% during the years from 2008 to 2011. The market share of the other three baby brands namely, Baby Bench, Baby Flo and Bambini Baby, likewise fell by one percentage point.

It was eventually determined that the loss in market share in the baby cologne sub-category was captured by the teen cologne sub-category. For example, the Bench Daily Scent market share was 0%-6% for the period covering 2008 to 2011, Juicy's market share was 8% to 14% and Fiona's market share was 1%-4% for the same period. L&P Cologne which was challenged in its second-place rank was not able to capture the market lost by Johnson's Baby Cologne. The L&P market share was flat at 19%-20% for the period from 2008 to 2011.

While the supermarket cologne category was declining, the number of cologne kiosks such as Aficionado was increasing nationwide. In 2011, the number of kiosks of Aficionado located within malls and supermarkets was estimated at around 600. These brands were priced higher by 20% - 30%, compared to supermarket cologne brands.

L&P Cologne is one of the products manufactured by a major market player with over 60 years of experience, focusing on three main product categories: health and hygiene, personal care, and fabric and homecare. L&P

sales displayed peaks and valleys for the period from 2008 to 2012 compared to Bench, Fiona and Juicy which were consistently on an upward trend. This trend was steady despite several product relaunches done by the L&P manufacturer consisting of package upgrading from non-transparent bottles to PET bottles, introduction of new scents and deletion of old scents, and introduction of the spray format besides the existing splash format. L&P has also been aggressive in building consumer awareness through product trials. On a yearly basis, television commercials, school tours, online promotions, and trade-related activities such as bundling and shelf rental and increase in distribution to include sari-sari stores and drug stores were conducted in an attempt to boost sales. But despite these activities, L&P sales continued to drop.

Launching a new product variant for L&P involves significant investment. The listing fee alone for one stock keeping unit (SKU) can reach five million pesos (or currently around USD 108,696) covering modern trade channels such as major Philippine supermarkets like SM and Robinsons Supermarkets and general trade channels such as local supermarkets, grocery stores and drug stores. In practice, new products on the shelves with minimal take-off would be delisted within three to six months by national key accounts such as SM and Robinsons Supermarkets and local grocery stores and supermarkets such as South Emerald and Tanauan Supermart, respectively, as a matter of policy. Even existing variants with consumer sales less than 15% of the initial pipeline volume were considered for deletion.

This study does not intend to test theory as this exploratory, inductive study aimed to aid company managers of the L&P brand in understanding the buying behavior of the Philippine teen market segment, determine their brand preferences for cologne to arrest the decline in sales, maintain its number two market share and in the process, contribute to the profitability of the company. In addition, this study provides insights to marketing scholars as well as prospective investors relative to the cologne buying behavior of the Philippine teen market segment and thus beef up scarce literature on the subject matter to pave the way for theory building in the future.

Ⅱ. Review of Literature

An examination of the extant literature showed primarily customer preference studies on clothing and apparel and the absence of a developed body of knowledge specifically on cologne brand preferences of teenagers. However, some related literature that may have some bearing on this study are summarized below.

2.1. Buying Behavior of Different Age Groups

"If the buying behavior of older consumers were identical to that of younger consumers, there would be no justification for research on specific age groups. However, previous, though scarce, research in marketing indicates that they behave differently, especially in terms of brand choice. Studies suggest that older consumers tend to prefer long-established brands over newer brands, consistent with other research that indicates, more generally, older people's preference for long-established options. In contrast, young consumers are often attracted by recently introduced options" (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2012, p.3). It is this disparity in preferences of older people and younger people that challenges companies manufacturing products or offering services to come up with marketing strategies aimed at a particular market segment to entice such a market segment to buy their products or service offerings.

Wysocki (1997) conjured the idea of a global teenager with communication technologies such as the Internet and satellite television having homogenized teen preferences and attitudes. However, Parker, Hermans and Schaefer (2008) debunked this "global teenager hypothesis" by revealing that significant differences in apparel brand attitudes were evident in teens in China, Japan and the United States.

2.2. Brand Preferences and Loyalty Depending on Gender

According to Parker, Hermans and Schaefer (2008), girls are more influenced by peers than boys in terms of their preference for certain clothing brands. Furthermore, conforming to the fashion that is accepted by the group is more important than choosing brands that express one's own identity.

In another study, this time on the influence of brand loyalty on the cosmetics buying behavior of United Arab Emirates (UAE) female consumers conducted by Khraim (2011) showed that overall, UAE consumers single out brand name, product quality, promotion and service quality as factors of brand loyalty. On the other hand, price, design and store environment were less significant factors in influencing brand loyalty for cosmetics.

2.3. Intergenerational Influence on Brand Preference

In terms of intergenerational influence (IGI), Siddiqui, Bashir, Sarki, Jaffari and Abbas (2012) showed that parental influence on the brand preferences of their children was higher during the children's early years and that this diminishes as the children grow older. The researchers also found out that IGI was more evident on durable goods such as appliances (e.g. electronics) compared to consumable goods (e.g. milk, cream, lotion).

2.4. Customer Preferences in Perfume Bottle Design

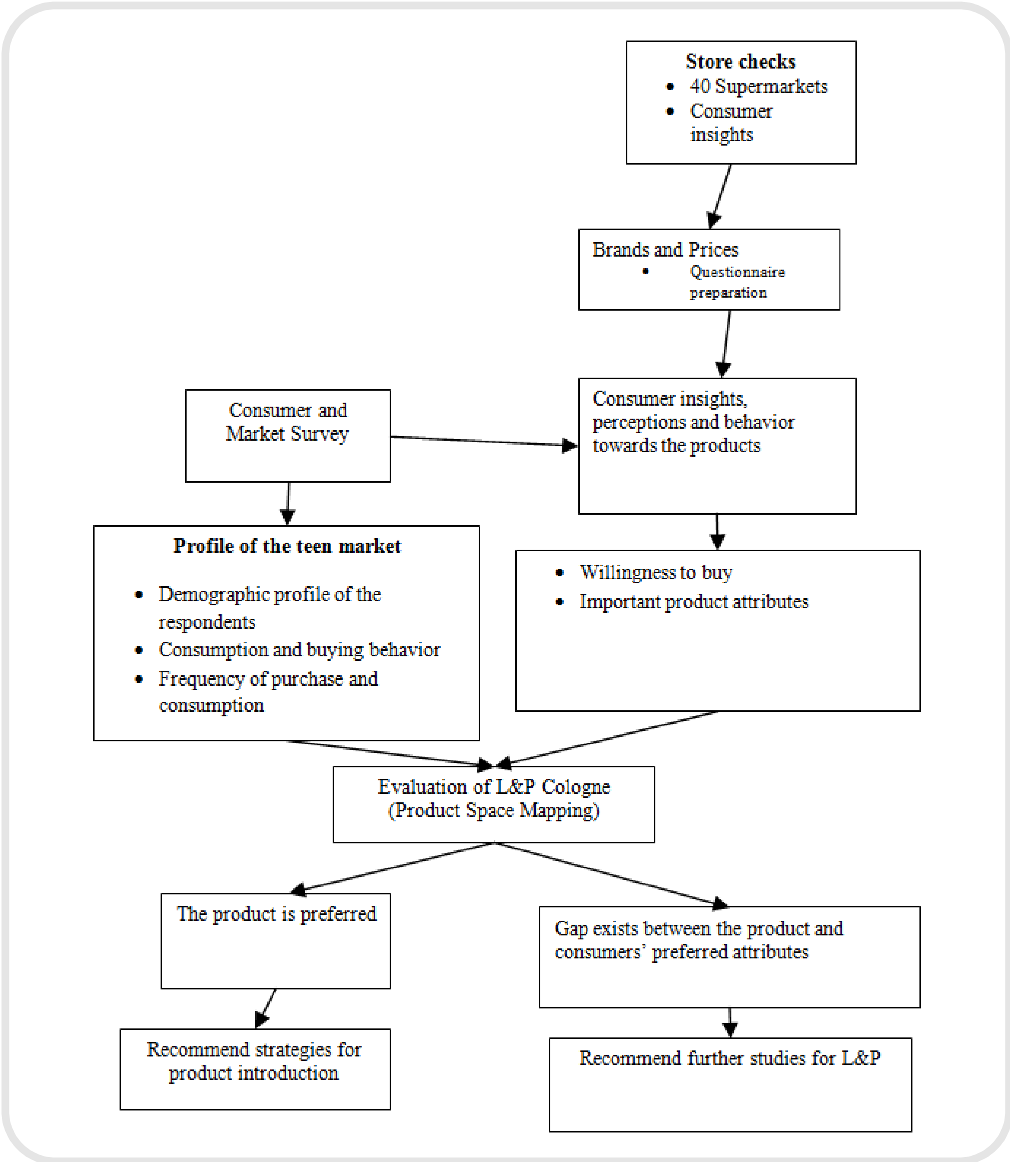
According to the study of Wang (2012) on customer preference in perfume bottle design, achromatic glass and colored glass were the most popular in customer's mind but plastic arts and circle shapes were the most likely that they would choose.

It is apparent from these past studies that literature relative to cologne brand preferences of teenagers is scarce and may very well be non-existent. This strengthens all the more the relevance of this study.

Ⅲ. Methodology

As seen in the analytical framework (**Figure 1**), store checks were first conducted to ascertain the top brands of cologne displayed for sale in 40 supermarkets (10 supermarkets each in the four study areas). The prices, sizes,

Fig. 1. Analytical Framework



Source: Adapted from Angeles (2010); Bienvenido (2010); Francisco (2010) and Jasmin (2013)

variants, bottle configurations and promotional activities were noted. The output of such store checks was used in designing the consumer and market survey questionnaires. The consumer and market survey was conducted with the aid of questionnaires in order to provide data for analyzing the important product attributes among consumers, their pattern of consumption and buying behavior, as well as product awareness. These also elicited the preferred brands of cologne of the respondents based on the following attributes; brand name, bottle design, fragrance, price and commercial means of communication. The data gathered was then analyzed to determine if there were opportunities in the four P's of marketing (e.g. product, price, place and promotion) that are relevant to the manufacturer of L&P. Marketing strategies were formulated and suggested to the manufacturer.

The consumer and market study was conducted in selected primary and secondary schools located across major distribution areas of the manufacturing company of L&P which gave permission to conduct the survey. These included Commonwealth Elementary School (Greater Metro Manila), Saint Joseph Academy (Luzon); Minglanilla National Science High School (Visayas); and Digos City National High School (Mindanao). Respondents were composed of public and private schools from grade six to fourth year high school, 10 to 18 years of age. A total of 473 respondents were surveyed.

Secondary data were taken mostly from published journals. Available data from the manufacturer of L&P and AC Nielsen were also used and analyzed.

Product space mapping was utilized as a means to evaluate L & P Cologne in terms of the cologne brand preferences and buying behavior of Philippine teenagers. This methodology was used on a macro level by the World Bank (2009) to map out the product space or products traded by Lao PDR with other countries. In doing so, the World Bank was able to point out to Lao PDR implications about its export products categorized as classics, emerging champions and marginals based on the mapped out product space.

Ⅳ. Results and Discussion

4.1. Store Checks

Store checks were conducted in the Greater Metro Manila area and Quezon Province (Luzon), Cebu Province (Visayas) and Cotabato Province (Mindanao) with a total of 40 supermarkets (10 supermarkets for each study area). The following ten brands were observed to be available at the supermarkets during the store checks: L&P, Johnson's Baby Cologne, Juicy, Bambini, Baby Flo, Fiona, Bench, Ellips, Penshoppe, and Marina.

In terms of splash cologne pricing for the 25ml bottle, on the average, Fiona was the lowest at Php14.20 (or USD 0.31) while Bench was the highest at Php16.43 (USD 0.36). For the 50ml bottle, Bambini Attitude was the lowest at Php22.09 (USD 0.48) while Bench was the highest at Php27.86 (USD 0.60). There were only 3 brands competing relative to the 75ml cologne bottle size, Fiona was the lowest at Php32.36 (USD 0.70) while Bench was the highest at Php37.72 (USD 0.82), while L&P was priced very close to Bench. For the 125ml cologne bottle size, Bambini Attitude was the lowest at Php35.06 (USD 0.76) while Bench was the highest at Php56.18 (USD 1.22). Price gaps for each cologne bottle size variant between the highest and the lowest brands were Php2.23 (USD 0.05) for the 25 ml bottle, Php5.77 (USD 0.12) for the 50 ml bottle, Php5.36 (USD 0.12) for the 75 ml bottle, and Php12.37 (USD 0.27) for the 125ml bottle variants.

The cheapest cologne per ml was Marina which was priced at Php0.35 (approximately USD 0.01)while the most expensive was Bench Body Spray at Php1.23 (USD 0.03). Several brands were priced at Php0.70 (USD 0.02) per ml such as L&P, Bambini Attitude, Bambini Fruitshake, Bench Daily Spell and Fiona. While Baby Flo and Penshoppe were priced at Php0.60 (USD 0.01) per ml, all Bench sub-brands were priced at Php1.00 per ml (USD 0.02). Fiona and Ellips which offer two sizes for the spray bottle format had higher prices per ml for the smaller size at Php0.71 (almost USD 0.02) and Php0.98 (USD 0.02), respectively, compared to the bigger sizes at Php0.49 (USD 0.01) and Php0.81 (close to USD 0.02), respectively.

In terms of distribution of the different sizes in 40 supermarkets, L&P and Johnson and Johnson (J&J) have equal distribution placed at between 95% to 100%, followed by Juicy between 73% to 98%. Bench Splash cologne distribution, on the other hand, was between 8% to 18%. What is interesting to note is the significantly high distribution level of L&P spray cologne at 98% versus the closest competitor at an average of 13%, with Bambini Fruit Shake in second place (40%) in terms of distribution level.

4.2. Consumer and Market Survey

The consumer and market survey was conducted to determine the buying behavior of teens for cologne. This ascertained who bought the product, who influenced what brand to purchase, what bottle presentation form is bought, when buyers buy and why buyers buy the brand.

4.2.1. Socio Demographic Profile of Respondents

As seen in <Table 1>, majority of the respondents came from public schools (89%) and were female (61%). The youngest male and female respondents were 10 and 11 years old, respectively, while the oldest male and female respondents were 17 and 18 years old, respectively. Mean age was 13.28 years and 12.80 years old for female and male, respectively.

The mean allowance of students in private schools was Php86.84 (USD 1.89) per day versus Php31.27 (USD 0.68) per day for public schools. Female cologne users had an average allowance of Php40.66 (USD0.88) while male cologne users had an average allowance of Php28.50 (USD 0.62). Average allowance based on geographical location of respondents was highest in Davao (Mindanao) with a mean of Php61.85 (USD 1.34) and lowest in the Greater Manila area with a mean of Php19.19 (USD 0.42). This is most likely because respondents from Quezon City live near the school and so there was no need for transportation allowance and meal allowance.

4.2.2. Cologne Buying and Usage Behavior

As shown in <Table 2>, there were 23 respondents who did not use cologne either due to the presence of allergies to cologne, they were not interested in using cologne or due to insufficient allowance money. Four hundred fifty (450) respondents were cologne users at varying degrees. Of these, there were 412 (92%) cologne users from public schools while 38 (8%) from private schools. Majority of cologne users were from the Greater Manila Area (GMA) accounting for 61%. Of the 450 cologne users, 277 (62%) were female and 173 (38%) were male. The market penetration rate of cologne among respondents was very high already across variables such as gender,

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
School Classification		
Public	423	89
Private	50	11
Gender		
Male	183	39
Female	290	61
Geographic Location		
Luzon	93	20
GMA	279	59
Visayas	51	11
Mindanao	50	10
Age		
10	1	0.2
11	86	18.2
12	149	31.5
13	51	10.8
14	47	9.9
15	101	21.4
16	27	5.7
17	9	1.9
18	2	0.4

Table 2. Cologne Users and Non-Cologne Users

RESPONDENTS	NON-COLOGNE USERS (N=23)		COLOGNE USERS (N=450)	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
School Classification				
Private	12	52	38	8
Public	11	48	412	92
Gender				
Female	13	57	277	62
Male	10	43	173	38
Geographic Location				
Luzon	13	57	80	18
GMA	3	13	276	61
Visayas	3	13	48	11
Mindanao	4	17	46	10

school type and geographic location. This is an indication of a mature market.

Teens used cologne on multiple occasions such as when going to school, attending special or regular occasions and at home. Teen respondents said they applied cologne on multiple body parts: at the neck, in front of the body, at the back of the body, at the back of the ears and on their wrist pulses.

<Table 3> shows the influencer(s) of

Table 3. Influencer of Cologne Brands Purchase

INFLUENCER	FREQUENCY*	PERCENTAGE (%)
Friends/Peers	171	35
Mother	94	19
Father	17	3
Brother	27	5
Sister	61	12
TV Commercial	88	18
Personal Choice	28	6
Cousin	4	1
Magazine	1	0.2
Total	491*	100

*Multiple answers

Table 4. Fragrance Preferences According to Gender, Type of School and Location

Fragrance	Female	Male	Private	Public	Luzon	GMA	Visayas	Mindanao
Green	7th	7th	8th	7th	7th	6th	7th	7th
Floral	**1st**	3rd	3rd	**1st**	2nd	2nd	**1st**	**1st**
Oriental	2nd	**1st**	**1st**	**1st**	**1st**	**1st**	3rd	3rd
Woody	8th	8th	7th	8th	7th	8th	8th	8th
Aquatic	3rd	2nd	4th	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	2nd
Citrus	4th	6th	6th	6th	6th	6th	5th	4th
Fruity	4th	4th	5th	4th	4th	3rd	4th	5th
Gourmand	6th	5th	2nd	5th	4th	5th	6th	6th

cologne brand purchase among teens. Friends/peers were the major influencer (35%) followed by their mother (19%), TV commercials (18%) and by their sister (12%).

4.2.3. Fragrance Preference

Fragrance ranked first followed by brand name, affordability, bottle design and cologne endorser. Bench was the top brand preferred by respondents followed closely by L&P, considering that all brands offer several variants to choose from. Bench is a local apparel fashion brand endorsed by actors, actresses and models. The preference for a particular fragrance was ranked and as shown in <Table 4>, in general, floral(preferred by female teens, those studying in public schools and those residing in the Visayas and Mindanao areas), Oriental (preferred by male teens, those studying in both private and public schools, and those residing in Luzon and the GMA) and aquatic (second most preferred fragrance for male teens and those residing in Visayas and Mindanao) turned out as the top three preferred scents across respondents, with slight differences in the rankings. Green fragrances appeared not to be favorite scents of teens.

Ⅴ. Managerial Implications

The study findings carry a number of managerial implications not only for the major market player handling the L & P cologne brand but also for its competitors, prospective investors and marketing scholars.

5.1. Target Market

The supermarket cologne category, specifically, the teen cologne segment is in the mature stage of its product life cycle as characterized by peak sales, low cost per customer, high profits, customers being the middle majority, stable competitors and customer patronage beginning to decline. These were demonstrated by 95% of the cologne users with 5% valid non-cologne users due to medical reasons; steady pricing due to high production rates; and stable competitor numbers.

The current target market of L&P are both male and female, with ages ranging from 15 to 19 years old (teens to young adult), characterized as having close circles of friends, valuing bonding time together, addicted to social networking, open to new experiences, and keeping a positive outlook in life. It is recommended that L&P cologne managers capture male and female customers in the 10 to 14 (young teens) age range, categorized as former users of baby cologne or switchers from baby cologne to teen cologne. The opportunity lies in tapping the switchers from baby cologne to teen cologne. This was evident in the survey results with only 1.1% users of Johnson's Baby Cologne.

Moreover, the company producing L & P cologne should continue relaunching products through product innovation to create brand excitement for the target market segment and to avoid market decline. It should continually introduce innovative platforms and practices in the four P's of marketing to protect market share and achieve the desired profit objective.

5.2. Product

Fragrance or scent is the first criteria teen customers use in choosing cologne, therefore, the company should be able to offer the relevant variants of scents to its target market. Out of the eight types of fragrance, five relevant fragrances were preferred by 89.6% of the respondents, L&P's current thirteen variants can be cross-matched with these eight categories. It could focus on the top five variants with two to three iterations of scents and the remaining three fragrances with only one iteration.

For example, in the market, each competing brand has the Oriental scent and if each Oriental scent was compared, each has its unique scent although all of them belong to the Oriental scent category. Applying this to the case of L&P, currently, it has one variant of Oriental scent. This can be modified into mild, moderate and strong versions of Oriental scent. This is supported by survey results wherein almost equal preference was given to: (1) the cologne with higher concentration but with the higher price; (2) the cologne with lower concentration but with the lower price. For higher concentration cologne, a limited edition of glass bottle can be used since 33% of the respondents had preference for this despite its implied higher pricing.

Another alternative is to combine the Oriental scent with another scent but with one scent having a higher concentration. For the remaining three scents, L&P can still come up with one variant and two sizes, 25ml and 50ml. This is important because majority of cologne users are multiple fragrance users and majority of teen cologne users change fragrances within a span of one week to one month.

Since 72% of the consumers are multiple brand users, it is important for L&P to provide a wide range of product offerings capturing the best attributes of each top player. With this, there is a high opportunity of capturing loyal consumers which is 27% based on survey results.

Furthermore, the spray bottle is highly preferred by 65% of teens but the company has ten splash bottle variants and three spray bottle variants only. L&P should consider increasing the number of spray bottle variants to five but should take into consideration how to maintain a price range that is acceptable to the target market.

Current color shades of bottle of L&P cologne is limited to colored-transparent but 10% to 13% of teens prefer the colored non-transparent bottle and 18% prefer non-transparent colored bottles and specifically 12% of male respondents indicated a preference for metallic bottles. The company can consider these as a part of its variant offerings which can be differentiated either by pricing or scent concentration.

Male respondents are more driven to buy upon initial fragrance application compared to female respondents who were driven to purchase the fragrance after application of the fragrance. Currently, the company positions L&P towards female teens. Thus, this will be a good differentiating factor for developing a new variant for male teens.

The 50ml bottle size has the highest preference among respondents but the other sizes such as 25ml, 75ml and 125ml must be considered too due to its relevance to consumers. This is most important in maintaining market share in terms of using small bottles for trial applications by new customers and capitalizing on the big bottles for loyal customers who are hooked on the brand.

5.3.Price

The average allowances of teen respondents were Php86.84 (USD 1.88) and Php31.27 (USD 0.68) for private and public schools, respectively. The company should be able to craft a price that is within the allowance range of the students, considering that 33% of the respondents use this as their budget.

Based on the budget provided by the teen respondents, if a price increase of Php1.00 (USD 0.02) would be implemented, 92.9% of the respondents would still purchase their chosen brand while with a Php10.00 (USD 0.22) price increase, only 26.2% would purchase their preferred brand.

In general, teens were price sensitive. More specifically, male respondents from public schools and residing in GMA were more price sensitive compared to others. To be competitive, the company should be able to compare its price and make it competitive with competitors to avoid brand switching. It can launch a new variant of cologne with a higher price but which offers a fragrance that last more than four hours considering that there were 41% to 43% respondents who preferred this kind of scent concentration.

5.4. Place

L&P is widely distributed through *sari-sari* stores (small general merchandise stores), school supplies, drug stores, groceries, supermarkets and markets stalls. About 73%

of teen respondents purchased their cologne needs from these outlets. A noticeable trend is the current increase in distribution through cologne kiosks from which 22% to 23% of teen respondents purchased their cologne. L&P can start experimenting by showcasing an L&P Kiosk. Rental cost will be incurred in lieu of the listing fee but this new distribution outlet can also showcase new products or innovations of the company before fully launching these to retail outlets. In this manner, the company can avoid the heavy cost of listing fees for untested, newly developed cologne variants.

Another option is to have a distribution alliance with a well-known apparel brand. This strategy will mimic the strategy of Bench and Penshoppe. Brand name is the second criteria which teens use in choosing a preferred brand, in which case, Bench Cologne had the highest brand name exposure due to its existing apparel business.

5.5. Promotion

Current promotional campaigns of the company include Internet placement through Facebook, TV commercials, school tours and in-store promotional campaigns such as bundling and display highlights. In terms of budget allocation, TV commercial placement had the highest allocation and a minimal budget was allocated to other promotional campaigns.

Considering that peers are the strongest influencers of cologne purchase and usage (32% to 36% respondents), the company can evaluate the possibility of teen ambassadorship of L&P cologne. This can be done either by initially launching this at school, tapping their student council, school muse/escort and varsity players. Regular supply of samples and sponsoring their attire/uniform(s) during special occasions will influence their peers to use L&P. The ambassador can be trained on proper grooming and use of cologne such as frequency of application and parts of the body where the cologne can be applied. This is considering that only 70% of the teen respondents applied cologne on their neck and front of the body, only 30% of the respondents applied cologne at the back of body and only 30% of the respondents applied cologne once a day. **Figures 2** and **3** summarize the current and recommended product space map, respectively, for L&P Cologne. Variables considered were price, scent concentration, target market and channel of distribution.

5.6. Other Recommendations

Frequent customer survey is needed to catch the pulse of the target market. This is considering that buying behavior can change, especially with the advent of digital technology. A consumer panel scent test should also be done to determine the preferred degree of scent concentration. Further study should be conducted as well for the teen and baby segment to determine what age the baby segment starts to shift to teen cologne.

This manuscript has not been published previously and is not under consideration by another publisher or journal, and the study in this manuscript has been conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines set forth by the Institute of Management Research at Kangwon National University.

Fig. 2. Current Product Space Map

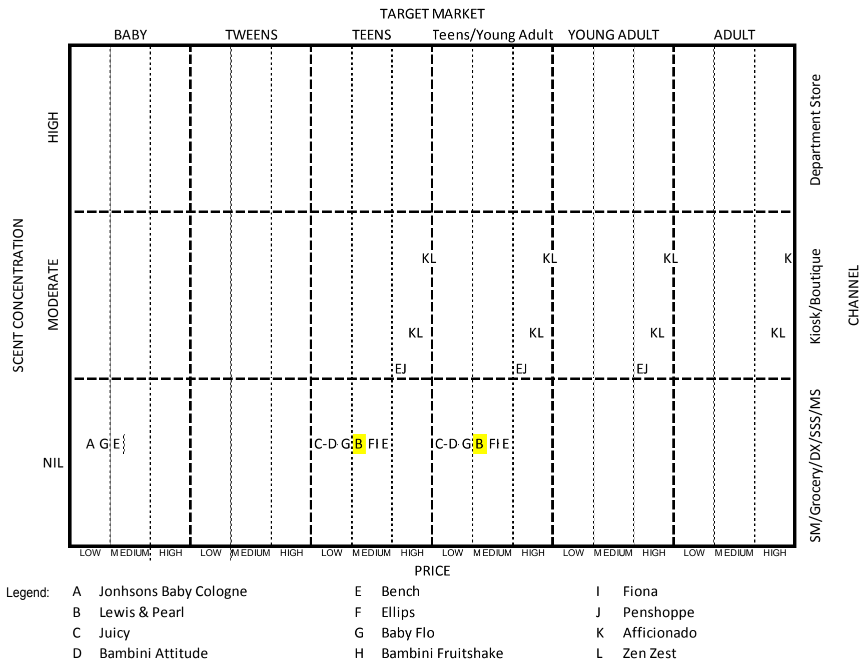
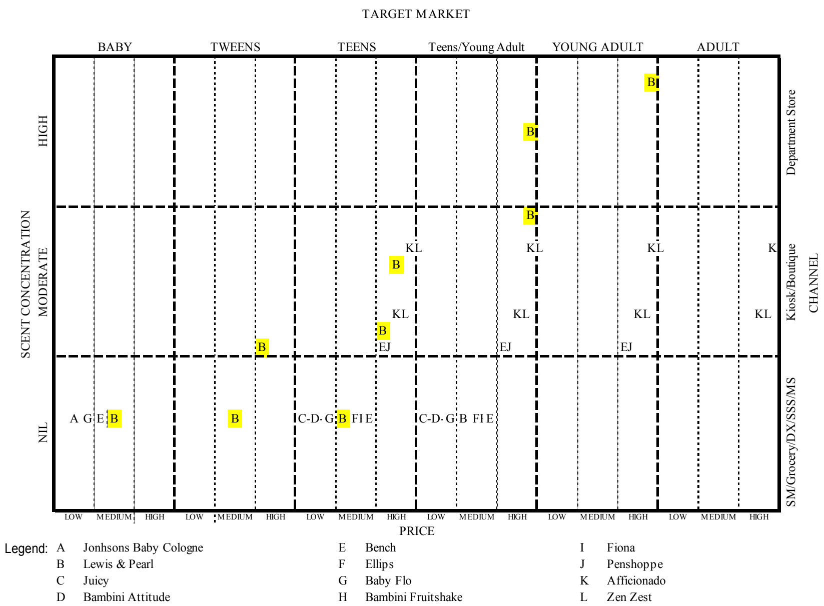


Fig. 3. Proposed Product Space Map



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