CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

This research was undertaken with the primary objective of explaining differences in consumption of personal care products using personality variables. Several streams of research reported were reviewed and a conceptual model was developed. Theories on the relationship between self concept and behaviour was reviewed and the need to use individual difference variables to conceptualize and measure the salient dimensions of the self were emphasized. Theories relating to social comparison, eating disorders, role of idealized media images in shaping the self-concept, evidence on cosmetic surgery and persuasibility were reviewed in the study. These came from diverse fields like social psychology, use of cosmetics, women studies, media studies, self-concept literature in psychology and consumer research, and marketing. From the review three basic dimensions, namely self-evaluation, self-awareness and persuasibility were identified and they were posited to be related to consumption. Several personality variables from these conceptual domains were identified and factor analysis confirmed the expected structure fitting the basic theoretical dimensions. Demographic variables like gender and income were also considered.
It was found that self-awareness measured by the variable public self-consciousness explain differences in consumption of personal care products. The relationship between public self-consciousness and consumption was found to be most conspicuous in cases of poor self-evaluation measured by self-esteem. Susceptibility to advertising also was found to explain differences in consumption.

From the research, it may be concluded that personality variables are useful for explaining consumption and they must be used together to explain and understand the process. There may not be obvious and conspicuous links between individual measures and behaviour in marketing. However, when used in proper combination and with the help of theoretical models personality offers considerable explanatory power as illustrated in the seventy five percent accuracy rate of prediction obtained in binary logistic regression.

6.2 Implications

The practical implications from marketer's point of view is the identification of a segment which has a personality profile of low self esteem and high public self consciousness who are most susceptible to the use of personal care products. However, it should also be noted that there are other segments that may have to be approached using different methods since it does not mean that all users are of poor self-evaluation and high self-awareness and develop negative self perceptions of attractiveness as a result
of social comparisons. There are also the implications for public policy where certain segments of the populations being vulnerable to the marketing tactics in the case personal care products.

From a methodological perspective, it is important to note that the consumption may not be explained by single measures in isolation. One needs to consider several variables and use a proper theoretical framework to help explain consumption. Further, though individual measures may not be related to specific behavioural aspects like the preference for a product or a brand and its purchase, there is a collective effect of several variables on the aggregated behaviours which serve to cancel out the situational variation. There should also be an emphasis on theoretical models that provide a logical explanation than being restricted by the use of largely atheoretical models and empirical validation. Another point worth emphasizing is the need to study the moderating effect of variables. Even if the variables are uncorrelated, there may be interactions between them on determining the dependent variable, which need to be explored.

From the perspective of theory, it is worth noting that numerous studies have already been undertaken in the west exploring the influence of self esteem on body image, body esteem and appearance anxiety. It is suggested that people of low Self-Esteem have a poor body image, lower body esteem and higher social and appearance anxiety compared to those with high Self-Esteem. This group is more prone to eating disorders like
Anorexia nervosa and Bulimia. This study expand the scope of generalizations possible in this area by relating consumption of personal care products with self esteem and public self-consciousness albeit defining self-esteem as having a moderating effect on the relation between public self-consciousness and consumption.

6.3 Scope for further research

The present research reported offer some evidence on the relationship between personality variables and consumption but limited to personal care products that serve an appearance related function. Though there is reasonable evidence, there is need to confirm the relationships by extending the research to other age groups and socio-demographic classes. In addition, it is felt that the predictive value of the model can be improved further by dropping some variables and adding other variables on which there is research evidence concerning the link with consumption. Personal vanity (Netemeyer, Burton and Lichtenstein) and consumer materialism (Richins 1990 and 1992) are such variables. Also the researcher would like to verify experimentally the link between advertising, self evaluation and self awareness.