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Cosmetics consumption behaviour among men and women and the importance in products indication and treatment adherence

Comportamento de homens e mulheres quanto ao consumo de cosméticos e a importância na indicação de produtos e adesão ao tratamento

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Cosmetics stands out in commerce, not only in Brazil but also worldwide. There is great need for knowledge on buying motivations of consumers for the development of better-targeted products and improved adherence to dermatological treatments.

Objective: To know the cosmetic consumption habits and provide a link from the pharmaceutical with the medical area.

Methods: An analytical observational study, cross-sectional, was conducted by questionnaire.

Results: Main change in male skin is oiliness; in women, besides oiliness, there is concern with blemishes. The consumption of hygiene products is unanimous in both sexes. Women are more concerned with the treatment and prevention of sun damage. The vast majority of women use anti-acne products and makeup. Hair products have the same sales trend for both men and women, but this is not observed among products for skin.

Conclusions: Men and women have different motivations when buying cosmetics. The way consumers relate with products has changed dramatically and they are seeking to express their individuality in society. This reflects a need for medical knowledge of such motivations in order to improve patients' adherence to treatment.

Keywords: cosmetics; habits; questionnaires; data collection; behavior

RESUMO

Introdução: Os cosméticos apresentam-se em destaque no comércio não só no Brasil, mas mundialmente. Há grande necessidade do conhecimento das motivações de compra dos consumidores para o desenvolvimento de produtos mais bem direcionados e melhora na adesão de tratamentos dermatológicos.

Objetivo: Conhecer os hábitos de consumo cosmético e fornecer um link da área farmacêutica com a área médica.

Métodos: Estudo observacional analítico do tipo transversal, realizado por meio de questionário.

Resultados: A principal alteração na pele masculina é a oleosidade, nas mulheres além dessa há a preocupação com manchas. O consumo de produtos de higiene é unânime em ambos os sexos. As mulheres se mostram mais preocupadas com o tratamento e prevenção de danos solares. A maioria das mulheres utiliza produtos antiacne e maquiagens. Produtos para cabelo apresentam a mesma tendência de vendas tanto para homens quanto para mulheres, não sendo o mesmo observado entre os produtos para pele.

Conclusões: Homens e mulheres apresentam diferentes motivações no momento de adquirir produtos cosméticos. A forma de relacionamento do consumidor com os produtos tem mudado expressivamente, e ele vem buscando expressar sua individualidade perante a sociedade. Isso reflete a necessidade do conhecimento médico de tais motivações a fim de melhorar a adesão dos pacientes ao tratamento.

Palavras-chave: cosméticos; hábitos; questionários; coleta de dados; comportamento

INTRODUCTION

The study of consumer behavior focuses on understanding the habits underpinning their actions in different situations involving purchases and consumption. Nevertheless, analyzing their behavior isolatedly is not enough, and understanding why people act in a certain way becomes crucial. Consumers of different products have different characteristics, meaning that it is critical to understand the desires and needs of consumers in different market segments in light of the relevant product.¹

Currently, cosmetic products stand out in the market place not only in Brazil, but also worldwide. This is due to the more active and steady participation of these products' consumers, who began to use them more often. Due to the high exposure – both in the media and in homes – this type of product became the subject of academic and market research within several areas of study, in special in marketing.²

The cosmetics industry is composed of three major segments: cosmetics (linked to the concept of products for improving the appearance), personal care and fragrance products.¹

The Brazilian cosmetic industry has grown considerably, having surpassed France and Japan, and becoming the world's second largest market for cosmetic products in 2009. In light of this fact, it became important to understand whether the consumers' motivation is strictly related to improving their appearance and beauty or it is also associated with the improvement in their quality of life and skin's health.

There is a big conjuncture change in the way people relate with their personal image and there has been a steady growth of this consumer sector in the cosmetic industry. In addition, the increased access of male consumers to the cosmetic market reflects a possible improvement in their quality of life, since many health problems directly related to the skin are ignored by that consumer segment due to their resistance to treatment with cosmeceutical products.

When seeking to understand consumer behavior, it is necessary to bear in mind what is underpinning that behavior, who is involved and which is the socioeconomic context. Behavior is closely related to stimuli from different sources, and the consumer's response is processed according to the context. For Martins,³ the factors that motivate consumers to buy can be distributed into five different groups: anthropological or cultural, environmental, organic, psychological, and socioeconomic.

In the 80's, a reconstruction of the male and female models took place through the symbology involving their clothing, gestures, attitudes and the relationship with one's own body and sexuality; there was a change in the pattern of behavior linked to gender. In the face of the women's achievements, men ended up losing their maximum function of being the family provider – inherited from a patriarchal society – and began to engage in a process of transformation of their social *persona* and intimacy, becoming more participating at home and capable of progressively sharing responsibilities with women.⁴

Furthermore, men currently believe that being apparently cleaner, neater and well dressed implies better job opportunities, in addition deriving satisfaction from the perception that

they are building their own image. While men are concerned with their appearance, they can acknowledge their weaknesses, their susceptibilities and show that they need care – something rarely seen among men up until the mid-80's. Their concern for health and beauty is such that the cosmetics industry saw a large increase in the demand for products and started to develop lines specific for the male segment.⁵

METHODS

Aiming at understanding the consumption habits regarding the cosmetic products market, an analytical observational cross-sectional study was carried out. After receiving the approval by the Research Ethics Committee CEP/FCFRP n.303, a mixed questionnaire was prepared with 15 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. The questionnaire was applied to the studied individuals, with questions about their social status, cosmetic consumption culture and some health habits, such as use of sunscreen.

The study population consisted of male and female consumers of cosmetics. Individuals who did not reside in Brazil were excluded. The sampling method used was the stratified random group sampling of male and female individuals. All participants answered all questions in the questionnaire. The obtained answers were validated, having their consistency and integrity confirmed.

RESULTS

The questionnaire comparing the purchasing motivations, as well as the way through which consumers interact with cosmetic products was applied to the population study, which consisted of 101 people (49 men and 52 women). The participants' ages concentrated in the range of 18 to 35 years, characterizing the population as young.

As for the participants' income distribution, it was possible to notice a strong concentration in the group earning up to six times the minimum wage (R\$ 788,00 in 2015), which may be related to the fact that respondents were mainly young people and adults up to 35 years old (Table 1).

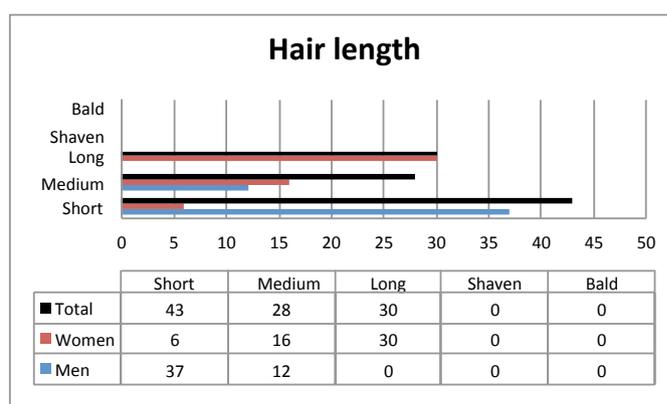
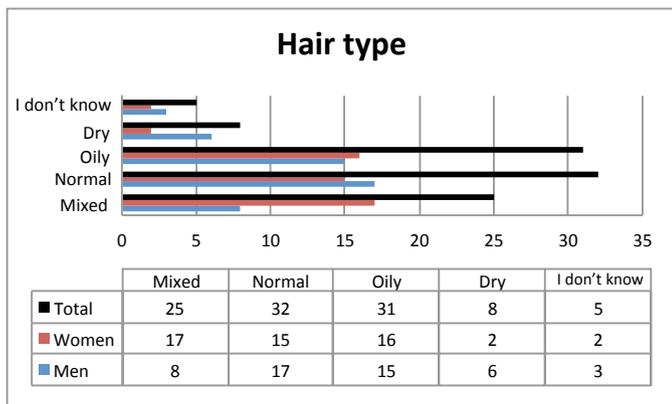
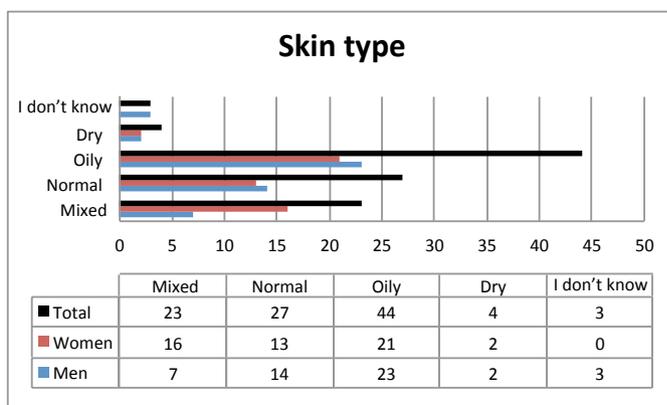
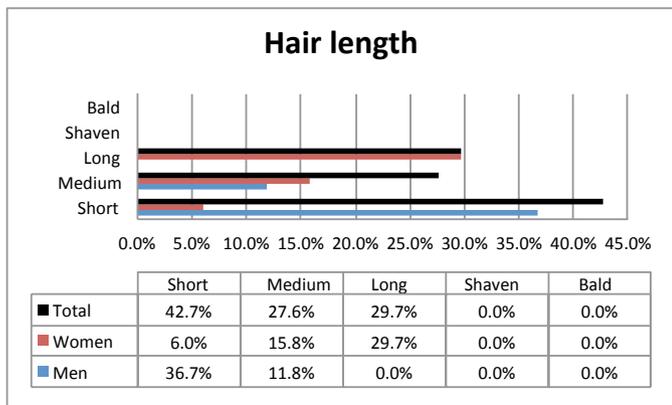
Respondents were asked about physical characteristics regarding their skin and hair. It was possible to observe a greater number of male respondents with oily skin and normal, short and brown hair. As for women, it was possible to note that most of them classified their skin as oily, and their hair as mixed, brown and long. Overall, it was possible to notice that the respondents have mainly oily or mixed hair and skin, a very

Income	Men	Women	Total
Less than 3 minimum wages	15,8%	26,7%	42,6%
From 3 to 6 minimum wages	16,8%	11,9%	28,7%
From 6 to 10 minimum wages	9,7%	8,8%	18,8%
More than 10 minimum wages	5,8%	3,9%	9,9%

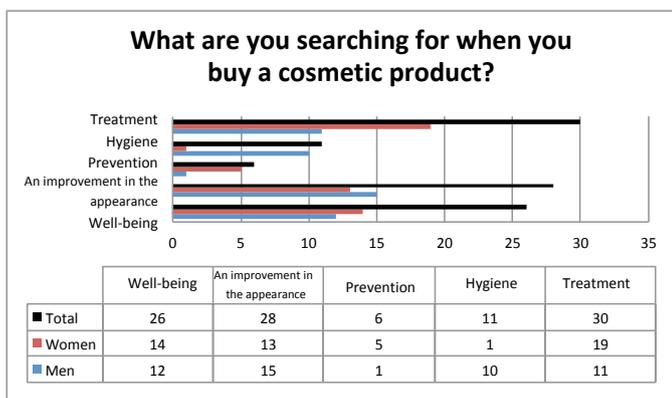
frequently present characteristic among Brazilians. The data on the skin and hair are in Graph 1.

This type of information is important for the dermatologist, in conjunction with a pharmacist, to decide on the best treatment for the individual. This becomes even more relevant in light of the fact that different skin or hair types have different physical and chemical characteristics and composition, which will even influence the form of absorption of the active principles. Thus, dermatological prescriptions can be made more personalized and efficient.

In order to understand the differences in the motivations for purchasing cosmetic products, two questions were asked in the questionnaire: “What are you searching for when you buy a cosmetic product?” and “What do you take into consideration when choosing a cosmetic product?” Although the questions seem very similar, they are important to analyze what consumers conceptually expect from a cosmetic product versus what makes consumers to look for a specific, already commercially available product. The data collected are present in Graphs 2 and 3.



GRAPH 1: Distribution of the interviewees' skin and hair characteristics



GRAPH 2: Consumers' motivations when buying cosmetic products



GRAPH 3: What influences consumers in their choice of cosmetic products

When questioning about what makes consumers to look for a specific cosmetic product, the following picture was obtained: women are more influenced by brands, followed by indication from friends and price, while men are mainly influenced by price, brand and medical indication (Graph 3).

Regarding customer loyalty, the majority of women were little loyal to brands, enjoying varying manufacturers. On the other hand, among men this trend was balanced, according to the data presented in Graph 4.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents should mention up to three brands of cosmetic products that they could recall at the moment. Roughly 60 brands were referred, with 43 arising only once or twice in the sample space. Brands that were mentioned three or more times are shown in Graph 5.

The L'Oreal group stands out as the leader in number of citations, as well as its various cosmeceutical product lines, such as Vichy and La Roche-Posay. Brazilian brands were poorly recalled; with only Natura and O Boticário groups being cited.

The main facial alteration that bothered male respondents was oiliness. Women described cases of oiliness, however problems with spots are also among the main complaints of the interviewees, despite being young. The data is depicted in Graph 6.

Respondents mentioned all cosmetic products that were in use at the time of the study or had been previously used at any stage of their lives. For a better analysis of the data, products for hair, skin and personal care were segregated. Respondents could choose any number of products (it is important to note that there is a greater variety of cosmetic products used by women). The data obtained are in Graphs 7, 8 and 9.

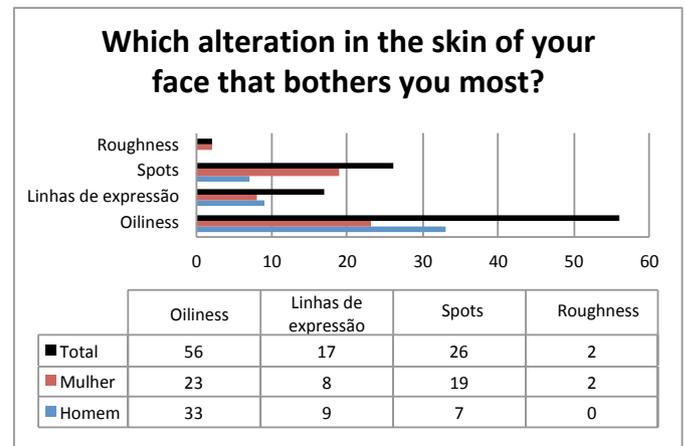
The presence of personal care products is very significant in both genders. Regarding products for the hair, it was possible to notice that men use a wide range of products. A result that has drawn attention is the intense use of hair conditioners by the male public – even in light of the fact that most have short hair. Men more commonly use hair styling creams and gels.

Women use hair moisturizing masks and fixing sprays in greater quantities. The use of lotions for hair loss by men is sporadic, mainly due to the fact that the studied public corresponded to young men, who do not usually seek treatment at the first signs of baldness. These individuals usually seek improvements in their appearance and while the actual problem does not fully arise, male consumers do not seek treatment.

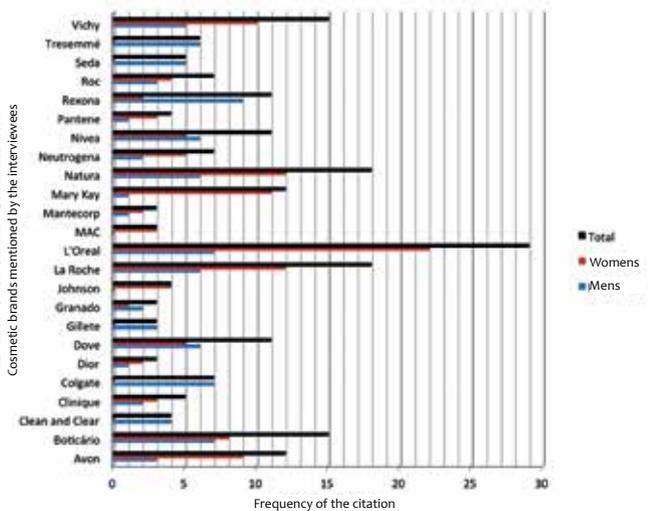
Graph 8 shows that the consumption trend is similar in both genders, nonetheless with different proportions, meaning



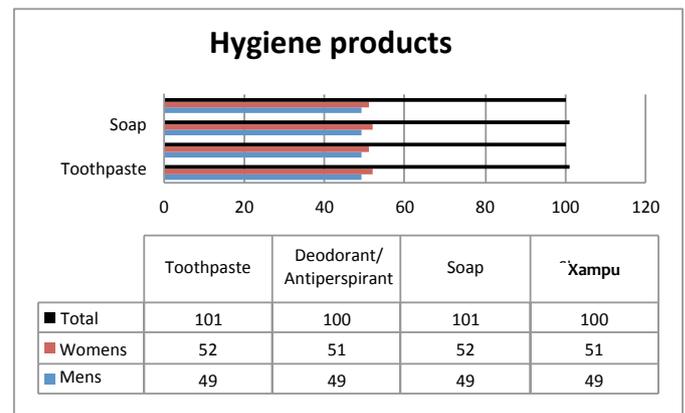
GRAPH 4: Consumers' loyalty to cosmetic brands



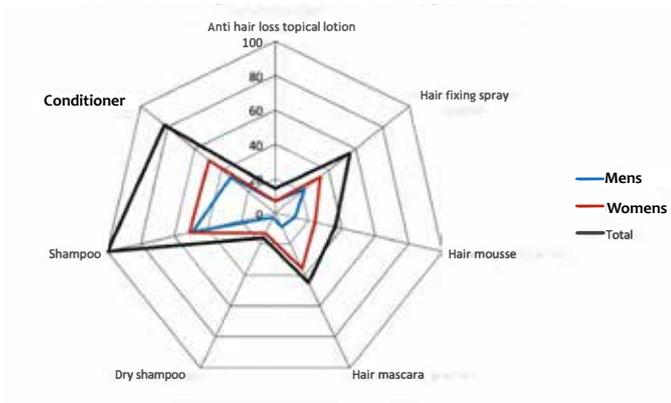
GRAPH 6: Alterations in the interviewee's skin



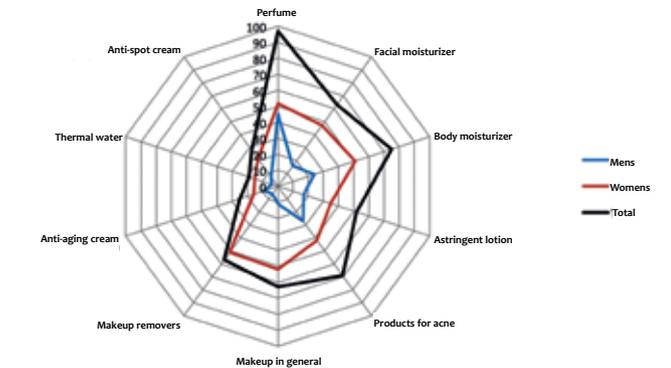
GRAPH 5: Cosmetic brands mentioned more than twice by interviewees



GRAPH 7: Consumption of personal hygiene products in absolute values



GRAPH 8: consumption of cosmetic products for the hair



GRAPH 9: Consumption of cosmetic products for the skin

that men and women tend to purchase the same type of product for the hair, proportionally in greater or more modest quantities. The behavior observed regarding products for the hair is not the same in products for the skin. As shown in Graph 9, there were differences in consumption trends. Women, for instance, tend to consume much greater quantities of makeup, removers and facial moisturizers than men. There is a strong presence of perfumery in this type of consumption, with almost unanimous answers. The fact that more than 20% of men claimed to have already used some sort of makeup such as eyeshadows, correctives or bases is also noteworthy.

Another interesting finding relates to the use of products for shaving by men: 80% of respondents claimed to use shaving cream while only 49% claimed to use after shave lotions. In line with this, the development of product lines for shaving should focus on the production of shaving creams and / or increase the investment in improving the quality of after shave lotions in order to improve the acceptance of the latter by consumers.

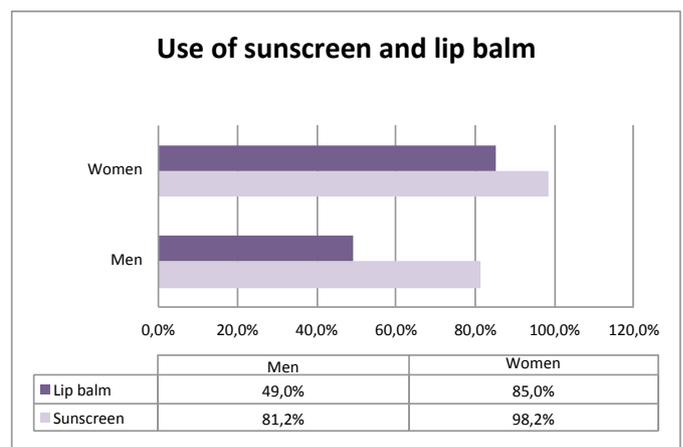
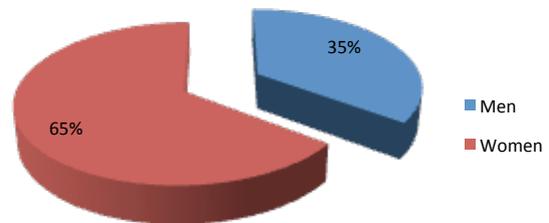
Regarding sunscreens, the questionnaire provides the following picture: women are more concerned, making more use of the products than men, as can be seen in Graph 10. A surprising finding is that roughly 20% of men claim they have never used sunscreens.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results obtained and described in the present study, it was possible to observe that in general men are concerned with improving their appearance, improving their well-being and receiving treatment, in this order of priority. On the other hand, women have receiving treatment as their main motivation, followed by improving their well-being and improving their appearance. These results confirm what is observed in the macro society, since the search for improved masculine appearance is mainly related with men’s lack of self confidence towards how to present themselves regarding a new job, their social status or partner. The questions related to the motivation for purchasing are crucial to understand consumer behavior, however they become even more important as tools for the dermatologist to understand how their patients behave. For example, it is possible to observe that the brand, price and medical indications are the three main considerations at the moment of obtaining a cosmetic product. Thus, these are three important points relevant to the dermatologist at the moment of the prescription.

Moreover, treatment, well-being and improvement of the appearance are the most popular factors when consumers are purchasing cosmetics. The understanding of the consumer’s profile by dermatologists, combined with the knowledge of the trends in the cosmetic market, is extremely important for the prescription to be more precise, according to the patient’s profile.

Do you usually use sunscreen?



GRAPH 10: Interviewees’ sun protection habits.

Men seek to build a receptive self-image that is capable of assisting them to achieve their goals. In addition, lifestyle has been disconnected from sexual orientation, increasingly becoming an expression of their individuality.⁵ In turn, women are concerned with the future impacts that a certain alteration in their skin can cause, seeking cosmetic products that are not only associated with an improvement in the appearance, but also with the correction and / or prevention of specific changes, such as formulations that reduce the skin's oiliness, for example.

Although women complain about spots, they do not make substantial use of creams for treating them, usually making more use of products for acne beforehand, despite the fact that this type of alteration is more common in men. This consumption is driven by their vanity, suggesting that women pay more attention to changes in their skin, noticing them as soon as they arise.⁶ This information is relevant to the medical public for women often do not have knowledge about possible treatments for the spots about which they complain. Moreover, these cutaneous alterations may have different origins and only an effective dermatologic examination can lead to an effective treatment.

The cosmetic product brand appeal became evident with the findings about the purchase motivation. This is in line with studies indicating that advertising is one of the main factors influencing the purchase of cosmetic products⁷ combined with the perception of body image. However, the influence of price, coupled with the fact that women take into account indication from friends or blogs at the time of purchase, show that they may no longer maintain their loyalty to the brand in case they find a better product offered by a competing manufacturer.

A more loyal and conservative behavior is observed among men, meaning that from the moment they find the product they were looking for, they halt the search process. This confirms the notion that men are always practical, even when taking care of their appearance, while women prefer to prolong the time leading to the moment of choice.⁸ This shows that, despite the fact that men are approaching an area that has been traditionally considered exclusive of women, gender differences still linger.

It is important to note that brands that are more present in supermarkets and drugstores, such as Nivea, Dove and Rexona, are more remembered by men than by women, with the same being observed regarding personal care products. *Tres-Semmé* is an essentially feminine brand and advertising focusing on this public, however it was mentioned only by men. Brands found in supermarkets are the most remembered by the male audience. This is in line with previous studies showing that men often buy their cosmetic products in supermarkets, pharmacies and drugstores.⁹

Women seem much more likely to spend more on cosmetic products, and prefer to follow suggestions from friends rather than medical indications, with the opposite being observed among men. These behaviors are very present in today's society, nonetheless it is possible to notice a growing number of blogs, magazines and Internet sites responsible for spreading the use of cosmetic products among the male audience. This is a

trend already established in Europe and that will not take long to reach the conceited Brazilian masculine market.¹⁰

It is important to note that knowledge of this trend is critical to dermatologists, with a view to a possible dissemination channel for dermatological knowledge. Physicians should be alert to possible Internet websites that can assist with correct dermatologic information.

Although Brazil is considered the second largest cosmetic products consumer market and the world leader in growth in this sector, few national companies were recalled. These companies should explore strategies and specificities in the composition of the skin and hair of Brazilians, providing specialized products.¹¹ Notably, products developed abroad cannot fully be adapted to the skin of Brazilian consumers due to the particularities of the population.

Understanding which brands the consumer market prefers helps to prescribe cosmeceutic products, and increases patients' adherence to the treatment. Some brands, such those of the L'Oreal group, make use of clinical efficacy studies, which may partly explain their intense presence among the cited brands *vis a vis* their relatively high cost. Knowing how the product is manufactured and the company's integrity, combined with the preferences of the consumer market, can assist towards a more effective adherence to the treatment.

Correlating data from the present study with previous ones¹², it was possible to observe that the Brazilian cosmetic industry needs to invest in strengthening its identity through marketing strategies, pricing policies that are aligned with what consumers attribute to the products, in addition to market knowledge. In this manner, the Brazilian companies will be able to reach more consumers and supply cosmetic products consistent with the local population.

Personal care products have almost unanimous use among the population. This cosmetic market segment is very lucrative and affects the population in an almost homogenous way. The industry as a whole, and in special research and development teams, should be aware of this fact, leveraging opportunities within this sector.

Men reported the use of products that are traditionally considered feminine, such as makeup for instance. This finding demonstrates a disconnecting trend in gender constructions. Men are more concerned with their overall presentation than with the premeditated judgment of their spending habits.

Additionally, when examining cosmetic products, the solar protection and impact it causes on the quality of life and long-term physical appearance cannot be left aside.¹³ The use of sunscreen is the main prevention against more severe consequences, such as wrinkles or loss of the natural elasticity of the skin, in addition to skin cancer, which affects an important percentage of the Brazilian population, given that Brazil is a tropical country with high rates of sunlight incidence.

There are studies suggesting that the Brazilian population is aware of the risks associated with the exposure to the sun and the importance of photoprotection. Nevertheless, individuals struggle to create long-term habits of using sunscreen.¹⁴ A fifth

of the male population stated to have never used sunscreen. This data is consistent with previous studies showing that men use sunscreen less frequently than women.¹⁵ This kind of behavior reveals a challenge to be addressed: photoprotection awareness campaigns should target the male audience more efficiently and stimulate the habit of applying sunscreen.

Knowledge of such behavior is of significant importance to the dermatologist regarding skin cancer prevention campaigns, for instance. In addition, it helps the physician when prescribing sunscreens, for the approach to male audiences must be more concise and robust.

CONCLUSIONS

Men and women have different motivations when buying cosmetics. While the first are more concerned with the improvement in the appearance, along with a good cost/benefit ratio, the latter are more concerned with products associated with treatments and seek indications of new brands and products from friends. The way consumers relate to products has been changing dramatically, while people are seeking more authentic ways to express their individuality in society, regardless of pre-established standards.

It is possible to realize a pattern of behavior in which people increasingly become protagonists of their own wills – and not necessarily seek to appropriate ideals typical of certain social classes. Caused by a less polarized, hyper-connected and more democratic world, this behavior opens the possibility that people not only have access to common references regardless of their origin, class, gender or age, but also find ways to authentically voice their individuality.

Having the understanding of such data may seem exclusive to marketing activities, nevertheless it reveals a range of important information, enabling dermatologists to perform more modern and effective therapeutic approaches. Having knowledge of the patients' behavior means to understand which impacts a treatment can have in their quality of life. Moreover, this knowledge helps the physician to understand the more modern and humane therapeutic approaches. ●

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