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The Study on Color Cosmetics Purchase Utilizing Online and Offline Channels by the Generation Zalpha

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the status of online and offline color cosmetic purchases among 324 members of the "Zalpha" generation (aged 15 to 30). **Research design, data and methodology:** The study examined demographic characteristics and purchase patterns of color cosmetics across online and offline platforms. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify the general characteristics of the subjects, and chi-square analysis (cross-tabulation) was performed to determine whether significant differences existed based on these general characteristics. **Results:** The analysis revealed that the Zalpha generation exhibited flexible omni-channel consumption characteristics, utilizing both online and offline channels simultaneously ($p < .05$). While social media (SNS) was the most prominent source of general product information, statistically significant differences were observed depending on the subjects' age, gender, and affiliation ($p < .05$). Generally, participants were found to obtain information on color makeup techniques through short-form content, such as Instagram Reels ($p < .001$). Regarding offline channels, Health & Beauty (H&B) stores were predominant; however, Daiso was confirmed to be significantly emerging as a new low-cost beauty channel ($p < .05$). **Conclusions*:*** This study confirms that the Zalpha generation demonstrates "smart consumption" patterns, strategically utilizing online and offline channels based on personal color trends and short-form media. In particular, the growth of cost-effective channels such as Daiso suggests that practical beauty consumption is becoming increasingly reinforced within the Zalpha generation.

Keywords: Zalpha generation, Color cosmetics, On-Off channel, Purchasing Characteristics

JEL Classification Code: D12, E30, E31

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, makeup has evolved beyond simple aesthetic enhancement to serve as both a means of self-expression and a core mechanism for establishing social relationships (Cho & Kim, 2005). Furthermore, alongside rapidly shifting consumption trends and changes in the primary demographic of consumers, the age at which individuals first begin using makeup has gradually decreased. Succeeding the MZ generation, which

previously constituted a major consumer segment, the Zalpha generation has emerged as a formidable new consumer force within the marketing landscape of the K-beauty cosmetics market.

This transition in the primary consumer demographic, coupled with the decreasing age of makeup initiation, is precipitating a significant diversification of both online and offline distribution channels.

According to previous studies, Generation Z a key constituent of the Zalpha generation utilizes makeup to compensate for personal short coming sand obtain psychological comfort(Lee et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been reported that rather than blindly following trends, they prefer specific color products that facilitate self-expression (Kim & Kwon, 2014; Lee et al., 2021).

Significant changes are also being observed within the distribution environment. Domestic cosmetics distribution channels have undergone a complete restructuring, transitioning from the former brand-exclusive road shops to Health & Beauty(H&B) stores such as Olive Young (Bang & Kim, 2020). More recently, driven by high inflation, ultra-low-cost and highly accessible channels such as Daiso and convenience stores have rapidly emerged as new "beauty meccas" for teenagers.

Similarly, in the digital sphere, the diversification of online pathways has led to a growing preference for vertical platforms over official brand websites; furthermore, "short-form" videos of less than one minute are exerting a powerful influence on actual purchasing decisions (Cho, 2024). In essence, multifaceted transformations are currently underway.

However, existing research has tended to analyze Gen MZ, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha separately, or has remained disproportionately focused on the purchasing behavior of college students and adult women. Amidst the rapidly evolving digital media environment and the diversification of online and offline distribution channels, there remains a lack of integrated and empirical research that encompasses the Zalpha generation as a whole. In particular, it is necessary to re-examine how the influence of emerging ultra-cost-effective channels—such as Daiso—alongside short-form media and personal color-based selection criteria are reflected in actual purchasing patterns. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the status of color cosmetic purchases among the Zalpha generation, specifically those aged 15 to 30 residing in South Korea.

More specifically, by investigating online and offline purchase channels, purchasing factors, and information acquisition sources as well as identifying variations in color cosmetic purchasing behavior based on general characteristics this research intends to provide foundational data for marketing strategies within the K-beauty cosmetics industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Emergence and Consumer Traits of the Zalpha Generation

The Zalpha generation is a digital native cohort encompassing Generation Z(born after the mid-1990s) and Generation Alpha (born after 2010); they fluently utilize digital devices and social media, exhibiting "omni-channel" consumption characteristics that traverse online and offline boundaries (Univ Tomorrow 20's Research Institute, 2024). This phenomenon has also been described through the concept of "omnivorous taste, " which signifies not an indiscriminate "liking" of everything, but rather a tolerant attitude characterized by openness and recognition toward a diverse range of elements (Peterson & Kern, 1996).

This cohort has grown to constitute 28.7% of the total population(Hwang, 2023). According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census by Statistics Korea, the respective proportions within the total population are reported as 17.4 % for Generation Z and 11.3 % for Generation Alpha.

As digital natives born into an environment of constant digital exposure, the Zalpha generation perceives the process of acquiring and sharing cosmetic information as a form of "play culture, "transcending the mere act of purchasing products (Son, 2023). Furthermore, they utilize color cosmetics as a means of expressing their individuality rather than blindly following trends, and they exhibit savvy consumption patterns by cross-verifyingingredient and pigmentation data through review applications and other digital platforms.

In contemporary society, where the low birth rate has emerged as a significant social issue, the Zalpha generation is often characterized by the "Ten-pocket" phenomenon. This term reflects the intensified concentration of attention and capital on a single child, resulting in their substantial purchasing power(Cho, 2024). This explains why a significant portion of the Zalpha generation has been able to emerge as powerful primary consumers, despite many not yet belonging to the economically active population(Jang, 2024).

2.2. Changes in the Color Cosmetics Market and Distribution Channels

According to the 2024 Cosmetics Industry Status Report by the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS), the market for color cosmetics is valued at 2,675.5 billion KRW and continues to show a consistent annual upward trend.

As a category highly sensitive to contemporary trends, color cosmetics influence a wide demographic ranging from adults to elementary school students through various media platforms in a modern society where lookism (appearance-oriented culture) is prevalent (Na & Song, 2014). Particularly in the current era, where the age of makeup initiation is gradually decreasing, color cosmetics serve as a core instrument for adolescents to express their individuality.

According to the "U.S. Color Cosmetics Market Trends" report published by the Korea Health Industry Development Institute(KHIDI) and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency(KOTRA), the export volume of Korean color cosmetics has been exhibiting a significant upward trend compared to 2023. The analysis suggests that overseas Gen MZ consumers, who prioritize "Gasimbi" (psychological satisfaction relative to cost), are increasingly selecting K-beauty products that offer high levels of psychological fulfillment (E-Today, 2024).

In terms of distribution channels, the market has undergone a complete restructuring, transitioning from traditional brand-exclusive road shops to H&B stores such as Olive Young (Bang & Kim, 2020; Lim et al., 2021). More recently, driven by the impact of high inflation resulting from socio-economic shifts, ultra-low-cost channels such as Daiso and convenience stores have emerged as new "play grounds" for adolescents (next economy, 2024). In the online sphere, a distinct trend is becoming increasingly pronounced, with consumers favoring vertical plat forms like "Ably" and "Zigzag" over official brand websites (Maeil Business Newspaper, 2025).

2.3. Cosmetic Information-Seeking Behavior of the Zalpha Generation

The Zalpha generation, inherently accustomed to digital media environments, engages in consumption activities through various social media channels and ultra-short-form content of less than 10 seconds (next economy, 2024). Recently, within the beauty cosmetics market, short-form videos of less than one minute have been exerting a more significant impact on purchase conversion than traditional, long-form tutorial videos.

Furthermore, as personal color diagnosis has become increasingly mainstream, there is a growing trend among consumers to prioritize products that complement their individual skin tone over merely following popular color trends when purchasing color cosmetics (Park, 2025).

3. Methods

3.1. Data Collection and Methods

This study was conducted over a period of 13 days, from November 25 to December 7, 2025, targeting male and female consumers aged 15 to 30residing nationwide in South Korea who had prior experience purchasing color cosmetics. Data were collected through an online (mobile) survey utilizing Google Forms.

A total of 325 questionnaires were collected through recruitment and promotion on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and KakaoTalk. Among these, after excluding one insincere response, the remaining 324 responses were utilized as the final data for analysis.

3.2. Survey Instruments

The questionnaire for this study comprised a total of 30 items covering demographic characteristics and the current status of color cosmetic purchases, including preferences and purchase decision factors.

These items were adapted and reconstructed by the researcher based on the studies by Yoo (2016), titled "A Study on Middle-low Priced Cosmetics Purchasing Intention in Relation to the Consumption Value of Female Consumers in their 20s and 30s" and Son (2024), titled "A study on the purchasing behavior and usage of make-up Cosmetics of MZ Generation".

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 25.0; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). The specific statistical analysis methods employed in this study are as follows:

First, frequency analysis was performed to examine the general characteristics of the survey participants. Second, to investigate the current status of color cosmetics purchasing via online and offline channels among the Zalpha generation, and to determine whether there were significant differences based on the participants' general characteristics, cross-tabulation analysis (Chi-square test, χ^2**)** was conducted.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. General Characteristics of the Study Participants

Table 1 presents the results of the frequency analysis conducted to examine the general characteristics of the study participants.

According to the analysis, the age distribution of the participants was in the order of 20-24 years(n=115, 35.5 %), 15-19 years(n=107, 33.0 %), and 25–30 years (n=102, 31.5 %). In terms of gender, there were 31 males (9.6 %) and 293 females (90.4 %), indicating that the participants were predominantly female. By affiliation, the sample consisted of 42 middle school student(13.0 %), 66 high school students (20.4 %), 97 college and graduate students (29.9 %), and 119 office workers/adults (36.7 %), with a total of 324 subjects investigated. The average monthly personal disposable income (allowance or salary) of the study participants was distributed as follows: 400,000 KRW or more (n=103, 31.8 %), followed by less than 100,000 KRW (n=70,21.6 %), 100,000-200,000 KRW(n=64, 19.8 %), 200,000-300,000 KRW (n=46,14.2%), and 300,000–400,000 KRW(n=41, 12.7 %).

Table 1: General characteristics of the study subjects (n=324, %)

Variable		Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Age	15-19	107	33.0
	20-24	115	35.5
	25-30	102	31.5
Gender	Male	31	9.6
	Female	293	90.4
Affiliation	Middle school student	42	13.0
	High school student	66	20.4
	University / Graduate student	97	29.9
	Employed / Adult	119	36.7
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000 KRW	70	21.6
	100,000-less than 200,000 KRW	64	19.8
	200,000-less than 300,000 KRW	46	14.2
	300,000-less than 400,000 KRW	41	12.7
	400,000 KRW or more	103	31.8
Total		324	100.0

4.2. Purchase Factors

4.2.1. Purchase Decision Factors for Color Cosmetics

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis regarding the primary factors prioritized by consumers during the cosmetic purchase process.

According to the analysis, 'Price 'was identified as the most significant factor (n=104, 32.1 %).

This was closely followed by 'Efficacy / Effectiveness' (n=101, 31.2 %) and 'Satisfaction after Product Testing' (n=88, 27.2 %). Other factors, such as 'Advertising/Promotion' (n=15, 4.6 %), 'Brand Reliability' (n=11, 3.4 %), and 'Packaging Design' (n=5, 1.5 %), appeared in descending order of frequency. These findings suggest that consumers generally prioritize price and functional efficacy as the most critical determinants in their purchase decision-making process.

4.2.2. Factors Influencing Color Selection in Color Cosmetic Purchases

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis regarding the primary factors considered for color selection during the purchase of color cosmetics.

The analysis revealed that 'Personal color suited to the individual' was the most significant factor, identified by 256 participants (79.0 %).

This was followed by 'Specific colors for expressing individuality and personal taste'(n=26, 8 %), 'Latest trend colors'(n=21, 6.5 %), ‘Colors frequently exposed in advertisements’(n=11, 3.4 %), and ‘Colors recommended by acquaintances’(n=10, 3.1 %). Overall, personal color was the primary consideration for selecting shades, and no statistically significant differences were observed across demographic variables.

These findings align with Son (2023), who reported that younger consumers exhibit a stronger tendency toward value-oriented consumption rooted in self-identity, resulting in higher rates of personal color diagnosis.

Furthermore, Kim(2026) demonstrated that higher awareness of personal color positively

influences both choice intention and consumer satisfaction. The overwhelming emphasis on personal color in color selection suggests that the Zalpha generation engages in 'smart consumption', strategically seeking to ensure purchase success and minimize the risk of failure.

Table 2: Most Important Factors in Cosmetics Purchase Decision (n=324, %)

Category		Factor						
		Advertising Promotion	**Price**	**Package design**	**Usage satisfaction after testing**	**Efficacy Effect**	**Brand reliability**	***χ²(p)***
Age	15-19	4(3.7)	38(35.5)	5(4.7)	26(24.3)	31(29.0)	3(2.8)	15.197 (.125)
	20-24	5(4.3)	38(33.0)	0(.0)	36(31.3)	33(28.7)	3(2.6)	
	25-30	6(5.9)	28(27.5)	0(.0)	26(25.5)	37(36.3)	5(4.9)	
Gender	Male	3(9.7)	12(38.7)	0(.0)	7(22.6)	6(19.4)	3(9.7)	8.668 (.123)
	Female	12(4.1)	92(31.4)	5(1.7)	81(27.6)	95(32.4)	8(2.7)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	1(2.4)	13(31.0)	2(4.8)	11(26.2)	13(31.0)	2(4.8)	16.172 (.371)
	High school student	4(6.1)	25(37.9)	3(4.5)	15(22.7)	18(27.3)	1(1.5)	
	University / Graduate student	6(6.2)	27(27.8)	0(.0)	31(32.0)	29(29.9)	4(4.1)	
	Employed / Adult	4(3.4)	39(32.8)	0(.0)	31(26.1)	41(34.5)	4(3.4)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000 KRW	4(5.7)	32(45.7)	1(1.4)	15(21.4)	16(22.9)	2(2.9)	22.897 (.294)
	100,000 – less than 200,000 KRW	3(4.7)	23(35.9)	2(3.1)	17(26.6)	16(25.0)	3(4.7)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000 KRW	2(4.3)	14(30.4)	0(.0)	11(23.9)	19(41.3)	0(.0)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000 KRW	2(4.9)	10(24.4)	1(2.4)	16(39.0)	12(29.3)	0(.0)	
	400,000 KRW or more	4(3.9)	25(24.3)	1(1.0)	29(28.2)	38(36.9)	6(5.8)	
Total		15(4.6)	104(32.1)	5(1.5)	88(27.2)	101(31.2)	11(3.4)	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Table 3: Key Factors in Color Selection for Color Cosmetics. (n=324, %)

Category		Factor					
		Latest trend colors	Personal color matching oneself	Colors frequently featured in advertisements	Specific colors for expressing individuality /preferences	Colors recommended by acquaintances	$\chi^2(p)$
Age	15-19	6(5.6)	87(81.3)	1(.9)	11(10.3)	2(1.9)	8.988 (.343)
	20-24	5(4.3)	92(80.0)	6(5.2)	9(7.8)	3(2.6)	
	25-30	10(9.8)	77(75.5)	4(3.9)	6(5.9)	5(4.9)	
Gender	Male	4(12.9)	20(64.5)	1(3.2)	3(9.7)	3(9.7)	8.037 (.090)
	Female	17(5.8)	236(80.5)	10(3.4)	23(7.8)	7(2.4)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	2(4.8)	37(88.1)	1(2.4)	2(4.8)	0(.0)	20.510 (.058)
	High school student	5(7.6)	49(74.2)	0(.0)	10(15.2)	2(3.0)	
	University / Graduate student	6(6.2)	78(80.4)	6(6.2)	7(7.2)	0(.0)	
	Employed / Adult	8(6.7)	92(77.3)	4(3.4)	7(5.9)	8(6.7)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000KRW	8(11.4)	52(74.3)	4(5.7)	4(5.7)	2(2.9)	18.849 (.277)
	100,000 – less than 200,000KRW	6(9.4)	46(71.9)	0(.0)	8(12.5)	4(6.3)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000KRW	1(2.2)	38(82.6)	2(4.3)	4(8.7)	1(2.2)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000KRW	3(7.3)	36(87.8)	1(2.4)	1(2.4)	0(.0)	
	400,000KRW or more	3(2.9)	84(81.6)	4(3.9)	9(8.7)	3(2.9)	
Total		21(6.5)	256(79.0)	11(3.4)	26(8.0)	10(3.1)	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

4.3. Information Acquisition Channels

4.3.1. Acquisition of Product Information

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis regarding the acquisition of product information.

The analysis revealed that 'Social Media(TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, etc.)' was the most prevalent channel for acquiring information, identified by 168 participants (51.9 %).

This was followed by 'Friends / Acquaintances'(n=59, 18.2 %), 'Internet Search'(n=54,16.7 %), 'Experience with Samples'(n=24,7.4 %), and 'TV / Advertisements / Dramas'(n=19,5.9 %) in descending order. These findings indicate that the participants primarily obtain general information regarding cosmetics through social media platforms. While social media was the leading information source overall, statistically significant differences were observed based on the participants' age, gender, and affiliation ($p < .05$).

These results align with Hwang (2025), who reported that online and social media channels are the most frequently utilized paths for product information search, with a vast majority of consumers having experience searching for

cosmetic information online. This reflects the inherent characteristics of the Zalpha generations 'Digital Natives' who proficiently and intuitively leverage digital devices and social media for information acquisition

Table 4: General Information Sources for Cosmetics (n=324, %)

Category		General information sources for cosmetics					
		Mass Media (TV, Dramas, Advertisements)	Friends Acquaintances	Internet Search	Social Media	Sample / Trial experience	$\chi^2(p)$
Age	15-19	3(2.8)	25(23.4)	9(8.4)	65(60.7)	5(4.7)	25.285** (.001)
	20-24	5(4.3)	17(14.8)	22(19.1)	64(55.7)	7(6.1)	
	25-30	11(10.8)	17(16.7)	23(22.5)	39(38.2)	12(11.8)	
Gender	Male	4(12.9)	5(16.1)	10(32.3)	10(32.3)	2(6.5)	10.558* (.032)
	Female	15(5.1)	54(18.4)	44(15.0)	158(53.9)	22(7.5)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	0(.0)	12(28.6)	2(4.8)	27(64.3)	1(2.4)	21.446* (.044)
	High school student	4(6.1)	13(19.7)	7(10.6)	38(57.6)	4(6.1)	
	University / Graduate student	4(4.1)	15(15.5)	19(19.6)	51(52.6)	8(8.2)	
	Employed / Adult	11(9.2)	19(16.0)	26(21.8)	52(43.7)	11(9.2)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000KRW	5(7.1)	17(24.3)	13(18.6)	32(45.7)	3(4.3)	19.366 (.250)
	100,000 – less than 200,000KRW	4(6.3)	12(18.8)	5(7.8)	36(56.3)	7(10.9)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000KRW	1(2.2)	10(21.7)	9(19.6)	22(47.8)	4(8.7)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000KRW	6(14.6)	5(12.2)	6(14.6)	22(53.7)	2(4.9)	
	400,000KRW or more	3(2.9)	15(14.6)	21(20.4)	56(54.4)	8(7.8)	
Total		19(5.9)	59(18.2)	54(16.7)	168(51.9)	24(7.4)	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

4.3.2. Acquisition of Information on Makeup Techniques

Table 5 presents the results of the analysis regarding the information sources for color makeup techniques.

The analysis revealed that 'Instagram Reels' was the most dominant information source, identified by 109 participants (33.6 %). This was followed by 'YouTube Shorts' (n=95, 29.3 %), 'Friends or acquaintances'(n=47, 14.5 %), and 'TikTok'(n=38, 11.7 %) in descending order. These findings indicate that the participants primarily obtain information regarding color makeup techniques through Instagram Reels. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were observed in information-seeking behavior based on the participants' age, affiliation, and average monthly personal disposable income ($p < .001$).

Regarding age, participants in the 15–19and 25–30groups primarily sourced information through Instagram Reels, whereas those in the 20–24group exhibited a preference for YouTube Shorts, showing a distinct contrast. In terms of affiliation, middle school students, high school students, and office workers/adults generally utilized Instagram Reels; however, college and graduate students relied more heavily on YouTube Shorts($p < .001$).

The study confirmed that 'short-form' video content—ranging from 15 seconds to one minute on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok—serves as a primary information source. These findings suggest that the Zalpha generation perceives the process of acquiring information on color cosmetics and sharing makeup techniques as a form of online 'play culture 'Furthermore, it is inferred that they strategically utilize short-form content to engage in a process of information

Table 5: Information Sources for Color Makeup Techniques (n=324, %)

Category		Information Sources for Color Makeup Methods					
		TikTok	Instagram Reels	YouTube Shorts	Friends Acquaintances	Other	$\chi^2(p)$
Age	15-19	22(20.6)	39(36.4)	19(17.8)	20(18.7)	7(6.5)	35.864*** (.000)
	20-24	5(4.3)	31(27.0)	52(45.2)	13(11.3)	14(12.2)	
	25-30	11(10.8)	39(38.2)	24(23.5)	14(13.7)	14(13.7)	
Gender	Male	3(9.7)	11(35.5)	6(19.4)	7(22.6)	4(12.9)	2.999 (.558)
	Female	35(11.9)	98(33.4)	89(30.4)	40(13.7)	31(10.6)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	9(21.4)	15(35.7)	4(9.5)	12(28.6)	2(4.8)	43.530 *** (.000)
	High school student	14(21.2)	23(34.8)	15(22.7)	8 (12.1)	6(9.1)	
	University / Graduate student	5(5.2)	26(26.8)	46(47.4)	9(9.3)	11(11.3)	
	Employed / Adult	10(8.4)	45(37.8)	30(25.2)	18(15.1)	16(13.4)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000KRW	16(22.9)	18(25.7)	11(15.7)	17(24.3)	8(11.4)	47.396*** (.000)
	100,000 – less than 200,000KRW	9(14.1)	28(43.8)	14(21.9)	7(10.9)	6(9.4)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000KRW	3(6.5)	19(41.3)	8(17.4)	10(21.7)	6(13.0)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000KRW	5(12.2)	15(36.6)	14(34.1)	4(9.8)	3(7.3)	
	400,000KRW or more	5(4.9)	29(28.2)	48(46.6)	9(8.7)	12(11.7)	
Total		38(11.7)	109(33.6)	95(29.3)	47(14.5)	35(10.8)	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

cross-verification.

Kim(2023) reported that consumers in their 20s and 30s utilize short-form content to verify peer opinions and engage in social interaction, noting that exposure to positive information significantly bolsters cosmetic purchase intentions. This phenomenon underscores the instantaneous and concise consumption traits of the Zalpha generation, who are characterized by multifaceted, digital-centric consumption patterns.

4.4. Online and Offline Purchasing Behavior

4.4.1. Primary Purchase Channels

Table 6 presents the results of the analysis regarding the primary purchase channels for cosmetics.

The analysis revealed that 'a similar preference for both online and offline channels' was the most frequent response, representing 140 participants (43.2 %). This was followed by 'offline stores'(n=111,34.3 %) and 'online shopping malls'(n=73, 22.5 %) in descending order, indicating that consumers generally tend to utilize both online and offline platforms for their purchases.

Statistically significant differences were observed based on the participants' age ($p < .05$). While a similar preference for both channels remained the dominant response across all age groups, a distinct contrast emerged: younger participants exhibited a higher tendency to utilize offline stores, where older participants were more likely to use online shopping malls.

Table 6: Primary Purchase Channels for Cosmetics (n=324, %)

Category		Variable			
		Online shopping malls	Offline stores	Both online and offline are similar	$\chi^2(p)$
Age	15-19	16(15.0)	45(42.1)	46(43.0)	9.832*(.043)
	20-24	25(21.7)	38(33.0)	52(45.2)	
	25-30	32(31.4)	28(27.5)	42(41.2)	
Gender	Male	7(22.6)	13(41.9)	11(35.5)	1.063(.588)
	Female	66(22.5)	98(33.4)	129(44.0)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	5(11.9)	20(47.6)	17(40.5)	7.425(.283)
	High school student	12 (18.2)	25(37.9)	29(43.9)	
	University / Graduate student	24(24.7)	29(29.9)	44(45.4)	
	Employed / Adult	32(26.9)	37(31.1)	50(42.0)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	Less than 100,000KRW	14(20.0)	27(38.6)	29(41.4)	12.483(.131)
	100,000 – less than 200,000KRW	15(23.4)	29(45.3)	20(31.3)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000KRW	6(13.0)	18(39.1)	22(47.8)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000KRW	12(29.3)	10(24.4)	19(46.3)	
	400,000KRW or more	26(25.2)	27(26.2)	50(48.5)	
Total		73(22.5)	111(34.3)	140(43.2)	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$,

4.4.2. Online Purchase Channels

Table 7 presents the results of the analysis regarding the primary online purchase channels among the 213 participants who utilize online platforms for their purchases.

The overall analysis of online purchase channels indicated that 'specialized beauty platforms (e.g., Olive Young)'were the most prevalent, accounted for by 153 participants (71.8 %).

This was followed by 'comprehensive online platforms (e.g., Coupang, G-market, Naver)'(n=54, 25.4 %) and 'social media-based individual sellers (e.g., Instagram, TikTok)' (n=6, 2.8 %) in descending order.

These results suggest that participants primarily rely on specialized beauty platforms for their online cosmetic purchases.

Regarding general characteristics, statistically significant differences were observed according to age and affiliation ($p < .05$). In terms of age, while all groups primarily used specialized beauty platforms (e.g., Olive Young), a distinct trend emerged where older participants exhibited a relatively higher usage of comprehensive online platforms.

Similarly, by affiliation, although specialized beauty platforms remained the dominant choice for all groups, office workers and adults showed a comparatively higher reliance on comprehensive online plat forms than other affiliation groups.

4.4.3. Primary Offline Purchase Channels

Table 8 presents the results of the analysis regarding the primary offline purchase channels among the 251 participants who utilize offline platforms for their purchases.

The analysis revealed that ‘Health & Beauty(H&B) stores, such as Olive Young’, was the most prevalent offline channel, identified by 198 participants(78.9 %). This was followed by ‘Daiso’(n=32, 12.7 %), ‘Large marts’(n=7, 2.8 %), ‘Department stores’ and ‘Road shops (Brand stores)’ (each n=6, 2.4 %), and ‘Convenience stores’ (n=2, 0.8 %) in descending order.

These findings indicate a clear dominance of H&B stores in the offline purchase landscape. No statistically significant differences were observed across the general characteristics of the participants ($p > .05$).

In summary, the purchasing behavior for color cosmetics among the participants exhibits a distinct omni-channel trend, with a similar preference for both online and offline channels reaching 43.2 %. While H&B stores (78.9 %) remained the leading offline channel, the emergence of Daiso (12.7 %) and convenience stores (0.8 %) as viable purchase points suggests a significant diversification of retail channels for the Zalpha generation.

In a study by Jung (2022) regarding the cosmetics purchasing behavior of the MZ generation, internet shopping malls accounted for the largest share at 54.3%, followed by brand road shops (23.0%) and H&B stores (12.9%). These findings exhibit a notable discrepancy with the results of the present study.

Conversely, Son (2024) reported that the purchase rates for color cosmetics among the MZ generation were highest in H&B stores (59.7 %), followed by online shopping malls (19.4 %), open markets/social commerce (8.4 %), and department stores/large marts (7.5 %). These results are partially congruent with the findings of this study, particularly regarding the high preference and response rate for H&B stores as a primary purchase channel.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the purchasing behavior and decision factors of the Zalpha generation, who have emerged as a new powerhouse in the K-beauty market, and identified how these factors manifest in their actual online and offline consumption of color cosmetics.

The findings revealed that price and efficacy/effect are the primary factors influencing their purchase decisions, reflecting a utilitarian and autonomous consumption attitude that prioritizes practicality and affordability. Notably, in color selection, the overwhelming preference for personal color indicates a strong tendency toward "fail-proof" consumption, where participants seek to minimize purchase risk.

As the Zalpha generation rises as a dominant force in the K-beauty market, they are reshaping the retail landscape. Value-oriented channels such as Daiso and convenience stores are evolving into new "beauty land marks" and "digital-physical play grounds "for this demographic. This study confirms that Zalpha consumers exhibit strategic and "smart" consumption patterns, leveraging both online and offline channels to maximize utility. The growth of cost-effective channels like Daiso further highlights the strengthening of utilitarian beauty consumption.

This research is significant as it provides an integrated analysis of the Zalpha generation's behavior. These findings are expected to serve as fundamental data for establishing target marketing strategies and developing new products in the beauty industry.

Table 7: Mainly Used Online Purchase Channels (n=213, %)

Category		Variable			
		General online platforms	Specialized cosmetics platforms	SNS-based individual sellers	$\chi^2(p)$
Age	15-19	9(14.5)	51(82.3)	2(3.2)	10.447* (.034)
	20-24	17(22.1)	58(75.3)	2(2.6)	
	25-30	28(37.8)	44(59.5)	2(2.7)	
Gender	Male	8(44.4)	10(55.6)	0(.0)	4.106 (.128)
	Female	46(23.6)	143(73.3)	6(3.1)	
Affiliation	Middle school student	4(18.2)	16(72.7)	2(9.1)	13.866* (.031)
	High school student	6(14.6)	35(85.4)	0(.0)	
	University / Graduate student	14(20.6)	52(76.5)	2(2.9)	
	Employed / Adult	30(36.6)	50(61.0)	2(2.4)	
Average monthly personal disposable income (Allowance, Salary)	less than 100,000KRW	9(20.9)	32(74.4)	2(4.7)	5.354 (.719)
	100,000 – less than 200,000KRW	7(20.0)	28(80.0)	0(.0)	
	200,000 – less than 300,000KRW	6(21.4)	21(75.0)	1(3.6)	
	300,000 – less than 400,000KRW	9(29.0)	22(71.0)	0(.0)	
	400,000KRW or more	23(30.3)	50(65.8)	3(3.9)	
Total		54(25.4)	153(71.8)	6(2.8)	

*$p < .05$,

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