

# The Role of Implicit Theory of Beauty and Appearance Orientation on Consumers' Perceptions of Multi-Purpose Products<sup>1)</sup>

미(美)의 암묵적 이론과 외모지향성이 다목적 제품에 대한 소비자 인식에 미치는 영향

최주혜 (Ju Hae Choi) Yonsei School of Business<sup>2)</sup>  
전정룡 (Quan Zhenglong) Yonsei School of Business<sup>3)</sup>  
전유정 (Youjung Jun) Yonsei School of Business<sup>4)</sup>

## 〈 Abstract 〉

Cosmetics brands are increasingly offering “multi-purpose” products that serve multiple functions at once, such as an eye cream that could also be used as a lip moisturizer. Yet, there is little research on consumers' perceptions of multi-purpose products and the brands that offer these products. This research examines the impact of consumers' own theory of beauty. We find that endorsing a strong incremental (vs. entity) theory of beauty (i.e., believing that one's beauty is changeable through one's effort rather than innate and unchangeable) reduces consumers' preferences for multi-purpose products, particularly among those who are highly appearance oriented. These consumers' reduced evaluation of multi-purpose products also spills over to their overall brand evaluation. The findings suggest that brand managers should consider consumers' implicit theory of beauty and product preferences when managing product knowledge.

Key words: Implicit theory, Product knowledge, Appearance orientation, Brand perception

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2) First Author juchoi18@yonsei.ac.kr

3) Second Author, b1036467074@gmail.com

4) Corresponding Author, youjungjun@yonsei.ac.kr

## 1. Introduction

Recently, South Korean cosmetics company, Kahi, took the beauty world by storm with their “Multi Balm Stick,”; a moisturizing balm that could be applied anywhere including one’s neck, eye, or lips, to deliver an immediate effect with just a single application. Their tagline, “Anytime, Anywhere, Easy to Carry,” underscores the product’s effortless and versatile benefits. Another South Korean brand, “MODAMODA,” distinguishes itself from other brands by promoting its dual-functioning hair product which acts as both a regular shampoo and a natural hair dye for gray hair. This product is described as an “All-In-One Solution” that is optimal for “those who wish to see the effect of a hair dye quickly.” A South Korean skincare brand, ULOS, offers all-in-one body products (e.g., shampoo and body wash in one) and was chosen as the most trusted brand in South Korea (Kim, 2013). These examples suggest that multi-purpose products have been successful due, in part, to the allure of having a singular product to conveniently solve many different issues at once.

Given the abundance of “all-in-one” beauty products, this research aims to explore the factors that affect consumers’ preferences for multi-purpose products and the brands that offer these products. Specifically, we study how consumers’ incremental theory of beauty—i.e. that beauty is a changeable feature that can be altered as a function of one’s own efforts—relates to their perspective on multi-purpose products. We posit that consumers who believe that one’s beauty is incremental and fluid (rather than fixed and unchangeable) have lower preferences for products that have multiple different purposes, especially if they are high (vs. low) in appearance orientation.

Multi-purpose beauty products are designed to help consumers achieve multiple beauty goals effortlessly in comparison to beauty products intended for a singular function. Some consumers may be drawn to multi-purpose products for their ease, efficiency, and effortlessness. However, we predict that among consumers who direct their attention to improving their appearance (i.e., highly appearance-oriented consumers) and believe that beauty can be improved through one’s work (i.e., incremental theorists of beauty), they would demonstrate lower preferences for multi-purpose beauty products.

Our work is significant because even though numerous research has examined the general concept of incremental and entity theory of self, little research has applied the implicit theory of one’s beauty to their perception of products. Furthermore, this research intends to add to existing research on products with multiple features (e.g., “feature-rich” products; Thompson & Norton, 2011) by contributing to our understanding of how consumers respond to *beauty* products that have several different functions. In terms of practical use, our findings show how brand managers can shape consumers’ knowledge of multi-purpose products as well as the brands offering these products. In the following sections, we discuss prior work on beauty consumption, multi-purpose products, and develop our hypotheses on how the incremental (vs. entity) theory of beauty predicts different preferences for multi-purpose beauty products. Then, we explain our predicted moderation of appearance orientation.

## 2. Conceptual Background

### 2.1. Multi-purpose Products in Beauty Consumption

Despite facing several global economic crises, the beauty industry has continued to flourish, with global consumer spending reaching approximately 483 billion US dollars in 2020 and projected to increase to 716 billion US dollars by 2025 (Licata, 2021). Consumers continue to use beauty products to enhance their physical appearance, increase their confidence, and feel good about themselves (Rose, 2014). More importantly, there has been a significant increase in the use of beauty products among younger consumers (i.e., Gen Y consumers born between 1986 and 2005) as they associate consuming beauty products with psychological benefits such as “fun” (Markert, 2004).

In this research, we focus on an important trend across various cosmetics brands – bundling a variety of desired functions into a single multi-purpose product. In essence, a multi-purpose product combines a variety of features into a single item; its all-in-one design enables consumers to achieve multiple intents with one purchased product (Ozcan & Sheinin, 2015; Thompson & Norton, 2011). Prior work on multi-purpose products found that consumers associate a product's capability with the number of features, thus associating more benefits from multi-purpose products (Carpenter et al., 1994; Thompson & Norton, 2011). Also, the popularity of multi-purpose products has grown as brands aim for broader customer appeal (Thompson & Norton, 2011). Adding features to a product enables a positive differentiation for a brand, as multi-purpose products can signal clear advantages over competitors

(Carpenter et al., 1994). Since single-purpose products can only meet specific consumer needs, managing a large array of various single-purpose products can be challenging and costly. Hence, another reason why brand managers increasingly favor multi-functional products is that it also allows for more cost-effective portfolio management (Kang, 2007).

There is scant research that directly examines multi-purpose products in beauty consumption. Nevertheless, previous studies on multi-purpose products have demonstrated that the key characteristics of multi-purpose beauty products are the perceived convenience and efficiency of such products (Thompson & Norton, 2011; Ozcan & Sheinin, 2015). For example, You et al. (2022) demonstrated that exposure to multi-purpose products increases consumer impatience. This effect occurred as multi-purpose products triggered a strong efficiency goal in consumers due to consumers' desire to see quick and easy results. Similarly, Thompson and Norton (2011) found that exposure to products with multiple (vs. few) capabilities accentuates functional or utility efficiency among users. Some argue that adding extra features may lower the perceived usability of a product, as people perceive it as too complex to learn or misunderstand the product's intended use (Nielsen, 1993; Page, 2009). However, we hypothesize that consumers would perceive lower complexity and higher ease of use with multi-purpose beauty products. This is because a notable feature of multi-purpose *beauty* products, such as a shampoo-and-hair dye-in-1, unlike other types of multi-purpose products, is that the product does not require users to alter their usage behavior at all. For example, a camera with multiple features like different image modes would necessitate the users to maneuver through different buttons or settings to access each specific feature

(Thompson & Norton, 2011). In contrast, a multi-purpose beauty product provides various benefits without requiring users to change how they use it. Hence, we predict that ease and effortlessness would align with people's general perceptions of multi-purpose beauty products. This relationship is later tested and confirmed in our correlational test.

While prior research emphasizes the advantages of multi-purpose products, we aim to identify when, or for which segment of consumers, these products might not be favored. Specifically, we predict that those who subscribe to the belief that beauty is a quality that can be enhanced through personal effort (referred to as entity theorists of beauty) and are focused on improving their appearance (highly appearance-orientated individuals) would reduce their preferences for multi-purpose beauty items. Next, we elaborate on our theoretical framework, specifically addressing the concept of implicit theories.

## 2.2. Implicit Theory of Self and Beauty Consumption

Implicit theory refers to the internal belief that people have about the nature of human characteristics (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 1999; Murphy & Dweck, 2016), which shape people's motivations and behaviors (Dweck, 1999; Plaks et al., 2005). Previous research has defined two kinds of implicit self-theories: incremental and entity theory (Park & John, 2012). Individuals who believe in the entity theory view personal qualities as fixed and difficult to change (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Molden & Dweck, 2000). Hence, they agree with statements such as, "Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that" (Levy et

al., 1998). This mindset is reflected by their tendency to judge people based on their single behavior (Dweck et al., 1993; Dweck et al., 1995). They view personality traits to be fixed and expect high consistency in people's behavior over time and across situations (Erdley & Dweck, 1993; Hong et al., 1997). Incremental theory, on the other hand, is defined as the belief that people can substantially change (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 1999). Individuals who endorse incremental theory are prone to agree with statements such as, "Anyone can change even his/her most basic qualities" (Levy et al., 1998). Incremental theorists do not perceive an individual's single behavioral incident, such as their brand use, as a signal that is indicative of his/her innate traits (Park & John, 2018).

Different implicit theories also shape the way people think about effort and process. Supporters of the entity theory believe that if you have high ability, you should not need high effort. Entity theorists also believe that people cannot easily change their abilities even with effort, so they strive to demonstrate their fixed states by exhibiting their abilities, resulting in an orientation towards performance outcome (Erdley et al., 1997; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Blackwell et al., 2007). By contrast, incremental theorists view effort as the main driving force of change and development. Since incremental theorists believe that where they start is the beginning of their development, they believe that their capabilities can change and improve with effort (cf. Mueller & Dweck, 1998; Blackwell et al., 2007). Therefore, incremental theorists orient toward learning goals in which they can improve their competence and mastery over time (Erdley et al., 1997; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Blackwell et al., 2007).

Consequently, compared to entity theorists, incremental

theorists are highly process-oriented, valuing the process through which something comes to have an effect rather than focusing on getting the desired outcome (Hong et al., 1997; Levy et al., 1998). They prefer products that explicitly and clearly explain how the product can help them change in the process (Hong et al., 1997; Levy et al., 1998). Incremental theorists also prefer ads when they highlight how a brand can help them improve or acquire the desirable qualities over time, rather than how it can express the qualities that they already possess (Park & John, 2010).

Prior work also shows that implicit theory applies not only to general self-concept but also to specific aspects of self, such as intelligence and physical attractiveness. For example, those possessing an entity theory of intelligence prioritize performance goals over learning goals and focus on demonstrating how smart they are (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Mathur & Maheswaran, 2016). In contrast, those with an incremental theory of intelligence tend to pursue self-enhancement through learning and self-improvement opportunities to *become* smarter. Given that beauty is a meaningful aspect of self (Rudd & Lennon, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2018), others have also examined the distinctions between entity theorists and incremental theorists in the realm of beauty beliefs. For example, those who thought beauty is fixed (entity theorists) engaged in greater cosmetic consumption than those who thought beauty is malleable (incremental theorists) because entity theorists are more susceptible to the social pressure to seem attractive to others (Faust et al. 2022). Importantly, entity theorists increased their intention to consume cosmetic products only in a public and social, but not private, context. It was similarly found that entity theorists of beauty prefer symbolic products that represent their beauty, such as products with

a prominent logo (Lee & Kang, 2021). Furthermore, entity theorists tended to have greater personality-related motives for consuming cosmetic products (e.g. “I think appearance management is essential in social life,” “My personality can be expressed by using appearance management products”) compared to incremental theorists. Conversely, incremental theorists of beauty were more attuned to how they could improve their inherent attributes rather than showcase their appearance to others (Suh et al., 2016). Whereas prior work on the implicit theory of beauty focused on entity theory and cosmetic consumption in general, explained by heightened social signaling concerns, the current research examines a context where consumers engage in private consumption of multi-purpose beauty products and highlight the role of incremental theorists’ strong focus on procedural efforts.

There is some evidence that implicit theory of self (not of one’s beauty per se) can impact people’s attention to the effort involved in beauty consumption and attitude toward cosmetic product ads (i.e., Victoria’s Secret eye shadow; Park & John, 2012). The ads either emphasized how users can signal how attractive they are (e.g., “there’s no better way to show others that you have a modern up-to-date sense of beauty”) or how users can try to improve their attractiveness (e.g., “there’s no better way for you to learn how to have a modern up-to-date sense of beauty”). Incremental theorists preferred the ad with self-improvement appeals because they use products and brands as part of their active effort to keep improving themselves. This suggests that entity theorists may not be drawn to beauty products that are associated with convenience and effortlessness.

Here, we examine how individuals with an incremental

theory of beauty perceive multi-purpose beauty products. We propose that those who believe they can substantially improve their appearance with their own efforts (i.e., incremental theorists) will show a decreased preference for multi-purpose products compared to those who believe that their beauty is fixed and unrelated to one's own effort. Furthermore, we predict this effect to be stronger among highly appearance-oriented individuals. Next, we discuss prior research on appearance orientation and derive our hypotheses.

### 2.3. Appearance Orientation and Beauty Consumption

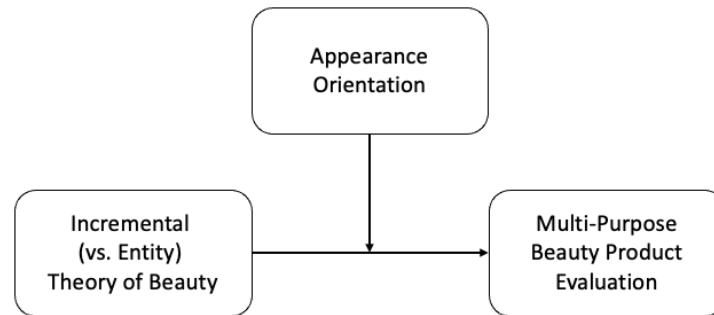
Appearance orientation refers to the measure of importance one places on appearance (Dixon et al., 2002; McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Al-Samyda et al., 2021). Thus, appearance orientation often predicts the level of psychological preoccupation with one's appearance as well as the tangible investment one puts into the appearance (Yip et al., 2011). Individuals who are highly appearance-oriented tend to use beauty products more frequently, dedicate more time to their beauty routines, and allocate a greater budget for beauty product expenditures (Mafra et al., 2022). A strong orientation toward beauty motivates individuals to exert more time and effort in their beauty routine.

Importantly, strong appearance orientation suggests that individuals find enjoyment in the various tasks related to their appearance, however demanding they may be, rather than considering them to be burdensome. Appearance orientation predicts the extent to which one derives satisfaction from utilizing products for their appearance (Horn & Gurel, 1981). That is, highly appearance-oriented individuals do

not see their beauty routine as a means to an end, but rather, as a way to fulfill their psychological needs during the process itself. This suggests that their process of using beauty products is not for superficial displays but for reflections of their personal inner experiences. Indeed, the fulfillment derived from one's appearance-related actions, such as exploring a variety of beauty products, appreciating each beauty ritual's details, or spending effort to find products that suit their specific needs, is as important to appearance-oriented individuals as the ultimate outcome (e.g., looking good for other people; Jeong & Suh, 2009). Individuals with a strong appearance orientation are focused on beauty products because they derive satisfaction from the process of utilizing beauty products. For those who do not perceive more effort as burdensome and enjoy the procedural details of their beauty routine, using a quick and easy multi-purpose beauty product may be less appealing compared to using separate single-purpose products.

### 2.4 Hypothesis Development

Previous research indicates that multi-purpose beauty products are often associated with convenience and effortlessness, which may clash with the preferences of individuals who value exerting effort in their beauty routines. Specifically, those who believe in the incremental theory of beauty—that one's efforts can alter their appearance—and derive satisfaction from enhancing their appearance may find the notion of ease contradictory to their values. Therefore, we propose that holding an incremental rather than fixed theory of beauty would lead to lower evaluations of multi-purpose products, especially among individuals who are highly appearance-oriented.



〈Figure 1〉 Research model

Given that incremental (vs. entity) theorists believe in the positive relationship between high effort and desired results, and highly (vs. low) appearance-oriented consumers are invested in spending effort to improve their looks, we predict an interactive effect of the theory of beauty and appearance orientation (Figure 1). Specifically, the evaluation of multi-purpose beauty products would be lower among those who subscribe to the incremental (vs. entity) theory of beauty if they have a high appearance orientation. For those with low appearance orientation, we do not expect their theory of beauty to have a significant effect because they are unlikely to show much interest in beauty products, whether multi- or single-purpose, or be sensitive to the level of effort involved in their beauty consumption (i.e., how much their own effort can improve their appearance). We also predict that this effect would apply to people's evaluation of brands that offer multi-purpose beauty products. Formally:

- H1: Among highly appearance-oriented individuals, endorsing a strong incremental (vs. entity) theory of beauty will negatively predict the evaluation of multi-purpose products.
- H2: Among highly appearance-oriented individuals, endorsing a strong incremental (vs. entity) theory of beauty will negatively predict the evaluation of the brand offering multi-purpose products.

### III. Correlational Pilot study

The pilot study examines the premise of our hypotheses. We test that the key attributes of multi-purpose beauty products are low effort (e.g., less work, less time) and high convenience (e.g., easier), which do not resonate with individuals who emphasize effort and the process in their beauty routine. In essence, those who value the effort in their cosmetic routine and relish the process of using beauty products —i.e., incremental theorists who are highly appearance-oriented—are less likely to perceive benefits from using multi-purpose products. We test the following question directly: is using multi-purpose beauty products (vs. using separate single-purpose products) considered to take little effort and work, and thus less suitable for the individuals who appreciate the procedural aspects of beauty routine?

#### 3.1. Data collection and survey sample

An empirical analysis was conducted using a questionnaire survey. A total of 229 US participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and completed the online study for a small monetary compensation. At the end of the survey, an attention check item was added which

asked participants to ignore the text of the question and click on a specific number to show they were paying attention. 14 people who failed our attention check question were excluded from the dataset, leaving us with 215 participants in our final sample. The respondents' demographical characteristics were as follows. Of 215 participants, 116 were female (54.0%), 92 were male (42.8%), and 7 people were non-binary (3.2%). The majority of our participants were in their 20s-30s. Specifically, 18.1% of our participants were in the 20s, 40.5% in the 30s, 25.1% in the 40s, and 16.3% in the 50s. The average age was 38.2.

### 3.2. Procedure

All participants read about single-purpose products and multi-purpose products and compared them using several questions presented in a random order. In a survey that was purportedly about beauty/cosmetic consumption, all participants first read about the differences between using single-purpose products separately and using multi-purpose products. Specifically, they were told:

“Single-purpose products are distinct and designed for specific uses. For instance, we use a body cream and a separate hand cream, or we have a shampoo and a conditioner separately. In contrast, All-in-one products are versatile and serve multiple purposes simultaneously. For instance, a body cream that *also* functions as a hand cream, or a 3-in-1 shampoo that combines shampoo, conditioner, and body wash in a single product are all multi-purpose products. How do you compare using separate products (e.g., one shampoo, one conditioner, one body wash) vs. using all-in-one products (e.g., shampoo-conditioner-body wash-in-1)?”

For each question, they were told to indicate their responses on a 7-point scale where 1 indicated that it definitely describes using separate single-purpose products and 7 indicated that it definitely describes using multi-purpose (all-in-one) products. The participants were asked to compare which one is more convenient, easier, more efficient, and more effortful (reverse-scored), and which one takes more work (reverse-scored) and more time (reverse-scored; six items,  $\alpha = .761$ ).

The participants also answered two questions about which option would be more suitable for the following two consumers: Customer A was described as somebody who is deeply interested in, and concerned about, the process of using beauty products, rather than just getting the final result of the products (i.e., incremental theorist). Customer B was described as somebody who is focused on their appearance and enjoys investing time and effort into using beauty products (i.e., highly appearance-oriented individuals). Neither the term incremental theory nor the term appearance orientation was mentioned in our description. All items were scored from 1 (*Definitely separate use*) to 7 (*Definitely multi-purpose product*), with 4 representing the scale midpoint (Tessler & Schwartz, 1972; Gerpott et al., 2018). The two questions were presented in a random order.

### 3.3. Results

As predicted, people thought that compared to using single-purpose products separately, using multi-purpose products is more convenient ( $M=5.94$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ; scale midpoint=4;  $t(214)=20.25$ ,  $p<.001$ ), easier ( $M=6.00$ ,  $SD=1.28$ ;  $t(214)=22.91$ ,  $p<.001$ ), more efficient ( $M=5.11$ ,  $SD=2.04$ ;



$t(214)=8.01, p<.001$ ), but less effortful ( $M=2.97, SD=2.05$ ;  $t(214)=-7.38, p<.001$ ), takes less work ( $M=2.68, SD=1.93$ ;  $t(214)=-10.00, p<.001$ ), and takes less time ( $M=2.44, SD=1.79$ ;  $t(214)=-12.77, p<.001$ ). Further, for each of the characteristics, the vast majority of the participants rated that using multi-purpose products is an easy and effortless way to consume beauty products (i.e., the majority of participants reported a value above the midpoint of the scale; see Table 1).

Additionally, when the participants were asked to think about the preferences of someone who subscribes to the incremental theory of beauty (who is concerned about putting work into the process of using beauty products), they intuited that using separate products would be more suitable than using multi-purpose products ( $M=2.64, SD=2.01$ ;  $t(214)=-9.91, p<.001$ ). They also thought that highly appearance-oriented individuals' preferences would lean toward separate products rather than multi-purpose products ( $M=2.14, SD=1.62$ ;  $t(214)=-16.84, p<.001$ ). See Table 1 for a summary of the results.

We note that our findings from the pilot study do not

imply that using single-purpose products is *inconvenient* or requires users to completely change their routine whenever they use separate single-purpose products. Rather, our insights and observations suggest that there exists a distinct association between multi-purpose beauty products and characteristics such as convenience and simplicity, which theoretically conflict with the focus of individuals who prioritize effort and derive satisfaction in the process of beauty routine, i.e., incremental theorists. Additionally, it is commonly perceived among people that multi-purpose products (compared to single-purpose ones) may be less suitable for individuals who prioritize incremental improvements and are highly focused on appearance qualities, commonly categorized as high appearance-oriented individuals.

The results confirmed that people associate multi-purpose beauty products with attributes such as convenience and effortlessness, which theoretically conflict with the values of those who prioritize effort and derive satisfaction in the process of beauty routine. Also, people intuitively think that multi-purpose products (compared to separate uses) are less suitable for incremental theorists and high

(Table 1) Summary of Characteristics

Characteristic	Mean	SD	t compared to midpoint	% above midpoint (separate use)	% below midpoint (multi-purpose)
Convenient	5.94	1.41	20.25***	7.9	87.4
Easy	6.00	1.28	22.91***	4.2	89.3
Effortful	2.97	2.05	-7.38**	67.4	25.6
Take work	2.68	1.93	-10.00***	73	19.5
Take time	2.44	1.79	-12.77***	75.3	17.7
Efficient	5.11	2.04	8.01***	20.9	69.8
Suitable for incremental theorist	2.64	2.01	-9.91***	73	18.1
Suitable for appearance-oriented individual	2.14	1.62	-16.84***	82.8	10.2

Note: The table reports mean ratings, standard deviations, t-statistics compared to scale midpoint (4 out of 7), and proportion of participants who rated the characteristic to be more descriptive of separate product use (i.e., had a value below scale midpoint) or multi-purpose product use (i.e., had a value above scale midpoint). All items were scored from 1 (Definitely separate use) to 7 (Definitely multi-purpose product). \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

appearance-oriented individuals. In the next study, we directly test the effects of people's incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation on their preference for multi-purpose products.

## IV. Study

### 4.1. Data collection and survey sample

An empirical analysis was conducted using a questionnaire survey to verify the research model. A total of 200 US participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and completed the online study for a small monetary compensation. We used the same attention check question as in the correlational pilot study. 9 people who did not pass our attention check question were excluded from the dataset, leaving us with 191 participants in our final sample. The respondents' demographical characteristics were as follows. Of 191 participants, 99 were female (51.8%), 89 were male (46.6%), and 3 people were non-binary (1.6%). The majority of our participants were in their 20s-30s. Specifically, 19.9% of our participants were in the 20s, 44.0% in the 30s, and 23.0% in the 40s, and 13.1% in the 50s. The average age was 37.4. We assessed and confirmed that participants' level of interest in beauty did not deviate from the mean point ( $M=4.24$ ;  $SD=1.988$ ;  $p=.089$ ). The measure of interest in beauty still did not deviate from the mean point ( $M=4.23$ ;  $SD=1.981$ ).

### 4.2. Measures

The implicit theory of beauty was measured using the

8-item "Implicit Persons Theory Measure" (Dweck, 1999), modified to be about one's beauty. Four items in the scale measure one's entity theory (e.g., "You are born with a certain level of beauty, and you can't really do much to change it") and 4 items measure incremental theory (e.g., "You can always substantially change how physically attractive you are"). We, thus, reverse-scored 4 items that measure one's entity theory of beauty. The participants reported the degree to which they agreed with each statement from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*). A higher score indicated greater endorsement of the incremental theory of beauty.

To measure appearance orientation, we used a modified version of the Appearance Scales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ-AS; Cash, 2000). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement to 12 items anchored on a 7-point scale (1=*Not like me at all*, 7=*Very much like me*). Sample items include, "Before going out in public, I always notice how I look"; "I am careful to buy clothes that will make me look my best."

Afterward, participants were introduced to a fictitious cosmetic brand called "Colorscience". Prior to the measurement, participants were instructed to attentively read the brand description. Specifically, the brand description emphasized its dedication to selling multi-purpose products by saying, "Each of our products serves multiple functions. You will find one product that can be any or all of these things at once" (see Appendix A for exact description).

### 4.3. Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable of this study was the multi-purpose product evaluation. Participants were told to

consider the following four different products and read its descriptions carefully (see Appendix B for exact descriptions): (1) An all-in-one hair product that can be applied during or after shower, depending on how the user chooses to apply it; (2) An overnight eye cream that can also be used as a lip cream; (3) A face-serum-and-acne-control-in-1; and (4) A 3-in-1 shampoo & conditioner & body wash for head-to-toe cleansing. Then, they evaluated the products by reporting how much they liked and were interested in the products, using two seven-point scales (1=Strongly dislike, 7=Strongly like; 1= Not interested at all, 7=Very interested; Etkin & Sela, 2016; Townsend et al., 2019). We averaged the participants' responses to the multi-purpose products (8 questions in total;  $M=7.8$ ) and used the resulting index as the measure for product evaluation. This served as our first dependent variable.

Additionally, the participants evaluated the brand using the following items ( $M=9.6$ ): (1) "How much would you consider using Colorscience products?" (2) "How interested are you in purchasing Colorscience products?" and (3) "How likely are you to purchase Colorscience products?" (1=Not at all, 7=Very much). We adapted the scale from prior studies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Sürücü et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2022; Purohit & Radia, 2022). This served as our second dependent variable (i.e., brand evaluation).

## 4.4. Results

### 4.4.1. Product Evaluation

Linear regression analysis was conducted using the incremental theory of beauty ( $M=4.74$  out of 7,  $SD=1.19$ ), appearance orientation ( $M=4.29$  out of 7,  $SD=1.21$ ), and their interaction as predictors. The main effects of

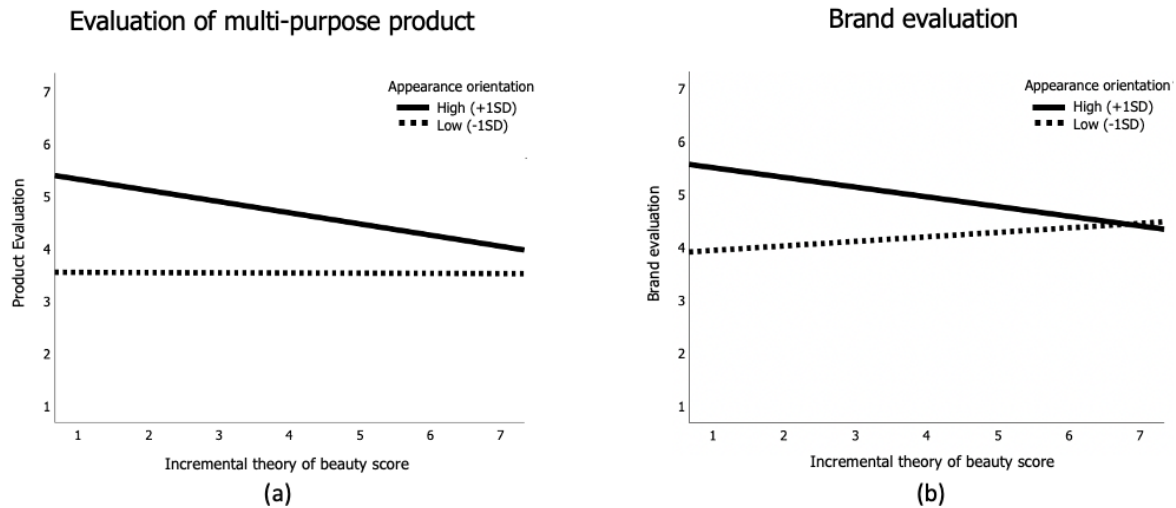
incremental theory of beauty ( $b=.58$ ,  $SE=.26$ ,  $t(187)=2.24$ ,  $p=.027$ ) and appearance orientation ( $b=1.05$ ,  $SE=.31$ ,  $t(187)=3.34$ ,  $p=.001$ ) were significant. The positive effect of incremental theory on product evaluation suggests that beauty products in general are valued more among people who tend to believe that their beauty is largely malleable (vs. fixed) and they can (vs. cannot) significantly improve their beauty by putting in the effort. More importantly, consistent with our prediction, the analysis revealed a significant interaction between the incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation ( $b=-.15$ ,  $SE=.06$ ,  $t(187)=-2.53$ ,  $p=.012$ ; see Figure 2a; Table 2). The results were consistent for all four multi-purpose products used in our study (incremental theory of beauty appearance orientation interaction  $ps<.075$ ).

Spotlight analysis also revealed that, among those who are high in appearance orientation (+1SD), greater beliefs in the incremental theory of beauty (i.e., the more people thought that one's beauty is malleable rather than fixed) significantly reduced evaluation of multi-purpose products ( $b=-.26$ ,  $SE=.11$ ,  $t(187)=-2.25$ ;  $p=.026$ ). However, among those who are low in appearance orientation (-1SD), there was no effect of people's incremental theory of beauty on product evaluation ( $b=.11$ ,  $SE=.10$ ,  $t(187)=1.12$ ;  $p=.266$ ). For those who place great importance on their appearance and value good looks, multi-purpose products were viewed less favorably if they held a stronger belief that they can (vs. cannot) enhance and alter their own beauty. We did not predict gender differences in our effect as our multi-products were not particularly tailored to a specific gender (e.g., shampoo, acne control, face serum). As predicted, our results remained consistent when gender was added as a covariate (interaction  $p=.013$ ).

<Table 2> Results for the moderation

Variable	Product Evaluation			Brand Evaluation		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t
Constant	-.374	1.356	.276	-1.296	1.899	-.683
Incremental belief (IB)	.578	.258	2.236*	.487	.361	1.346 *
Appearance orientation (AO)	1.050	.314	3.345**	1.349	.439	3.072 **
IB AO	-.152	.060	-2.528*	-.143	.084	-1.707

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



<Figure 2> Interaction effects of appearance orientation and incremental theory of beauty on (a) evaluation of multi-purpose products and (b) brand evaluation.

#### 4.4.2. Brand Evaluation

We then tested the moderating effect of appearance orientation on the relationship between the incremental theory of beauty and the evaluation of multi-purpose products, using brand evaluation as the dependent variable. We predicted that the observed negative effect of incremental theory would also manifest in the overall brand evaluation (i.e., reduced desire to purchase products from the brand that offers multi-product products). Linear regression analysis was conducted using the incremental theory of beauty, appearance orientation, and their interaction as predictors.

The main effects of incremental theory of beauty ( $b=.49$ ,  $SE=.36$ ,  $t(187)=1.35$ ,  $p=.179$ ) and appearance orientation ( $b=1.35$ ,  $SE=.44$ ,  $t(187)=3.07$ ,  $p=.002$ ) were significant. Consistent with our prediction, the analysis revealed an interaction between the incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation ( $b=-.14$ ,  $SE=.08$ ,  $t(187)=-1.71$ ,  $p=.089$ ; see Figure 2b; Table 2).

Spotlight analysis then revealed that among those who are high in appearance orientation (+1SD), greater beliefs in the incremental theory of beauty (i.e., the more people thought that one's beauty is malleable rather than fixed) significantly reduced the overall brand evaluation ( $b=-.30$ ,

(Table 3) Bootstrapping results for the conditional indirect effect

Variable	Moderated Mediation Index	Boot SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Boor LLCI	Boot ULCI
Appearance orientation	-.137	.046	-.228	-.048

Note: LLCI: Lower-Level Confidence Interval, ULCI: Upper-Level Confidence Interval

SE=.16,  $t(187)=1.89$ ;  $p=.060$ ). However, among those who are low in appearance orientation (-1SD), there was no effect of people's incremental theory of beauty on the brand evaluation ( $b=.05$ , SE=.14,  $t(187)=0.33$ ;  $p=.745$ ). Again, our results remained consistent when gender was added as a covariate (interaction  $p=.081$ ). Individuals who highly value their appearance were less likely to consider purchasing products from a brand that offers multi-purpose items, when they strongly believed in their capacity to enhance and modify their beauty, compared to those who believed that beauty is immutable and cannot be changed.

Next, we tested the observed negative effect on consumers' evaluation of multi-purpose products which, in turn, lowers people's overall brand evaluation. We conducted a moderated mediation analysis (Edwards and Lambert 2007) and examined whether multi-purpose product evaluation mediated the interaction between the incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation. As expected, we found a significant indirect effect with the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (95% CI=-.228 to -.048; see Table 3). More specifically, product evaluation mediated the effect of incremental theory on the overall brand evaluation among highly appearance-oriented consumers (+1SD) (95% CI=-.397 to -.069), but not among low appearance-oriented consumers (-1SD) (95% CI=-.085 to .283). Therefore, highly appearance-oriented consumers had a lower opinion of multi-purpose products if they strongly believed in their ability to enhance and alter their

beauty (i.e. incremental belief in beauty). The reduced assessment of multi-purpose products then led to a lower overall evaluation of the brand that offers these products, making these consumers less inclined to consider purchasing from this brand. However, this effect did not occur among those who believe that beauty is unchangeable (i.e., fixed belief of beauty).

## V. General Discussion

The current research examines the effects of the incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation on consumers' evaluation of multi-purpose products and brand evaluation. The findings of our study showed that among people with high appearance orientation, incremental (vs. fixed) theory of beauty predicted lower evaluation of multi-purpose products. However, among those who are low in appearance orientation, there were no significant differences in the evaluation of multi-purpose products and brand evaluation as a function of their theory of beauty. Notably, these results remained robust even when we accounted for gender as a covariate, reinforcing the consistency and reliability of our findings.

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

Our research makes a theoretical contribution by applying

the implicit theory of self to the domain of beauty consumption. While previous research has primarily focused on individuals' implicit theories related to specific aspects of the self, such as their convictions regarding the malleability of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Mathur et al., 2016), our study delves into the realm of beauty. The impact of people's implicit theories about beauty on their utilization of beauty products implies a broader impact of these theories on other self-concept domains.

While previous studies have explored the theory of beauty, they predominantly concentrated on entity theorists' inclination towards cosmetic consumption, driven by their heightened concerns regarding social signaling (Lee & Kang, 2021; Faust et al., 2022). Relatedly, prior work on cosmetic consumption highlights the positive relationship between makeup usage and strong concerns for self-presentation and social self-esteem (Robertson et al. 2008). Departing from this focus, the present research investigates how incremental theorists prioritize their procedural efforts when utilizing multi-purpose beauty products. Impression management and social pressures are important antecedents of beauty consumption, but various cosmetic items, including multi-purpose ones, also cater to the benefits of convenience and functionality (Suh et al., 2016). We believe that understanding consumers' motivations for improving their beauty, regardless of others' presence, would be meaningful in such contexts.

Also, whereas previous research has suggested that adding more desired features to a product can lead to greater consumer preference (Carpenter, Glazer, & Nakamoto, 1994; Thompson & Norton, 2011), our findings indicate that such preferences may not occur for certain consumer segments: highly appearance-oriented individuals who endorse incremental theory of beauty. Although the convenience and effortlessness

of using multi-purpose products may increase product preference for some, they could have a negative effect for consumers who prioritize the process of beauty routine and their efforts invested in it. Moreover, our findings indicate that people share an understanding that multi-purpose beauty products are more convenient and effortless compared to using individual products separately, making them less appealing for those who value and put effort into their appearance.

## 5.2. Managerial Implications

Our research holds valuable implications for brand executives overseeing product knowledge. People's fascination with beauty has steadily grown, as shown in a clear rise in the demand for innovative cosmetic products. This societal trend indicates that a considerable number of people aspire to enhance their appearance (Yip et al., 2011). Furthermore, younger consumers increasingly invest time and effort in managing their appearance because they believe that their appearance is important in various areas of their social lives and an influential factor in their happiness and social success (Kim, 2015; Lee, 2016). Given the growth of the beauty industry, our findings on multi-purpose beauty products suggest that emphasizing the effort and process involved in using products can enhance the perceived value. For example, brands can highlight the process by detailing how the use of beauty products contributes to each step of one's own transformative journey, framing it as empowering and reflective of personal growth. Another strategy to highlight the process of product use involves product customization. For example, brands could encourage users to personalize the products, in terms of packaging or ingredients, to cater

to those who appreciate their active role in their own beauty routines.

Product knowledge holds significant importance, particularly among employees in the beauty market. Employees equipped with comprehensive product knowledge can offer informed assistance to customers, effectively addressing queries, providing recommendations, and alleviating concerns, thereby elevating the overall customer experience. In a market where consumers frequently seek personalized advice for their beauty needs, knowledgeable staff can establish trust and credibility with customers, fostering heightened satisfaction and loyalty. Recognizing the pivotal role of product knowledge in the beauty industry, firms can enhance their internal training programs to ensure that employees across departments possess a deep understanding of the products they offer. This training should encompass not only basic product information but also delve into the science behind the products, application techniques, and the benefits of specific ingredients. In this context, our findings prove invaluable as they can hint to brand managers and employees on consumer preferences regarding multi-purpose items. Employees' comprehensive understanding of products and consumer preferences is particularly valuable in assisting customers with diverse attributes, including individuals who appreciate procedural details such as those with incremental beliefs of beauty, as indicated by our findings. By investing in thorough training of product and consumer knowledge of employees, brands can empower them to provide informed assistance to customers. This shall lead to high brand satisfaction and loyalty. Altogether, incorporating ongoing training programs that keep employees updated on new product launches, advancements in beauty technology, and industry trends can further ensure that employees remain

knowledgeable and competitive in the ever-evolving beauty industry.

Our findings also have broad implications on how firms should incorporate people's implicit theories into product and brand knowledge management. For example, some brands focus on athleticism and offer versatile workout equipment such as kettlebells and resistance bands. These brands should be attentive to implicit theories related to fitness and physical strength. Specifically, when creating educational content for these products, companies should provide tutorials, blog posts, or video demonstrations that not only highlight the end results but also offer in-depth insights into the benefits of the products. By detailing the procedural knowledge associated with versatile products, brands can highlight users' efforts and the process of personal growth.

### 5.3. Limitations & Future Research

This research is not without limitations. We focused on beauty products, which are a specific type of product that may have unique characteristics and effects on consumers. For example, beauty products may be more related to consumers' self-esteem, self-image, and social comparison than other types of products that are more utilitarian (Mafra et al., 2022; Richins, 1991). Therefore, our findings may not be generalizable to other product categories that have different psychological and behavioral implications for consumers. Future studies can broaden the scope and conduct research encompassing a wider array of product categories. For example, baking soda is a versatile household item that serves multiple purposes, such as a cleaning agent for various surfaces and a deodorizer for refrigerators and

carpets. This expansion would allow us to explore how the incremental theory may manifest differently in various product domains.

Also, we note that our work examines measured, and not manipulated, implicit self-theories. Despite the limitation, we anticipate similar results for the experimentally induced theory of beauty. Drawing from past studies that have used manipulations such as having participants read a fictional scientific article that supports either entity or incremental theory (McConnell, 2001; Kruse & Sy 2011; Leith et al., 2014; Bullard et al., 2019), future research can further explore diverse methods for manipulation and heighten the robustness of studies on implicit theories. For example, researchers may utilize procedures based on Chiu et al. (1997) to manipulate and test the effects of implicit theories. This procedure includes participants reading about differing beliefs regarding whether people's basic attributes are fixed or changeable. In McConnell's study, one group was presented with the idea that people's attributes remain stable, while the other group was presented with the notion that these attributes can change. Specifically, participants in the entity theory condition read that "people's basic underlying attributes do not change much." The passage continued by noting that Jones's experiments, and those of numerous other researchers, have consistently found that "the kind of person someone cannot be changed much across one's lifetime and that people's basic personality traits and characteristics are very stable." Participants in the incremental theory condition read that "people's basic underlying attributes can change a great deal." The narrative then stated that expert Dr. Edward Jones argued that "no one's character is hard like a rock that cannot be changed. Only for a small number is great effort and determination needed to

effect changes." The passage continued by noting that Jones's experiments, and those of numerous other researchers, have consistently found that "the kind of person someone can be changed a great deal across one's lifetime and that people's basic personality traits and characteristics are quite flexible and malleable. Such methods will not only facilitate the exploration of chronic implicit theories but also unveil new sources of individuals' implicit theories (Leith et al., 2014).

Another potential avenue for future work is to examine the potential cultural differences in consumers' perceptions and responses to beauty products. Previous research has suggested that culture may influence how consumers evaluate and use beauty products, as well as how they express their beauty ideals and preferences (Kara and Özgür 2023). For example, consumers from individualistic cultures may be more likely to use beauty products to enhance their personal identity and uniqueness (Markus and Kitayama 2014), while consumers from collectivistic cultures may be more likely to use beauty products to conform to social norms and expectations (Madan et al., 2018). The following research can examine how the incremental theory of beauty and appearance orientation may vary across different cultures.

The current research highlights how consumers with distinct implicit theories about beauty have differential perceptions of multi-purpose beauty products and brands that offer these products. In doing so, we highlight the importance of the effort in the process to increase consumer evaluation.



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## Appendix A. Study Material: Brand Description

### Consumer Choice Task

In this task, we are interested in how consumers think and feel in their everyday lives.

Please read the ad below carefully. >> button will appear shortly.



**Colorescience makes beauty and grooming products for all men and women. At Colorescience, our product philosophy is simple: We do not tell you what to do with it. Each of our products serve multiple functions. Eye cream? Face moisturizer? Don't choose – you will find one product that can be any or all of these things at once.**

**When it comes to using our products, we give you NO guidelines. It's up to you to decide how our products help you look—and feel—great! Just trust there are no rules to getting incredible results. Meet our products and put them in action.**

## Appendix B. Study Material: Product Description

### 1. during + after shower hair product



An all-in-one hair product that can be applied during or after shower, depending on how the user chooses to apply it.

### 2. Eye cream + lip mask



A do-it-all overnight eye and lip cream. Put it on your eyes to hydrate, firm, and improve puffiness, or use as a lip mask to deliver lasting moisture on your lips while you sleep.

### 3. Acne control + Face serum



This face-serum-and-acne-control-in-1 helps reduce blemishes and pimples. Dot this on your face as a spot treatment, or apply it all over as a face serum for a clearer-looking skin.

### 4. shampoo & conditioner & body wash



3-in-1 shampoo & conditioner & body wash for head-to-toe cleansing. Formulated with hydrating ingredients that moisturize and absorb quickly.

## 저 자 소 개



### 최 주 혜 (Ju Hae Choi)

동덕여자대학교에서 국제경영학 학사 학위를 취득한 후, 현재는 연세대학교 일반대학원 경영학과에서 마케팅 석사 학위 과정을 이수하고 있다. 주요 관심 분야는 소비자 행동, 소비자 심리, 소비자 및 관리 의사결정, 브랜드 전략 등이다.



### 전 정 룡 (Quan Zhenglong)

고려대학교에서 경영학 학사 학위를 취득한 후, 현재는 연세대학교 일반대학원 경영학과에서 마케팅 석사 학위 과정을 이수하고 있다. 주요 관심 분야는 소비자 행동, 가상/증강 현실, 디지털 미디어, 소셜 미디어 등이다.



### 전 유 정 (Youjung Jun)

연세대학교 경영대학 마케팅 조교수이다. 주요 연구 분야는 소비자 행동, 가짜뉴스, 소셜 미디어, 가상/증강 현실 등이다.

〈 국문초록 〉

# 미(美)의 암묵적 이론과 외모지향성이 다목적 제품에 대한 소비자 인식에 미치는 영향

최주혜\*, 전정룡\*\*, 전유정\*\*\*

다양한 업계에서 한 번에 여러 가지 기능을 수행하는 ‘다목적’ 제품을 출시하는 브랜드들이 늘고 있다. 그러나 소비자들이 다목적 제품과 이를 제공하는 브랜드에 대한 인식 관련 연구는 아직 많이 이루어지지 않았다. 본 연구에서는 소비자들이 미(美)에 대해 갖고 있는 암묵적 이론이 다목적 제품 관련 지식과 브랜드 지식에 미치는 영향을 연구한다. 외모 지향성이 높은 소비자들 사이에서, 미(美)에 대한 증가(vs. 실제) 이론(즉, 본인의 아름다움은 타고난 것이 아닌, 노력에 의해 변화시킬 수 있는 것이라는 믿음)이 강할 수록 다목적 제품에 대한 선호도가 감소한다는 것을 발견하였다. 또한, 이는 전반적인 브랜드 평가에도 부정적인 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났다. 이 연구 결과는 제품/브랜드 관련 지식경영에 있어, 소비자들의 암묵적 이론과 그에 따른 선호도를 고려해야 한다는 것을 시사한다.

주제어: 암묵적 이론, 제품 지식, 외모 지향성, 브랜드 인식

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\* juchoi18@yonsei.ac.kr

\*\* b1036467074@gmail.com

\*\*\* youjungjun@yonsei.ac.kr