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Cosmetics industry: an analysis of marketing and mass communication strategies.

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Introduction

From an economic point of view, the cosmetic industry is an important market, in 2017 it was valued, at a global level, around \$532b and is expected to grow even more in the following years. Therefore, I decided to write this dissertation to analyze the factors that contribute to this constant growth from an economic but also social, historical, psychological and cultural perspective.

My thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first one, entitled ‘The beginning of the cosmetic industry’, describes firstly, how cosmetic substances were used in ancient societies and for which cultural and historical reasons. Secondly, from the past up to the present, it analyzes which factors contributed to the creation of the cosmetic industry and the development of a mass market for cosmetics. Lastly, it presents the psychological aspects that influence consumers’ behavior when it comes to buying cosmetic products.

The second chapter, entitled “Globalization of beauty ideals”, describes how the cosmetic industry achieved worldwide success from 1950 to the present. In this chapter an important aspect of e-commerce – i.e. if consumers prefer to buy cosmetic products online and why – is analyzed together with the emergence of beauty subscription-based services and the preference for standardization or adaptation in cosmetic product advertising. Lastly, the chapter outlines how marketing claims on more sustainable and cleaner products create successful cosmetic trends.

The third chapter, entitled “Worldwide advertising social media and influencer marketing”, covers one of the most relevant topics for the cosmetic industry in the last few years, which is the use of social media and influencers to create a deeper connection and two-way communication between cosmetic brands and consumers. The first part of this chapter analyzes how the beauty community is structured; the strengths of beauty influencers; how influencers are becoming more and more important for cosmetic brands and members of the beauty community, their abilities to engage consumers and influence people’s opinions about cosmetic products. In the second part, a comparison between beauty influencers or celebrities’ endorsement is presented to understand similarities and differences in driving consumers’ engagement and in which contexts this occurs. At the end of the third chapter examples of successful beauty channels and of partnership with cosmetic brands are provided.

My thesis is divided into three main chapters to describe the development of the cosmetic industry from a marketing point of view, and, at the same time, the changes in the social and cultural role of women in this market from ancient societies to the present day. The cosmetic industry started for and thanks to women. As explained in the first chapter, the industry not only values the appearance of women but also their social independence. The cosmetic industry allowed many women to work and to become independent, slowly changing their role in society in a positive way. The use of cosmetic products was, and is, a symbol of freedom and self-expression both for individuals and for a society. This concept is also expressed in the last chapter, where Social Media such as Instagram and YouTube are posited as means of communication that give women the opportunity to inspire and support each other. In the beauty community women who need advice as to the use of cosmetics to express their identity coexist with women who inspire other women to play with their self-expression in a sort of educational yet creative way. Many of those beauty gurus have made a successful career out of this experience. They are able to do what women used to do in the early 1900s, helping other women to solve their problems and meet their needs, inspire them, while achieving social and financial independence.

From a marketing perspective, it was important to analyze and compare, firstly, the tools and communication strategies used to make beauty ideals known to women in the past and in the present. Secondly, a comparison of psychological, cultural and social factors which influenced consumers' purchasing behavior throughout the development of this industry is provided. and changes in shopping habits for in cosmetic products over time – comparing the preference for a shopping experience in a specialized retailer or an online one – are analysed. Thirdly, in relation to the previous point, it was important to understand how product advertising, products' packaging, combined with language and especially key words shape a brand's image and enhance awareness of it. Lastly, the most relevant aspect to take into consideration, from a marketing perspective, was how the relationship between cosmetic brands and consumers changed and improved thanks to Social Media.

With regard to the cosmetic industry, the communication between brands and consumers and the expression of a brand's image is fundamental for success in the industry. The switch from a direct, one-way communication to a two-way one thanks to Social Media, changed not only the way in which consumers perceive a cosmetic brand, but also how consumers get informed about it, and how they get to know about a product or a beauty technique before purchasing cosmetics. This suggests that traditional

advertising and traditional marketing strategies are no longer sufficient to create and maintain new customers.

Therefore, in the following pages a research is presented on the marketing and mass communication strategies that have made and make this industry grow more and more, taking into consideration the most recent and up-to-date scientific literature but also images and examples from Social Media websites.

1. The beginning of the cosmetics industry

The term ‘cosmetics’ refers to any kind of substance that is applied to the body and/or the face in order to improve its appearance. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the origin of the term goes back to the 17th century and it has different possible roots, such as the “French *cosmétique*, from Greek *kosmētikos*, from *kosmein* ‘arrange or adorn’, from *kosmos* ‘order or adornment’”¹.

However, the art of beautifying the body dates back to ancient Egypt and even before. There are many reasons why we have been painting our face for such a long time. Firstly, cosmetic substances were used by ancient societies to protect the skin from the elements (sun, temperature, etc.); secondly, for rituals or as a symbol of a specific culture. For instance, some face drawings were used to threaten enemies or bad spirits (Eldridge, 2015). In Japan, China and South Asia a prehistoric tradition called *ohaguro*, that consisted in blackening one’s teeth, was used not only to prevent the decay of teeth but also to “protect the wearer from the evil spirits² within them” (Eldridge, 2015:75); this tradition was maintained until the 19th century in most of those countries.

An article reports that in 100,000 B.C. Neanderthal humans used to paint their bodies not only for decorative purposes but also to camouflage themselves for animals hunting. Moreover, painting the body with drawings of aggressive animals was believed to transfer animals’ power or characteristics to the person that was wearing them. Since society and culture are strong sources of influence when it comes to what is beautiful – especially for the category of cosmetics – for this specific society, the colors red and yellow were symbols of peace. The same two colors were perceived in a totally different way by modern societies of the 19th century (Hunt et al., 2011).

Egyptians in 3000 B.C. considered important painting the eye, firstly, as a reflection of human’s soul and, secondly, as a medical treatment to prevent the eye from suppuration – caused by the strong sun rays. Differently from the aborigines’ culture though, the color red was perceived as magical, and for this reason its use in cosmetics was banned. For Egyptian women, indeed, it was very important to prepare their hair and to apply makeup

¹ Oxford dictionary online, web page: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cosmetic> (last accessed in August 2019).

² As Lisa Eldridge writes in her book *Face Paint: The story of makeup*, white teeth were associated with scary beasts; that is one of many reasons for which those societies used to paint their teeth black.

and accessories; skincare was even more important, and to prevent wrinkles Egyptians created a combination of oils, waxes, incense, and crushed cypress to be applied regularly to the face. This concoction became so famous that it was commercialized to Mesopotamian soldiers and was also used in substitution of cash for trade (Hunt et al., 2011).

Even though the term cosmetics may be derived from the Greek term *kosmeticos*, the ancient Greeks were not inclined to use lots of cosmetics, they preferred a more simple and natural style – also for clothing. This was probably due to the lack of freedom women had in Greek society. As a matter of fact, a man did not want his wife to use makeup since it was associated with prostitutes – as they could freely hire them even if married. For Greek society, women did not have to be beautiful or seductive; instead, they were required to be good housewives and home keepers (Hunt et al., 2011).

Romans took inspiration from both Egyptian and Greek societies, but differently from their Greek counterparts, wealthy Roman women considered beauty so important that they usually hired an *ornatrix* to prepare their hair and skin. Similarly to Egyptian society³, Romans used to wear wigs in order to cover baldness and extreme dry hair due to bleaching treatments. Blue veins were emphasized with a blue paint since blue was a symbol of beauty. Later on, the Christian church decided to stop this ‘fake’ beauty routine and to discourage people from using wigs, which started to be associated with the image of prostitutes. This was quite common in many ancient societies when freedom of expression dwindled. Nonetheless, these three important societies of the past made their mark on beauty and hygiene techniques as examples of civilized and elegant societies for the following generations.

As time went by, the use of cosmetic substances started to be associated with social status, aesthetics, and, as the 19th century approached, to fashion too.

Makeup was all about status and being seen to be à la mode—the flamboyant manner in which rouge in particular was worn was so very apparent that there’s no way it could have been intended to look natural. (Eldridge, 2015:32)

Since then, the substances used to improve the appearance have been made of natural ingredients and have required a long and complex procedure to be made. The main

³ As Hunt says in the article though, Egyptians (women and men) used to shave both the body and the scalp in order to apply wigs decorated with accessories.
Hunt, K. A., Fate, J., & Dodds, B., “Cultural And Social Influences On The Perception Of Beauty: A Case Analysis Of The Cosmetics Industry”, *Journal of Business Case Studies (JBCS)*, (2011), 7(1), p. 2.

ingredients were: chalk, manganese dioxide, carbon, lapis lazuli, copper ore, yellow and red ochre (Eldridge, 2015:14). We can find an example of recipe, to obtain a brighter look and to hide hyperpigmentation, in the book *Hope in a Jar*:

To a pint of white wine vinegar put a full handful of well-sifted wheat bran, stepping it for several hours and adding the yolks of five eggs with two grains of ambergris. Distill the bottle for fourteen days. [...] a polished whiteness of the complexion will ensue. (Peiss, 2011:9)

Recipes such as this one are examples of beauty traditions passed down, through time, from mother to daughter, and were the only access to information regarding beauty techniques and knowledge; many of those recipes were also a reflection of popular beliefs on the power of nature and the theory of the four humors – yellow and black bile, blood, phlegm. Information became available to the public firstly thanks to the invention of the printing press, which made available and inexpensive beauty manuals such as *Gli Experimenti*⁴ – ancient beauty recipes of Caterina Sforza a noble woman of 1500 (Eldridge, 2015) and secondly thanks to advertising and magazines⁵ from 1840-1850 (Peiss, 2011). At the time, those new ways of communication were fundamental to build the beauty culture, and later on the beauty industry, which is part of our lives nowadays.

To be better-looking, women also used to apply substances such as red lead, cinnabar and mercuric sulfide, which gave them the actual ‘blushed look’, but such minerals were extremely poisonous (Eldridge, 2015). As a matter of fact, in order to have a white face – symbol of nobility and race – women used to apply ceruse, a mixture of white lead and vinegar, that gave a smooth and homogenous effect similar to present-day foundation. The best ceruse in the market was the so called ‘Venetian ceruse’ also named as ‘Spirits of Saturn’, which was one of the most expensive pure, white and intense lead. Paradoxically, being poor was better for the skin and body health; the constant use of those substances led to the opposite effect, which meant hyperpigmentation, aging skin, grey hair, boldness and general health issues and, even, in extreme cases, death (Eldridge, 2015).

⁴ This manual was just one of many examples around the world, Lisa Eldridge in her book, *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup*, mentions also British manuals such as *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1673), *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty* (1656), *The Ladies Dictionary* (1694) and also a magazine named *The Ladies' Mercury* (1693) from which shaped, little by little, the ideal of womanhood. Eldridge, Lisa, *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup*, New York, Abrams, 2015. p. 94.

⁵ Eldridge in her book mentions the British fashion magazines of the early 1800 *La Belle Assemblée* in which there were drawings of women wearing cosmetics, but also the French magazine *Les Modes* (1901) that presented models of the upper class that matched cosmetics to fashion items. Those, however, presented the ideal woman but did not advertise cosmetic products yet, since the use of makeup was not perceived culturally normal by everyone. Eldridge, Lisa, *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup*, New York, Abrams, 2015. pp. 96-97.

The use of poisoning substances continued until the French Revolution, from that moment on, people started to be more aware of the effects of those substances and began to put less make-up on their face. During the Victorian Age noble women had to be beautiful without showing the use of makeup, so it became more popular to use ingestible skincare substances (even though they were still dangerous for women's health). Little by little, people started to substitute lead and arsenic with chalk and magnesia's power, substances that were not dangerous and were available for a wider range of people.

1.1 The importance of culture to create value

In many societies, the possibility of beautifying the face with cosmetic substances was a privilege of rich people; noble women used to keep those ingredients into small and precious boxes and used to apply cosmetics in a private room with the help of a slave (named for that purpose *cosmetae*) a sort of ancient makeup artist (Eldridge, 2015). It is impossible, therefore, to analyze today's success of the cosmetic industry without considering the role that culture had on the use of makeup and the influence that culture had on advertising. The use of makeup was a social and political action. During the 17th century in England the use of rouge was a 'must', but was banned in the 18th century to mark a distinction with French people that were using makeup in an 'excessive' way. Indeed, Queen Victoria declared that the use of rouge was vulgar and that the 'pale look' was preferable. At the same time, though, in France, the beauty industry was born, with the first national industry specialized in cosmetics and based in Paris (Eldridge, 2015). The use of paints and cosmetics also marked:

distinctions between and within social classes; they also reinforced racial aesthetics. Notions of Anglo-American beauty in the nineteenth century were continually asserted in relation to people of color around the world. Nineteenth-century travelers, missionaries, anthropologists, and scientists habitually viewed beauty as a function of race. [...] they nevertheless proclaimed the superiority of white racial beauty [...] and justified white supremacy in a period of American expansion. (Peiss, 2011: 31)

Furthermore, in the same book, Peiss claims that exaggerating whiteness and white traits were also strategies to "dehumanize African Americans, and deny them social and political participation" (Peiss, 2011:33).

A use of cosmetics that reflects the importance of the cultural and social aspects of the 17th and 18th century, is the use of small patches shaped into flowers, stars and moon to cover pox's scars on the face. The application of those patches close to the lips meant that the woman was available to courtship. Instead, if she was engaged she had to wear the patch firstly upon the left cheek, and then on the right one when married. To avoid losing them when they wore them in social events, women used to bring with them a box that contained replacements (Hunt et al., 2011).



Figure 1. An ad of beauty patches which were replicas of those common in the 18th century⁶.

Moving on to the 20th century, cosmetics such as make-up, become slowly more acceptable both in Europe and America. The first element of the evolution of this industry is the production and use of health and hygiene products. The first final product that was sold by a beauty company in America was soap by Procter and Gamble (P&G) in 1880 (Frith, 2014). This was also the first beauty company that started to advertise its product exploiting culture-specific elements. In this period, both America and Europe started to spread the idea of the importance of cleanliness by advertising soaps and soap powders. An

⁶ Source: a blog article entitled “Cosmetic History: 18th-Century Beauty Patches” at the link: <https://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/blogs/beauty-patches.htm> (last accessed in August 2019).

example of paradoxical advertising was the soap ad published by William Lever's company, a British company founded in the late 1880s. To give an idea of cleanliness and effectiveness, the company marketed their product saying that it could whiten little black boys. In a few years soap and hygiene products started to be sold massively both in America and in Europe, creating a small but important business worldwide (Frith, 2014). His book *Hope in a Jar* (Peiss, 2011), estimates that the economic value of toiletries in 1849 was about \$355,00, causing a growing interest both in advertising those products and in possible future profits. In order to sell more, manufacturers of skin care, hygiene products and perfumes focused on psychological aspects and pictures that showed incredible improvement of the skin or the body (Peiss, 2011). This paved the way to the second stage of the evolution of the beauty industry, which was the creation of make-up and hair products necessary to mask imperfections and enhance woman's beauty.

In the western culture of the 20th century, it was the woman's duty to appear beautiful. Therefore, it was clear to advertisers that playing with women's insecurities in the ads was the key to business success. The business gradually grew from 1870 to 1900, developing two initial strands: people who could afford more expensive and completed formula of a product used to buy it in drugstores; people who couldn't afford such a product used to buy similar substances to mix them at home. In the 2000s the sales for cosmetic products boosted, whether it was for combinations of formulas or for finished products. It is in those years that the manufacture of products, and the creation of cosmetic brands started, that we still use today, and as we do now, retailers started to improve and embellish the packaging of the product or the displays to encourage the purchase (Peiss, 2011). Furthermore, for the first time, cosmetics started to be associated to freedom and feminine self-presentation, with woman's identity. Make-up was no longer a political claim but a social and personal one. Women slowly started to feel freer and powerful thanks to cosmetics. This was extremely important for advertising and the beauty business success in general especially from the 1920s onward. As Professor Peiss says in his book:

as woman began to buy theatrical preparations, tinted powders, and dry rouge, the notion of paint as unnatural and makeup as mask increasingly gave way to the modern sense of makeup as an expression of self and personality. (Peiss, 2011)

This first beauty business success was also due to the fact that in the 1900s, women started to work and to contribute to the family income. In this period, on the one hand, middle class-women gained visibility, and on the other, women became manufacturers,

creators, and entrepreneurs of their own beauty salon or beauty brand. The majority of successful women came from a poor family background, and they were often immigrants to America in the early 1900s. Two extremely important examples of success that shaped the beauty culture between the 1910s/1930s, were two immigrant white women, Helena Rubinstein and Elisabeth Arden, and two immigrant black women, Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C. J. Walker.

Helena Rubinstein was a Polish woman born in 1872. She came from a modest family; her real name, though, was Chaja, which she later changed – probably for business reasons. Since her parents tried to get her married when she was really young, she first moved to Vienna with her uncle (in order to escape the marriage), and then on again to Australia in 1896, where her beauty business emerged. Firstly, she understood the importance of face cream, especially for Australian women that were sensitive to sun exposure, so she started to sell to them Polish face creams. However, since shipping those creams was too expensive, she started to create her own face cream mimicking the Polish ones with the help of a chemist. The sales were so great that she first opened a beauty salon in Melbourne in 1903, then another one in New Zealand in 1907, and then she started selling her products in London too. During World War I, Helena and her family moved to New York, where she opened one of many beauty salons in which she firstly offered beauty products and services and then also make-up products (Eldridge, 2015).

Elizabeth Arden was a Canadian woman born around 1880⁷ in Toronto. Her real name was Florence Nightingale, but, as in the case of Helena Rubinstein, it was necessary for her to remake her own image into something more glamorous in order to be successful. Losing her parents when she was really young had made her a strong, determined woman, who aspired to a richer and better world. At the age of 26 she moved to New York, where in 1909 she started her own business of skin care; the following year she also opened a beauty salon called Salon d'Or to sell luxury treatments. Her brand kept growing over time, and in 1925 she could count nine beauty salons in important cities such as Paris and London (Eldridge, 2015).

Both Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden chose to market their brand as luxury brands, selling creams and cosmetic products at a high price for rich people, a choice that still makes their brands well-known nowadays. They also both lied about their origins and

⁷ There is no clear date of her birth since she changed version about her life too many times, indicatively she could have born or in 1878 or in 1886 as Lisa Eldridge says in her book *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup* (New York, Abrams, 2015. p. 135).

their abilities in order to be accepted by the upper classes and to sell their products to the elite. Indeed,

the projection of personality and expertise was central to the sales strategies women entrepreneurs adopted. [...] beauty entrepreneurs concentrated on women's aesthetics and cultural practices, weaving their trade into the fabric of women's everyday lives. (Peiss, 2011:81)

Malone and Walker, instead, had a totally different clientele. Annie Turnbo Malone was born in Illinois in 1869, lived as an orphan with her siblings near the Ohio River. Even though she had a difficult childhood, she received an education and started to prepare formulas for hair and scalp to sell to black women in 1890. She understood which the needs were of poor young black women and began to manufacture and to sell problem-solving treatments in 1900. Her business was positively perceived by the African-American community and become a thriving enterprise in 1914. Madam C. J. Walker, born in 1867 in Louisiana, had a similar upbringing and childhood to Malone; indeed, she was an orphan as well and lived with her older sister. She gave birth to her daughter when she was really young (1882), and suddenly lost her husband in an accident afterwards. For those reasons, she always worked hard to raise her daughter, and, at the same time she joined charitable societies of the African American culture such as the African Methodist Episcopal church. One day she experimented black women's hair problems (such as hair loss) and decided to create her own formula of hair cream that contained stimulant substances such as sulphur and capsicum. Her 'Wonderful Hair grower' obtained a positive feedback straight away. In 1910 Walker started to sell the product in Indianapolis (another important cultural center for African-American people) creating a national market (Peiss, 2011).

Undoubtedly, those four women were a clear example of the social, political and economic power that women could have during the 20th century but were two sides of the same coin, the American beauty culture. Both parts, even if they defended different values and ethnicities, wanted to meet the needs 'from women to women', stimulating the acceptance of the cosmetic use and creating a beauty routine for every woman. This was important not only for a cultural point of view, but also from an economic and marketing aspect. The consumers in the 1920s wanted to have a relation with the seller and reckoned important the cultural-based opinion of friends, fellows and men on beauty products and results. The advertising did not have the same power that a person's opinion could have in

selling a product. Both Rubinstein, Arden, Malone and Walker understood this point, and used it to strengthen their brands; Rubinstein and Arden offered services in their salons. By contrast, Malone and Walker demonstrated their products in the house of consumers and offered a direct marketing service with agents specialized in demonstrations and selling, also because they couldn't have the same privilege – that white people had – to sell their products in shops or drugstores – since they were of propriety of white American people.

Elizabeth Arden, for instance, saw an opportunity for profit by sustaining the feminism movement later on in time; whereas Rubinstein always demonstrated to support women's equal rights and accepted in her salon also immigrated women (Peiss, 2011). Both, though, reinforced the idea of white supremacy creating “marketing campaigns to reinforce the prestige of their systems, urging women to emulate and vicariously join high society by purchasing costly cosmetics” (Peiss, 2011:88). Rubinstein and Arden completed the campaign by selling pricy products only in exclusive department stores and by advertising their product in prestigious magazines such as *Vogue* and *Town and Country*.

Madam Walker, on the other hand, always “identified closely with the struggles and dignity of poor women even as she sought entrance into the ranks of the black economic and social elite” (Peiss, 2011:80), becoming a reference point for African-American women both from the cultural, social and political point of view, but also for the economic freedom that she gave them by offering well-paid jobs to poor women. An example of congruity of their thought, was the fact that Walker and Malone always refused to create and sell products that could whiten the skin of black women or hair straighteners to appear ‘whiter’. This choice, on one side, was not convenient economically because those products were best seller of that period, but on the other side, was extremely important to reinforce the African-American beauty culture. Malone and Walker were also very active in their black communities, offering services outside churches and black association, combining trade to services for the community (Peiss, 2011). As a matter of fact, Peiss writes in her book:

Members mingled, shared beauty tips, enjoyed outings and entertainment, gained insurance benefits, and raised money for churches and charity. Beauty salons –known for their spirited conversation between beauticians and clients– become neighborhood centers for sharing information and organizing. [...] For many working-class black women, beauty culture strengthened their involvement in the community affairs and even carried them into political activism. Two hundred Walker agents attended their first national convention in 1917, and heard Madam Walker speak on “Women's Duty to Women”. (Peiss, 2011:94)

Cosmetic products, therefore, become important tools in the beauty routine of a woman to express femininity, identity and dignity, but also to express a social revolution, modernity and freedom. In a few decades, the cosmetic industry succeeded in creating a beauty ideal of emancipation and self-representation associating to it the need of consumption, which led to the first major success of the beauty industry; indeed:

between 1909 and 1929 the number of American perfume and cosmetics manufacturers nearly doubled, and the factory value of their products rose tenfold, from \$14.2 million to nearly \$141 million. In 1929, sociologist Robert Lynd estimated, Americans were spending \$700 million annually for cosmetics and beauty services. (Peiss, 2011:97)

1.2 The role of media and the rise of mass market

As said before, between 1900 and 1920 more and more women entered in the beauty business both as entrepreneurs and consumers. Furthermore, the use of cosmetic products was no more a duty but a right. It is thanks to this that things started to move forward in the late '20s, with the help of advertising and media.

For the first time, in the late '20s, men started to take part in the beauty business, in some cases as support for their wives, but in others – and most importantly – as brand founders. Indeed, men such as Max Factor and Charles Revson improved the beauty industry by creating important marketing campaigns and by giving rise to the cosmetic mass market in the '30s.

Max Factor was born in 1872, in Poland, by a poor family of ten sons. The founder's real name was Maksymilian Faktorowicz. Factor started to work hard when he was 10 years old, then, when he was 14, was asked to work for the court of Czar Nicholas II in Moscow. Since he was not free to work and live as he wanted to, he decided to move in America in 1904 to be a wigmaker and cosmetician (Eldridge, 2015). Factor understood the importance of cosmetics by working with theatrical make-up, and for this reason, he decided to move to Los Angeles where he opened a shop and a make-up studio. Since the movie industry was settled in California, Max Factor saw a potential earning opportunity and started, firstly, to work for the screen, and secondly, founded his own brand named Society Makeup. His products were for everyday use and achieved immediate success due to a high demand of cosmetic products influenced by movies and movie stars. In 1927 Max

Factor reached the national market thanks to movies and romance magazine advertising (Peiss, 2011).

The make-up that was applied to movies' actresses was the same that was used for theatrical make-up and, at first, it was just a tool to help them to be more expressive on the screen. In most cases, actresses had a 'signature look' that emphasized the personality of the character they were representing. From that moment, on the one hand, actresses become a beauty ideal to follow and to copy, and on the other, people started to identify themselves with them. As Lisa Eldridge writes in her book "cinema, for this generation of women, extended imaginings of what a woman could be" (Eldridge, 2015:108). This persuaded people to 'get the look' that was publicized in magazines⁸ monthly or weekly.

The success was undoubtedly positive, and was then strongly reinforced by television in 1941, that created an affluence of millions of new viewers. From a marketing and communication perspective, this invention was the best opportunity for businesses to reach consumers and to explain them how – and why – to use their products; in 1945 the US became the biggest manufacturer of beauty products with a net of \$805 million⁹, making it the 'golden era' for the cosmetics industry.

In this context, the smartest and the most creative businessman was Charles Revson. Born in 1906 in Boston, he started his career in 1931 as sales representative for a brand that produced nail polishes. Later on, he decided to launch his own brand of nail polishes, Revlon, and created a special formula that dried down quickly and lasted longer, thanks to his girlfriend that was the manicurist of Diana Vreeland – an influent personality for the beauty and fashion industry in 1960. Indeed, Vreeland needed a new polish such as her favorite one – produced in Europe – and gave it to Charles Revson to reproduce it. To create the demand for those new cosmetic products, Revson decided to associate to the nail polishes the idea of socialite and claimed that they were available in a luxury shop even though it was not true yet. This advertising cost him his entire budget but was one of the greatest investments he did. In 1938 Revlon's sales were beyond one million dollars (Eldridge, 2015:140). Charles Revson was a strong believer in the power of advertising,

⁸ In her book, Lisa Eldridge mention the example of the magazine *Photoplay*, which in 1932 offered a monthly service of written tutorials and 'how to', entitled "*Photoplay's* Hollywood Beauty Shop" with the aim of recreating Hollywood stars looks in a more affordable way. A system comparable to a video tutorial that we can see today on platforms such as YouTube (Eldridge, 2015: 110).

⁹ Talking about this topic, Eldridge claims that it was not just for the Hollywood fame or for the television that the USA became the biggest cosmetic producer but was also the result of two devastating wars that prevented Europe to keep on with the production. Cosmetics products, as a matter of fact, were produced mainly to create the 'camouflage effect' during the wars (Eldridge, 2015: 124).

and built his fortune around it, sometimes even by playing dirty. The strategy that made his profits double, in 1940, was the association of his polishes to lipsticks. In order to make this combination popular, he decided to invest in TV programs, such as ‘\$64.000 Question’ game show, becoming the greatest seller of cosmetic products in 1960. His death in 1975, though, signed the decline of his brand, which nowadays is not as famous as it was before and is available in drugstores instead of luxury shops.

Undoubtedly, Factor and Revson would not have had the same influence and fast success without advertising and media. Before 1920, though, beauty magazines and the radio did not have the same power. As a matter of fact, the space reserved for cosmetics advertising was quite insignificant compared to magazines of 1950s. What may have made things change were the rise of working-class women, the world wars and the emergence of new beauty business. During the two world wars, more and more women started to save money and to be more independent; others that lost their husbands, wanted to reinvent their identities with the help of make-up. Beauty companies saw an opportunity of profit in this idea and started to pour lots of money in beauty campaigns, slowly building up a mass market. As Peiss writes in her book, between 1920 and 1929, beauty products were:

third among all classes of goods advertised in magazines generally, second in woman’s magazines, and fifth in newspapers. [...] between 1927 and 1930, the investment of cosmetics and toiletries firms in advertising on the radio networks climbed remarkably, from \$300,000 to \$3.2 millions annually. [...] promoted as a Depression-era product cheaper than its competition, Lady Esther saw sales increase 400 percent within a year of its first broadcast (Peiss, 2011:105).

What made those advertising so appealing and influent was empathy. If on the one hand men entered and prevailed in the beauty business during the ’30s/’50s, as brand owners, on the other, women were behind the scenes of the brand communication and presentation. Women constructed beauty ideals that reflected women’s needs and desires of this period, emphasizing the aspect of independence and individuality, working on advertising, marketing, media and sales. Peiss, claims that:

As a more self-conscious notion of the woman consumer took hold, it became axiomatic among mass-market manufacturers and advertisers that “if you are selling to women, nothing succeeds like a women’s viewpoint.” Advertising appeals “must be made with knowledge of the habits of women, their methods of reasoning, and their prejudices. (Peiss, 2011:119)

Though the beauty business flourished, in the early 1900s, with the positive aim of helping women to feel more confident and to solve their appearance problems, from the

1940s on, beauty brands used those elements just for profit and to instill in women's mind the habit of consumption. Indeed, making numbers grow by selling apparent ideals of individuality to standardized consumers, was important, as Kirsty Sinclair Dootson says:

to put it in another way, the standardization of the consumer, necessary to make these system work, was concealed by emphasizing superficial product differentiation, so that every consumer seemed individually catered to within a system of mass (re)production. (Dootson, 2016:122)

Max Factor, for instance, exploited women's femininity to make this theory work. During the blooming of Hollywood he had his 'Max Factor girls' that he used to create his beauty ideal for women; moreover, the 'Max Factor girls' were using the famous 'Pan-Cake Make-up' a glamorous product that smoothed the skin and gave the perception of perfection and uniformity. This product soon become a best-seller. Factor then invented the Beauty Calibrator that measured and sculpted women's face traits in order to achieve perfection. This tool was first used for movie's make-up purposes, and then Factor also offered this service in his shops not only to emphasize each woman's identity and beauty, but also to diffuse the idea that the use of cosmetics was based on precise studies and techniques.



Figure 2. Image of the Max Factor's Beauty Calibrator from the '30s¹⁰.

¹⁰ Online article entitled "Max Factor's Beauty Calibrator: A Beauty-Measuring Mask Analyzes Facial Flaws For Makeup From The 1930s"

If white people succeeded in building a beauty empire even during difficult times – the two World Wars and the economic crisis – African-American people cannot claim the same. Since national advertising was not possible for black people, Madame C. J. Walker and Annie Turnbo Malone tried to advertise their products in black papers and church's periodicals but it was not enough. Both women also tried to modernize their brand by selling make-up products, such as powder and paints but it did not change the situation. In the 1920s with the death of Walker, the company survived by selling bleaching products for the face – a product requested by consumers in order to look and to get closer to white women; Malone, instead, lost her company because of debts. Malone argued with her husband for the control of the company, and lost thousands and thousands of dollars to win the legal dispute. The final element that marked the decline of the African-American beauty business was the economic crisis of 1929, which slowly made almost every beauty brand for black women disappear.

Indeed, in almost 20 years, the beauty business centralized the influence power on its communication tools. Whereas in 1920 the most important thing, when buying a product, was friend's opinion; in 1940, the effects of brands' communication strategies were even stronger than the personal influence. For white American companies, the successful association of the acquisition of individuality and femininity – thanks to the purchase of a cosmetic product – was even more important. From the 1940s on, selling product that could solve aesthetics problems such as hyperpigmentation were not enough; women wanted an added value to cosmetic products, a beauty ideal to follow, hope and ambition for a better future.

1.3 Social, personal, psychological factors that influence(d) consumer's behavior and the purchase intention

From a psychological point of view, the importance that media had on diffusing concepts about beauty and attractiveness cannot be underestimated. Indeed, sending messages about looking clean and smelling good was necessary to reinforce the cultural psyche and to sell more cosmetic products, inducing women to behave and feel in certain ways. Generally speaking, there are many factors that influence consumer behavior, and many ways in which a consumer could behave. For instance, a client could behave: rationally, analyzing every aspect of the product – and the market in general – before purchasing something;

irrationally, strongly influenced by advertisement and marketing in general; the behavior could be also focused on emotions, positive feelings related to a product; lastly, a buyer could be precisely looking for a product that help them to achieve a goal (Shallu, 2013).

An interesting study (Wu et al., 2016), concerning impulsive behavior in cosmetic marketing activities, outlines that – for this specific category of buyers – the only significant factor that influence the purchase intention is the shopping experience. In particular, the article analyzes the experience that those consumers have in a beauty store – or online – when discovering a cosmetic product. This study demonstrates that giving full attention and information about cosmetic products to an impulsive consumer will increase their shopping satisfaction, creating a positive memory in their mind that will trigger the purchase intention. Differently from a general consumer, an impulsive buyer does not have to satisfy a precise need, and he/she is not influenced by a brand's image when purchasing a product. However, knowing the tendencies of this type of consumers, brands can improve their shop's interior design in order to attract their attention – for instance creating more attractive shop windows or more colorful displays – and offer a pleasant experience to them with the aim of creating positive memories on their minds. Furthermore, other factors influence consumers' behavior and the purchase intention. Consumers have their own self-image, subject of a study on the theory of self-congruity (Nor Rahimy Binti Khalid et al., 2018). According to the study, consumers are inclined to buy products that are congruent with their self-images and self-concept. There are many factors that determine a person's self-concept, some of them are: religion; the environment; culture.

Self-congruity has also been related to the concept of symbolic consumption. An interesting study demonstrates the efficacy of advertising in the activation of the self (Trampe et al., 2011). The fact that a purchased product could be not only an expression of a consumer's personality, but also an extension of it, it is important for the cosmetic industry's success. Indeed, advertisements are representations of a symbolic system that influence consumers' perceptions about the self. The authors of this study claim:

We know from research in social cognition (Schwinghammer, Stapel, and Blanton 2006; Stapel and Tesser 2001) that increased activation of thoughts about the self leads to an enhanced tendency to incorporate external information into one's self-view. (Trampe et al, 2011:1032)

It is not a mere coincidence that nowadays cosmetics products are one of the most advertised categories. Beauty products could be divided into two main categories:

‘enhancing’ products and ‘problem-solving’ products. The first ones have an effect on the physical attractiveness of the user, and the second ones improve a person’s attractiveness once they conceal problematic aspects of their physical appearance. This study shows that even though both kinds of products are beauty related, just the ‘enhancing’ ones lead to the activation of the self when advertised.

Attractiveness is, and has been, a very important aspect in the cosmetic industry, at the beginning of this industry and in today’s world as well. Cosmetic products are a tool that help people to express their personality but also to manage social impression. Indeed:

In general, females who wear cosmetics are perceived to look more feminine rather than those, who do not use cosmetics, therefore they are often attributed with better social qualities especially by males (Frevert, Walker, 2014), mainly as femininity is more associated with attractiveness for males. People who are more attractive are in general perceived to have better personalities, which is not only due to media exposing good people as beautiful, but overall people’s want for beauty, which is associated with rewarding personality. [...] females who are perceived to be more attractive are often seen as having better social interactions, therefore having better relationships, are happier with their partners and meet people easier. (Verbickaite, 2017: 16-17)

Maintaining good social relations such as friendship, family, sexual partners, is important for any person, even more than achieving self-fulfillment or having a great self-esteem. This may lead people to a conspicuous use of cosmetics to ‘manipulate’ or enhance their physical appearance to obtain a better integration in social life. A study (Cash et al., 1989) on American college women confirmed that from men’s point of view, girls wearing make-up were perceived to have a better personality and a better social perception compared to women without make-up; women respondents, instead, judged in an equal way other women’s appearance.

The aspect of attractiveness is strongly related to the concept of sexuality, element used in advertisement – sometimes in unethical ways – to drive the attention of consumers. As claimed in the article (Moses et Charles, 2014) written by Ani Moses and Makata Charles, the effectiveness of this type of advertisement depends on the kind of product advertised – generally it is used for clothes, creams, soaps, jewelries, perfumes, deodorants, (etc.) – on its demand, and on the market in general. The concept of ‘sexual appeal’ was introduced in advertising during the 1980s, and its effectiveness depends on cultural and religious limitations. For instance, Moses and Charles claim that advertisement with sexual appeal contents are positively perceived by northern American cultures, but are perceived negatively by Asians cultures. Analyzing this aspect in the

American beauty culture, during the 1920s selling a red lipstick was an economic risk for a beauty company, because the color red was not commonly used and did not give a natural appearance. Whereas, during the Second World War the use of red lipsticks became a symbol of patriotism and sensuality; red lips resembled the passion of a kiss and women's femininity. In 1948 the red lipstick became a best seller in America, thanks also to Charles Revson that created the famous lipstick 'fire and ice', the most beautiful red you could buy in that period (Peiss, 2011).

As said in previous paragraphs, ads can activate self-representation and self-concept. Many academic studies demonstrated that physical attractiveness is strongly related to self-esteem. It has been shown that exposing a woman to an advertisement in which an idealistic and unrealistic feminine ideal is presented has negative effects on her self-esteem such as an increased dissatisfaction of her appearance (Trampe et al., 2011). In the same study, the advertisement of 'enhancing' products showed a significant effect in lowering women's self-esteem compared to 'problem-solving products', which showed no effects in their self-esteem. In relation to this, Guthrie *et al.* (2008), show that body image dissatisfaction is the main reason why women use more cosmetics products. In the same article, the authors claim that face image dissatisfaction is not as powerful as body image dissatisfaction, when it comes to cosmetic products' purchase intention. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when women wear cosmetic products they tend to overestimate their appearance (and/or attractiveness) and to underestimate it when they are not wearing those products (Cash et al., 1989). The cosmetic brand Dove, in 2004, understood the importance of this relation – and the fact that their body products were no more appealing because of the unrealistic body image they were advertising. They decided to create a new campaign, the "Campaign for Real Beauty" promoting images of women with different body shapes, sizes, skin color, races, and ages. This choice allowed the brand to revisit its image and to achieve credibility¹¹.

Considering the aspect of social relations, it has been demonstrated (Tajeddini *et al.*, 2014) that social norms are strong forces that drive change in human behavior. Subjective norms, such as friends' and family's beliefs, are considered to be powerful forces that change women's purchase intention. Two women that used this concept, during the 1920s, were Elisabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein; they claimed that ugly women do not exist, "only lazy ones" (Eldridge, 2015:132), stressing the idea that being beautiful, at that time,

¹¹ Source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dove-real-beauty-campaign-turns-10_n_4575940 (last accessed in August 2019).

was a woman's duty. The same concept was reinforced by magazines later on, creating a social norm under which a woman had to be beautiful from the moment she woke up to late afternoon for her husband's pleasure. It was the women's responsibility to be beautiful during the war as well, to show patriotism (Peiss, 2011).

It is therefore possible to claim that beauty ideals change through time and generations, depending also on cultural values. For instance, nowadays in China having a white pure skin tone is still an important beauty ideal that lead beauty companies to sell more whitening and anti-aging products. In America, it has been relatively important as well until 1950, when Coco Chanel made fashionable the 'tan look'. As an article (Qinwei *et al.*, 2013) reports, Chinese and Asian people are focused on brightening products which are also anti-aging; therefore, their main concern is having white and young-looking skin. For American people moisturizing the skin is equally important, but they focus more on the firmness and smoothness of the skin rather than on its whiteness. The same concept was also confirmed by another article (Weber *et al.*, 2002) that compared American and French consumers' purchase behavior. Weber and Capitant de Villebonne agree on the fact that culture is a strong force in driving the purchase intention and claimed that, according to their investigation, taking care of the skin and using cosmetics (such as make-up) to improve face and body's appearances is an important aspect across any border. The main category for both countries seems to be skin care, followed by make-up. However, the two countries are culturally different and have different purchase behaviors. French people seem to be more conservative when purchasing cosmetics, and prefer to buy more prestigious products – especially fragrances – underlying the importance of historical and cultural aspects but also of the preference for quality over quantity. Americans, on the other hand, seem to be more materialistic, they prefer to look good; for this reason, the most important products are shampoos and make-up. An element that is relevant for any country – during the purchase process – is the learning process. Nowadays consumers are active and have quick access to information. Learning new information, whether it is through an experiential way or a conceptual one, activates a change in consumer behavior (Weber *et al.*, 2002).

Lastly, another element that influence consumer behavior and triggers the purchase intention is celebrity endorsement. Celebrities are significant not only for the brand, because they transmit the symbolic value of the firm, but also for the consumer that transfers the importance of the celebrity to the products he/she advertise. A study (Choi *et Rifon*, 2012) from the *Psychology and Marketing* journal, shows that the more specific the

association is between the product and the celebrity, the more effective the advertising is on consumers' responses and the purchase intentions. The study demonstrates that a high congruence between celebrity image and brand image has a positive effect on the attitude towards the ad; furthermore, the level of attractiveness of the celebrity has been shown to be an important factor that influence consumers' behavior. Another article (Parmar *et al.*, 2015) outlines that the expertise of the endorser is limited to the level of their attractiveness, especially when it comes to cosmetics products. Considering the Indian beauty market, it has been shown (Gupta, 2011) that materialism is part of the Indian culture, especially between young consumers (16-35 years old) that present higher levels of materialistic values in respect to older consumers. A high level of materialistic values was also found in middle-class and upper-class people. Nowadays more and more women are starting to work and to contribute to the Indian economy; for this reason, they can afford to spend money on cosmetics products, especially on foreign brands. A study (Shallu, 2013) was conducted in India with the objective of demonstrating the most important factors that influenced consumers' behavior and the purchase intention. This study shows that advertising has the ability to attract the attention of 48% of beauty consumers, the rest of the consumers are influenced by peers' opinions (23%), family (18%), and people they work with (11%). An interesting result was the fact that 44% of people who saw a beauty advertisement would purchase the product advertised, and 43% may potentially buy it, demonstrating the strong efficacy of advertising in growing markets such as the Indian one. When respondents were asked if celebrities had an influence on their purchase intention, 47% said that they may purchase the product thanks to a celebrity, and 26% confirmed the influence on their purchase intention. Lastly, another interesting aspect presented in this article is the association between quality expectation of the product and celebrity endorsement; 55% of people believe that the image of an endorser might translate into a good quality product, whereas for another 27% of respondents it is definitely a guarantee.

A more recent study (Parul, 2015) conducted in New Delhi confirms what the previous study claimed, reporting that: 79% of 250 people believe that the personality of the endorser matters for promotional activities. 91% of respondents reckon that the image of the celebrity must match the image of the brand (in order to have a positive effect on the consumer). 95% of people believe that the popularity of the endorser is important to build the image of the brand., Lastly, 65% of people think that the attractiveness of a celebrity is necessary in order to promote a product.

2. Globalization of beauty ideals

The worldwide success of the cosmetic market goes together with the development of a cosmetic mass-market. The mass production started firstly, with soap and perfumes and secondly, expanded to other cosmetic categories. Rubinstein was one of the first women, in the American cosmetic market, to open salons worldwide and not only to sell her products but also to diffuse western beauty ideals. Since that moment there was no global beauty standard that determined how to be beautiful; soon those western ideals and beauty routines spread all over the world. The advertisements for beauty products were rich in cultural references and assumptions typical of the western white society; those assumptions were also suggesting that the concept of whiteness was a synonym for civilization. Furthermore, advertisements of cosmetic products were necessary to diffuse all over the world the idea that beauty products, produced by companies based in New York and Paris, were much more prestigious and had a higher quality compared to others cosmetic products.

The first phase of the globalization process was the homogenization of beauty ideals that occurred during the 1950s. This was possible thanks to the success of Hollywood, theatrical shows, television programs – which were translated into local languages – magazines – *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Brides* (etc.) – and also the radio (Frith, 2014).

Hollywood stars had an important role in keeping 'international culture' alive during difficult times such as the two World Wars and the Great Depression (Jones, 2011). In the same period, consumers started to become international as well as to travel frequently. This led cosmetic brands to sell products in important airports to obtain a vast and new clientele – including businessmen – offering a prestige product with a tax-free price. This strategy reinforced the prestige of cosmetic brands such as Chanel, Guerlain, and Max Factor, that in 1971 was manufacturing in eight foreign countries and selling products to one hundred and forty-three countries (Jones, 2011).

The homogenization process, however, had limitations, such as cultural and social boundaries. As time went by, those limitations reduced the efficacy of the advertisement of American cosmetic products in other countries; to appeal to foreign consumers cosmetic brands had to add local elements to the advertising process. On the one hand, some luxury

cosmetic brands refused to do it and minimized localization, because they did not want to lose the prestige and the appeal their products arouse to foreign consumers. On the other hand, brands such as Lancôme tried to differentiate their perfume selection for each country the brand sold products to, creating scents that corresponded to the cultural identity of each country. Other mass-brands such as Uniliver, Nivea, Pond's etc. tried to use local models and celebrities instead of well-known American ones to meet foreign consumers' needs. Another strategy was the adaptation of the original formula of a product to local conditions: ingredients, color preferences, government laws, cost of production, availability of raw materials etc.. A controversial strategy was the adaptation of a brand's name to each foreign country; brands such as L'Oréal did it many times in order to be locally accepted (Jones, 2011).

The second and most important phase of globalization of beauty ideals is related to economic, cultural and social changes that started from the 1980s and continued to the present day. From an economic point of view there has been an important change, in terms of sales growth, in the global market thanks to the opening of Chinese, Russian Indian and Latin America markets. The openness to international trade spread western beauty ideals and the celebrity culture into those countries diffusing the appeal of white western trends such as wide-eyes, pale skin and thin bodies.

As professor Geoffrey Jones (2011), from the Harvard Business School, says in his article, after the Second World War if the European and Asian cosmetic market recovered slowly, the Japanese one had a rapid growth becoming the second cosmetic producer after the United States in 1976. In the 1980s, companies such as L'Oréal started to build their empire abroad acquiring existing brands such as Maybelline – that become Maybelline New York in 1996 –, Redken – an American brand –, Shu Uemura, – a Japanese brand –, and The Body Shop – a British brand – opening stores also in China and Russia.

The opening of new markets brought new ideas for the production of cosmetic products. American brands started to produce products containing new and exotic ingredients to excite and arouse curiosity of European and American consumers. Using new herbs and advanced knowledge to create novelty was beneficial both to foreign countries that wanted to be present and recognized worldwide, but also to western brands, because in this way they could easily increase cosmetic products sales thanks to ingredients unknown in their society.

From a social and cultural point of view, beauty ideals and perceptions started to change thanks to the decolonization of Asia and Africa and the American Civil Rights movement. Those two historical events swiped away the perception of superiority of the white race (as a beauty ideal as well) and allowed the development of a multi-ethnic beauty ideal. As Jones claims, in India and China from the 1960s/1970s on, Bollywood or local cinema actors started to achieve more relevance compared to famous Hollywood actors.

The increase of cosmetic use, the addition of new ingredients in beauty products, the contact with different cultures are all signs of a slow breakdown of a single distribution channel of one main beauty ideal. Little by little, from the 1990s on, the rise of new specialized stores, the use of different television shopping channels, the emergence of the e-commerce created new possibilities for the consumer. Nowadays people are much more aware of what they buy and why they buy it; they are more resolute when it comes to follow or not a beauty ideal.

In an article for the *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, Yan Yan and Kim Bissell (2014) outline the influence that media have nowadays on globalizing beauty ideals and how social norms of different countries are presented by media. This study took into consideration four main global magazines: *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Elle*. The results show that *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* tend to emphasize each country's uniqueness and distinctiveness rather than diffusing a single beauty standard; whereas *Elle* and *Glamour* prefer to communicate standards of beauty ideals to their audiences. Considering each magazine work, *Vogue* is more focused on fashion frames and a limited use of sex elements, whereas *Cosmopolitan* is extremely focused on relationship frames, sex and beauty, showing a low interest for fashion. *Elle* has a similar structure to *Vogue* magazine, with a slight difference in model selection and article characteristics; *Glamour* has similar characteristics to *Cosmopolitan* as well, with the addition of a higher presence of personal and self-help stories. Considering the influence that those topics have on different countries, it seems that the countries where those media are more influential are South African and Latin American ones, which have embraced a more western idealized beauty. Asian magazines, instead, seem to choose and select independently models and beauty standards; they also seem to be more conservative especially when it comes to sexual images (Yan et Bissell, 2014).

A constant feature in the homogenization of beauty ideals is the rise of cosmetic surgery in countries such as South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. The cosmetic surgery is considered a revolution in the beauty industry. According to Jung and Hwang (2016), in

2013 American people spent around 12 billion dollars in surgical procedures; South Korea, instead, has the highest rates of cosmetic surgery in the world. Another article claims that:

Cosmetic surgery is no longer just for movie celebrities, in the US, seventy percent of cosmetic surgery patients earn less than \$50,000 per year and 30% earn below \$25,000. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons, which collects statistics on cosmetic surgery, claimed a 966% increase in cosmetic surgery procedures between 1992 and 2007, with a 68% increase between 2000 and 2007 alone (the dates that reality shows about cosmetic surgery gained popularity). The vast majority, 91%, of these cosmetic surgery patients were women. (Frith, 2014:23)

The same article claims that more than 20% of women in Seoul between the age of 19 and 49 admitted having had cosmetic surgery to obtain a more western look. Ruth Holliday and Joanna Elfving-Hwang¹², conducted a study to analyze the phenomenon, claiming that the most common cosmetic surgery in South Korea are eyelid surgery and rhinoplasties: the first one to widen and lift the eyes; and the second one to make the nose appear more ‘pointy’ than wide. Furthermore, men too have cosmetic surgery to obtain softer features and they get inspired by popular Korean manhwa and Japanese manga cartoons and anime; this look “includes a less angular jaw, double eyelids and a prominent nose tip, while augmenting pectoral and bicep muscles to give their bodies ‘definition” (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). The cosmetic surgery industry in South Korea is growing so fast that the national government accepts and supports the international aesthetics surgery tourism and invests hundreds of millions of dollars to advertise it – even though this industry for the majority is unregulated (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). Cosmetic surgery is so common in South Korea that it is publicized as something to do with a friend – as a relaxing spa treatment – and is perceived by women as a necessary step to improve their femininity appearance and to increase the chances to have success in marriage and financially. This is the same perception that western women had of themselves in the first decades of the twentieth century in America. Lastly, there is an interesting graphic from the recent article “Cosmetics and Cosmeceuticals” (Cavinato, 2018) that represent the actual structure of the cosmetic industry divided into categories.

¹² Respectively a professor of Gender and Culture at the University of Leeds, and a Lecturer in Korean Studies at the University of Frankfurt.

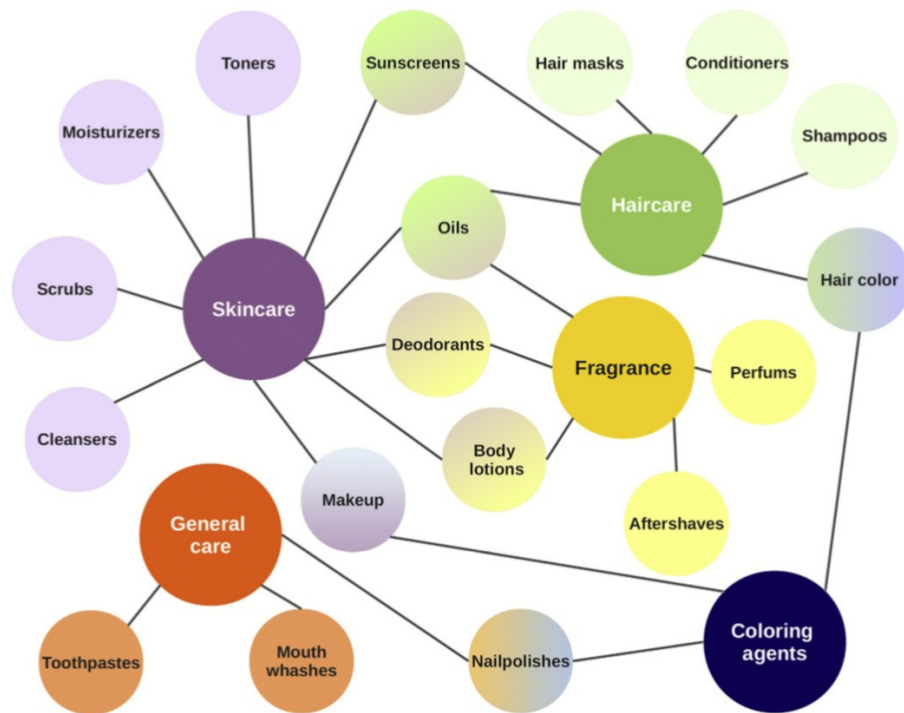


Figure 3. Categories of cosmetic products.

Source (Cavinato,2018: 3).

A recent statistics from Statista¹³, analyzes the growth of each category (skincare, haircare, make-up, perfumes and hygiene products) from 2011 to 2018. In the graphic the data show that the category that keeps growing worldwide is skincare from a percentage of 31% in 2011 to 39% in 2018¹⁴. Hair care, instead, registered a slow and constant fall, from 25% in 2011 to 21% in 2018. The make-up category slowly grew from 17% in 2011 to 19% in 2018. In regard to perfumes and hygiene products they both lost positions respectively from 14% (perfumes) and 13% (hygiene products) in 2011 to 11% (perfumes) and 10% (hygiene products) in 2018.

¹³ Graphic available Statista's website.

¹⁴ The growth has been constant, indeed in 2012 Statista register 33,8%, in 2013 34,1%, in 2014 35,3%, in 2015 36,1%, in 2016 36,4, in 2017 37%. (information found at the link previous cited) (last accessed in August 2019).

2.1 Online marketing

An important element that contributed to the rise of the cosmetic industry during the 1990s, was the choice of selling cosmetic products of different brands in one single specialized retail. In 1969 was founded Sephora, called by the passionate for cosmetics ‘the temple of beauty’. Sephora is a French company founded by Dominique Mandonnaud and then bought by LVMH¹⁵ in 1997. In 1998 Sephora started to open shops internationally: in Portugal, Poland, Spain and Italy. Then in 1999 expanded its business opening shops in USA. Sephora expansion went on until 2010, approaching the Asian market and the Latin American one¹⁶. As the magazine Forbes write, Sephora is a successful retailer for cosmetics, skincare and fragrance, and:

Today Sephora operates in 30 countries and has more than 1,750 points of sale generating revenues in excess of \$4 Billion by my estimate. In most locations the consumer can find more than 100 beauty brands. [...] Sephora’s sales in North America are estimated to exceed \$2 billion¹⁷, while Macy’s, with 810 stores, remains the leader in U.S. cosmetics with sales in excess of \$3.25 billion¹⁸.

Nowadays, however, Sephora is not the only successful retailer for the American cosmetic industry. Sephora’s main competitor in the USA is Ulta Beauty – founded in 2013 – that in 2017 operated in 1154 stores, registering an incredible net income increase of:

18.6% to \$658.6 million, up from \$555.2 million. Comparable sales for the fiscal year increased 8.1%, positively impacted by both the number of customers shopping and their average purchase¹⁹.

Effective strategies that the company use successfully consist in investing on loyalty programs. As the article claims, in the last year the percentage of active members has increased of a 14,4% – personalized services for consumers – improving consumer’s feeling about the service is key to make them return to the retailer – and the selection of highly requested new brands such as Kyle Cosmetics, Morphe, and Jeffrey Star.

¹⁵ LVMH is a French multinational luxury goods conglomerate headquartered in Paris. It controls 60 companies, some of the most famous are: Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Sephora, Givenchy, Fendi.

¹⁶ Information found at the original Sephora website.

¹⁷ In this case the article refers to the year 2013.

¹⁸ *Forbes* article, entitled “Sephora: Department Stores Cannot Stop Its Global Growth”.

¹⁹ *Forbes* article, entitled “Why Ulta Beauty Is Winning Customers And Keeps Growing Rapidly” at the link.

What is making both, and others, retailers grow even faster is the success of the e-commerce. The e-commerce provides many benefits to cosmetics retailers not only from an economic point of view but also from a marketing perspective. E-marketing strategies, indeed, aim to facilitate the relationship between companies and customers giving precious information both to the firm – about customer’s preferences – and to the shopper – about the products they are selling. Thanks to the internet, cosmetic companies can improve their personalization strategies and price promotions: They can spread even more the word of mouth and create better advertisement campaigns to satisfy consumer’s need and desires.

In the last few years, the e-commerce was particularly successful for Ulta Beauty, indeed:

The company’s e-commerce grew more than 60% in 2017, and it increased its share in the prestige beauty category from less than 8% in 2013 to over 13% in 2016. According to Euromonitor, Ulta is now the biggest specialty beauty retailer in the United States²⁰.

Statista too confirms Ulta’s growth by claiming that:

Ulta Beauty is widely recognized as a major player in cosmetics retail. Between 2012 and 2016, the company’s net sales revenue increased from 2.22 billion to 4.85 billion U.S. dollars, while income increased from 172.5 million to 409.8 million U.S. dollars. In 2016, Ulta Beauty controlled about eight percent of the online beauty sales market, ahead of Nordstrom but behind Amazon.com²¹.

E-marketing strategies can also be applied to other technologies such as the mobile phone and, the most recent, social networks. Through the mobile phone consumers can be constantly informed of promotions and news – email marketing – creating satisfaction and commitment – and eventually loyalty – towards the brands’ web pages that have a good web design (Javadian et al., 2012).

Considering selling cosmetics online, “in 2010 more than 11 billion USD worth of sales were online transactions” (Łopaciuk, 2013:1081). The online sales of cosmetics products are growing fast, especially for the emerging markets of the BRIC economy and Argentina; this is due to the change of consumer’s habits and the new method of choice and research for the right cosmetic product at the right price (Łopaciuk, 2013). A paper that analyses online sales growth in relation to the Taiwan market claims that:

²⁰ Information found at the research report of CBINSIGHTS website, article title “How Sephora Built A Beauty Empire To Survive The Retail Apocalypse”. Link at the webpage: <https://www.cbinsights.com/research/report/sephora-teardown/> (last accessed in August 2019).

²¹ Source, Statista website.

The proportion of frequent Internet users in the Internet population grew from 28% in 2000 to 45% in 2008 [5]. People use the Internet for all kinds of activities like shopping through online platforms [6]. As the number of Taiwanese online consumers increases, the integration of virtual and physical channels together with the forming of the community-based word-of-mouth shopping model produces an increase in the proportion of purchases made online as well. The strength of the Taiwanese online shopping market can be seen in how its size grew explosively from NT \$3.89 billion in 2004 to NT \$108 billion in 2007. [...] In 2006, for example, around 81% of the Taiwanese online shopping market was made up of travel, 3C, cosmetics and fashion products. Cosmetics had the fastest growth rate at 90%. [...] According to the statistics made by the Euromonitor International, the sales of cosmetics targeting people grew by over 40% between 1998 and 2003. Another market researcher Datamonitor estimated that in 2004, people spent around NT \$89 billion on personal cosmetics. (Liu et al., 2013:2)

More recent data confirm those growing rates trends, indeed, L’Oréal statistics report that in 2017 the overall cosmetics estimates sales reached 200 billion euros – a 4% to 5% sales growth. Geographically speaking, the areas in which cosmetics sales are higher are: Asia Pacific (37%), of which the most important country for contribution is China (with a 45%); North America (25%); Western Europe (18%); Latin America (11%); Eastern Europe (6%); Africa Middle East (3%). The three leading categories are: skincare (37%); haircare (22%); make-up (19%). The five greatest cosmetics brands for sales are actually: L’Oréal (28,5%); Unilever (20,5%); Procter & Gamble (15,4%); Estée Lauder (11,4%); Shiseido (7,7%). Globally speaking, the online cosmetics sales in 2017 grew by 25%²².

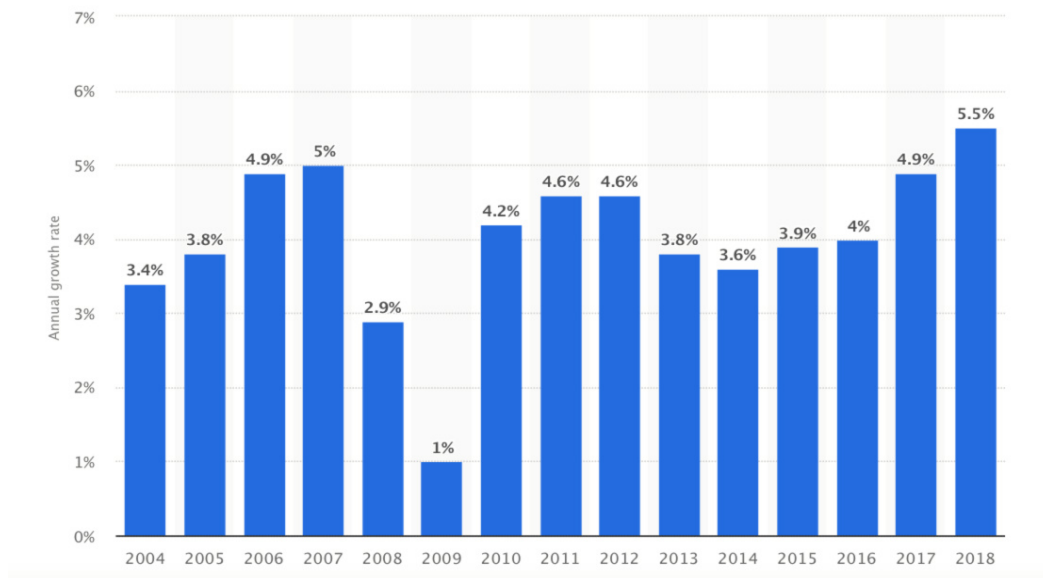


Figure 4. Global growth of cosmetics sales.

²² Statistics found at the L’Oréal website: <https://www.loreal-finance.com/en/annual-report-2017/cosmetics-market>

Source: Statista's analysis of the annual growth rate of the global cosmetics market from 2004 to 2018²³.

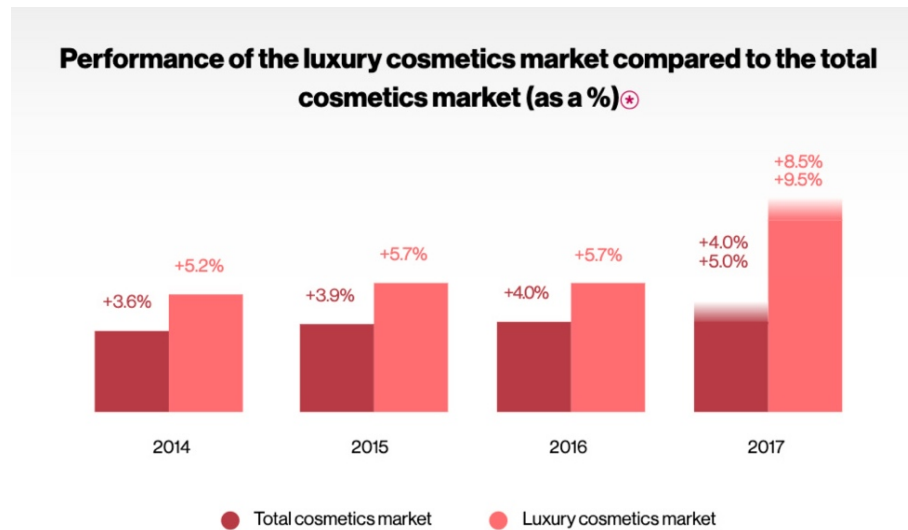


Figure 5. Performance of the luxury cosmetic market.

Source: L'Oréal annual sales report²⁴

The e-commerce is undoubtedly an important resource for beauty businesses nowadays, especially for the ones that struggle to maintain unsuccessful retailers. However, consumers may be driven to buy products by other factors, such as price and convenience. It has been shown that the possibility of a 'fast delivery' and 'reasonable delivery costs' are element of significant importance – especially for male consumers – when buying online (Liu et al., 2013). Those types of consumers, on the other hand, might not be the best for a beauty company since their loyalty to the brand and the purchase intention of cosmetic products depend on the price opportunity rather than the brand's image or other important elements, making their intention to repurchase products in their websites uncertain and unpredictable (Reibstein, 2002). Indeed,

It could be argued that these shoppers might limit their browsing activities to shopping areas that are in a convenient location. They may balance the wish for to shop around with the practical consideration of making a convenient purchase. On the other hand, it could be argued that these shoppers may actively seek to obtain the best possible deal. (Jayawardhena et al., 2007;521)

²³ Statistic found at the Statista's website.

²⁴ Graphic found at the L'Oréal website.

A factor that is related to convenience and strongly influences consumers' behavior on the attitude towards buying beauty products online is security, or the perceived risk of company's websites. Another important factor that influences consumers' attitude towards the e-commerce is the perception of confidence in ability and intention, namely: trust (Mukherjee et Nath, 2007). Online trust seems to be different from the traditional offline trust since in the online world the consumer feels the absence of a salesperson that mediates the relationship between consumer, brand, and cosmetic products. This absence, though, seem to give more power to the consumer that can navigate through the internet and find on his own relevant information and reasons to buy a specific product. Indeed, the consumer can interact online with other people in order to exchange information, experiences and opinions, replacing the absence of a salesperson of a cosmetic retailer. This new way of creating trust among consumers can be alarming for firms because the information that circulates in the internet is difficult to control differently from a traditional retailing system (Mukherjee et Nath, 2007).

There is also a positive correlation between trust and purchase intention, especially between younger age groups approximately around 18-30 and 30-51 years old people. There is the perception among these people that cosmetic online stores would not behave opportunistically, thus an indication of high trust towards buying online cosmetic products. The trustworthiness of a website seems, indeed, the most important thing that triggers the purchase intention for an online cosmetic customer; the good reputation of a brand or a brand's website design, seems to ensure many visits to a brand's website (Liat and Wuan, 2014). The aspect of privacy connects the security aspect to the concept of trust, indeed, the more a credit card transaction is secured the more trustworthy a website is (Mukherjee and Nath, 2007:1192).

Lastly, what pushes consumers to buy cosmetic products online instead of in stores, is the shopping satisfaction that derives from the online purchase experience. Indeed, there is a positive relation between shopping enjoyment and online purchase intention for cosmetics products, especially between younger people (under 30 years old) and, to a small extent between, more mature ones too (over 30 years old). Furthermore, the article outlines that the experience is even more pleasant if the design of the website is not only useful and easy to navigate, but also beautiful to look at because it reminds of the concept of quality (Kim *et al.*, 2007).

2.1.1 Beauty subscription-based online services

The beauty subscription-based online service originally started as a retail service mediated by magazines subscription. It consists of an e-business that for a weekly, monthly or annual fee, guarantee the delivery of a customized box to the customer's home. Nowadays there are many types of subscription-based online services, the main categories are: 'beauty' (36%); 'food' (33%); apparel (16%)²⁵. With regard to the beauty category, some beauty subscription services simply replace basic products such as soaps, detergents, shaving cream (etc.), but the most important ones customize boxes following customers' preferences. As an article in the magazine *Forbes* (Kestenbaum, 2010) claims:

Consumers will give up personal information if they think they'll get a better experience for it. Successful subscription boxes are adapting and personalizing their boxes to each individual consumer. It's an example of what internet retail has been talking about for a long time: mass customization. If a company can make a subscription box with pleasant surprises, they will continue to sell through as long as the customer maintains an interest in discovering new products²⁶.

Indeed, beauty subscription-based online services are constantly growing, in 2016 the beauty subscription e-commerce grew of 109,1% (in 2013 was around 29%) (Ramkumar, 2018). The most famous services in America are Birchbox, Ipsy, Dollar Shave Club, Le Tote, Me Undies, Rocksbox and Stitch Fix which have millions of subscribers. This fast and growing business attracted traditional retailers too, such as Sephora, which made the 'Play! by Sephora' box service and Walmart with 'Baby Box'. Indeed, numbers confirm this promising new beauty business, "customer traffic to these websites has increased from 0.7 million to 21.4 million (3000% increase) in 3 years (2013–2016)" (Ramkumar et Woo, 2018:2). This service though, started as an e-business before the diffusion of social networks, so for consumers, on one side, was a way to be always updated on new cosmetics releases at a modest monthly fee. On the other – since buying cosmetics may be confusing and expensive – this service allow them to try multiple and different products and guide them through the decision of what is best for them. The beauty subscription-

²⁵ Information based on a statistics of beauty box's websites visits. Found in the article "Subscription Businesses Are Exploding With Growth" of the magazine *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2017/08/10/subscription-businesses-are-exploding-with-growth/#6aa1ac5c6678> (last accessed in August 2019).

²⁶ Quote of Kestenbaum's article "Subscription Businesses Are Exploding With Growth" of the online magazine *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2017/08/10/subscription-businesses-are-exploding-with-growth/#6aa1ac5c6678> (last accessed in August 2019).

based online service is a sophisticated system that satisfy consumer’s needs in a detached way – there is no need for human assistance for the shopping experience – and excites consumers thanks to the ‘unboxing’ experience and the monthly surprise.

Top subscription sites
Number of visits in April 2017

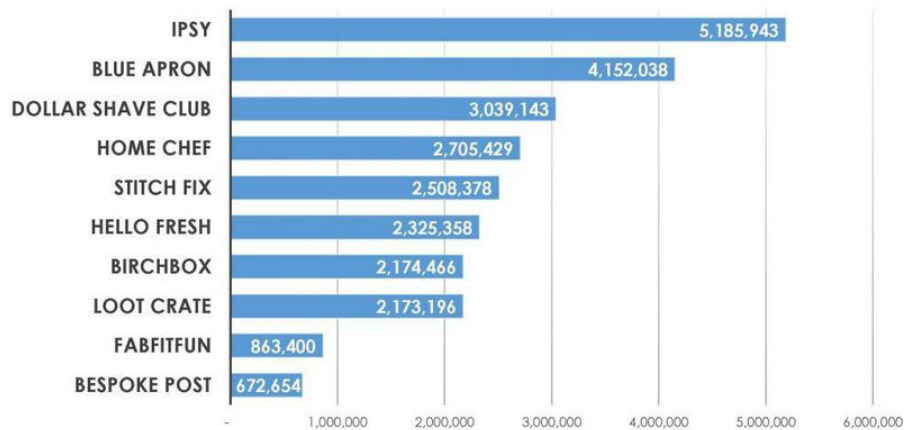


Figure 6. Ranking of successful beauty subscription sites in 2017.

Source: *Forbes* article²⁷

A recent study (Ramkumar et Woo, 2018) analyzed which factors contribute and increase the intention to use those online services. The most important factors are utilitarian and hedonic motivations, because the beauty box service allow the consumer not only to save time, avoid human interaction and save money, but also to experience something new and always surprising. Another important element, that confirms what has been previously said about consumers’ behavior and the purchase intention for cosmetics products, is the influence that social norms have onto online services; indeed:

subjective norm was a little more influential in driving consumers’ intentions to use fashion and beauty SOS than their attitudes, based on the comparison of coefficient values; this implies that for this particular behavior of using fashion and beauty SOS, the role of consumers’ reference groups could be especially critical in enhancing their intentions to use such SOS. (Ramkumar and Woo, 2018:18)

From the beauty brands’ point of view, those online services are beneficial to their sales in the long-run. For instance, one of the founder of Birchbox, Ms. Beauchamp, says

²⁷ Found in the article “Subscription Businesses Are Exploding With Growth” of the magazine *Forbes*. Link: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2017/08/10/subscription-businesses-are-exploding-with-growth/#6aa1ac5c6678> (last accessed in August 2019).

that she had the idea for the online beauty subscription-based service when she was working at Estée Lauder. She then concluded the process with a colleague at the Harvard Business School because she noticed that companies spent lots of money for samples to give to consumer after a purchase, but were not able to track the investment. Beauty boxes such as Birchbox, but also Ipsy, are a way to track data and the purchase behavior because they give the opportunity to purchase full size products of the brands featured in the box with the possibility of a discount depending on the service's policy²⁸.



Figure 7. Example of a beauty SOS.

Source: 'My Subscription Addiction' website²⁹

In this picture there is a clear example of how beneficial in financial and cosmetical terms those boxes are; the value of this box is over \$100 but the box's monthly fee is only \$21 for five good quality cosmetic products.

²⁸ Information found in the article "Birchbox Aims to Simplify the Business of Beauty" of the magazines *The New York Times*.

²⁹ Article "The 24 Best Subscription Boxes for Women in 2019". Link: <https://www.mysubscriptionaddiction.com/25-top-subscription-boxes-for-women> (last accessed in August 2019).

2.2 Standardization or adaptation in cosmetics websites?

As said previously, the Internet is an important tool for consumers to have conversations and discussion about cosmetics products, obtain information about cosmetic brands, and at the same time, it is useful for cosmetic brands to provide services for customers, to do a market research among current and new potential consumers, to inform loyal consumers of news and promotions (etc.).

Brands are using this and other important tools to be known worldwide but also to increase the number of sales and to expand the area in which their products are sold. Internationalization, however, may be a difficult step both for SMEs and multinationals because of the competition of a saturated market and of other barriers, such as cultural and political differences between countries. In this regard, a study (Constantinescu-Dobra, 2011) was conducted to understand which one between standardization or adaptation is the best strategy when it comes to cosmetics websites marketing. This study analyzes the degree of standardization that occurs on cosmetics websites of both multinationals and small and medium-sized enterprises taking in consideration languages, layout, content, navigation and interactivity. The strategy of standardization can be applied to the message of the campaign and to media resources. The main advantage of choosing the standardization strategy is the reduction of costs of the design of the campaign while reinforcing one and only global image of the cosmetic brand. On the other hand, the adaptation strategy may be useful in case of big cultural differences between two countries such as: different languages; negative connotation of some words used in promotions or associated to a product; different national attitudes and behaviors towards a beauty category; differences in laws and regulations regarding promotions etc. The adaptation strategy is more expensive compared to the standardization one and it may lead to a less powerful brand image. Even though it may not be easy for a brand to choose which strategy could be the best for a cosmetic campaign, it has been shown that some beauty categories are more prone to one or the other depending on the themes the products features. For instance, perfumes and body care products have higher possibilities of standardization in the European market, for this reason a cosmetic brand could be using the same marketing campaign for those two important categories in the European market. In respect to this, the article claims that “Avon chooses the same ingredients and packages for its global perfume brands, and the profit is 4% higher than regional and local brands” (Constantinescu-Dobra, 2011:222).

Another interesting strategy, that combines the two previously mentioned, is the acquisition of local brands by multinationals. An example of this, is the case of the L'Oréal Paris. On the one hand, L'Oréal remarks the importance and the prestige of its French origins – as well as their other French brand, Lancôme. On the other hand, it uses adaptation strategies by acquiring brands in other countries such as the American brands Maybelline New York and Helena Rubinstein (etc.) (Constantinescu-Dobra, 2011). In general, the results of the study (Constantinescu-Dobra, 2011) highlight a tendency of standardization strategies between SMEs and adaptation strategies or localized policies between multinationals. Furthermore, the article suggests that SMEs could improve their competitive advantage “through growing flexibility and interactivity with the existing or potential customers” (Constantinescu-Dobra, 2011:233). In conclusion, the article confirms the high degree of standardization for perfumes and toiletry in the European market, whereas, for other beauty categories the strategies are balanced depending on the characteristics of the category (the most adapted are the categories of skin care products, make-up and hair products).

Brands that are successful worldwide are more and more interested in the Asian beauty market. The Chinese market is the third most important market after the American and the French ones. Asian cultures are appropriating many aspects of the western ideal of beauty; however, they tend to avoid conformity and defend their traditional values. This could cause difficulties to international brands when it comes to choosing between standardizing their cosmetic campaigns or adapting them to local beliefs.

Two interesting articles take in consideration those aspects analyzing marketing strategies for the Chinese cosmetic market. The first one (Barnes et al., 2004) claims that Chinese consumers are willing to try new products, make sophisticated and well-thought choices when buying cosmetics and regularly invests in beauty products, healthcare and education. For Chinese consumers, though, culture is important and must be taken into account by international marketers especially for advertising campaigns. Indeed, this article claims that, since the Chinese culture strongly defines Chinese consumers, an adaptation strategy is preferred for this new potential market:

advertisers need to evaluate what aspects of the Chinese market are similar to those of the original market (and to what extent), before implementing a targeted campaign. It seems to be better for the brand to maintain a unified image while addressing the needs of the Chinese market. (Barnes et al., 2004:379)

The most influential channels for Chinese consumers are firstly, television and magazines, and secondly, the opinion of experts and the effect of word of mouth of friends and family.

The second article (Barnes et al., 2009) evaluate the cosmetic market of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Even if the two Chinese cities are geographically close, there are subtle differences in consumer tastes when it comes to advertising and making purchasing choices, underlying how challenging may be for a brand adapting or standardizing its product campaign. In this article, the author claims that women with a great financial independence look for western brands and western beauty ideals because they associate those aspects to social status and modernity. What looks fashionable to western people, though, may not be directly appealing for Hong Kong and Shenzhen people. As a matter of fact, it is important for international brands to underline why western products enhance oriental characteristics as well, in order to embrace both worlds and to be accepted by other cultures. Indeed,

the western notions of a 'modern woman' would not necessarily encompass materialism but self-fulfillment, whereas in Hong Kong, materialism would go hand in hand with the notion of a 'modern woman'. (Barnes et al., 2009:388)

The article then concludes with an advice for marketers, claiming that the two main techniques may be used in different contexts or combined depending on the target. In general, the author claims that in Hong Kong cosmetics advertising is more effective in magazines depicting images of beauty ideals and giving detailed information; whereas, in Shenzhen television and sophisticated models are more influential.

Japanese women as well tend to invest a lot on cosmetic products. They start to use cosmetics when they are eighteen years old, increasing their use around their twenties and slowly decreasing it around their thirties when marriage and children become the priority (Barnes et al., 2008). Japanese consumers confirm the tendency of being fascinated by western looks (or ideals) while defending their traditional values. Japanese consumers, as well as Chinese ones, appreciate background information of a cosmetic product and they are strongly influenced by beauty and fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle*, and by celebrities too. The aspect that is more important for Japanese consumers, though, is to the personality of the celebrity that represents a cosmetic brand. Celebrities, indeed, in order to be influential and reliable must have a high level of empathy since

being beautiful and having ‘good looks’ is not enough for Japanese consumers (Barnes *et al.*, 2008).

Considering the Asiatic cosmetic market from another perspective, it can be claimed that an important Japanese cosmetic brand such as Shiseido did not achieve the globalization goal as successfully as other American or French brands did. As a recent article (Umemura et Slater, 2017) outlines, the Japanese firm was more focused on regional rather than global strategies. Even though the proximity of other Asian markets was considered more important for this brand, the author claims that:

one reason for the lack of global reach among Japanese firms was because Tokyo – with Japan’s persistent association to geisha and samurai – did not become an aspirational global beauty capital on a par with New York or Paris. (Umemura et Slater, 2017:882)

Indeed, Japanese images were not appealing for the American market and were lacking ‘fashion credibility’ (Umemura et Slater, 2017). For economic, political and social reasons, though, the brand Shiseido achieved a great success in the Chinese market by selling the same Japanese beauty ideal, overtaking big brands such as P&G and L’Oréal (Umemura et Slater, 2017).

2.3 Consumers’ awareness of new cosmetics trends: green cosmetics

A cosmetic trend that is having a great success nowadays is the green beauty trend. As a matter of fact, from an economic point of view green cosmetics sales are growing at 20% per year in Europe, with an expectation of higher percentages in the following years. In Europe, the countries that are more aware of this trend are Germany, with sales of 6 billion of euros, followed by France – that is producing more and more cosmetic products that respect and follow the ‘organic’ norms (Cervellon et al., 2011).

On a global scale, China’s, India’s and Brazil’s citizens showed over 70% of positive interest to buy green cosmetics. In general, there is the perception that what is labeled as ‘green’ ‘organic’ or ‘natural’ is better – in terms of safety – than standard cosmetics products, because consumers perceive that green products have more active and pure ingredients compared to the average cosmetic product. However, this is not necessary the case since it is a perception created by marketers thanks to marketing strategies and advertising. Indeed, there is random use of the term ‘natural’ in green marketing

campaigns since strict regulations are lacking in this field. In general, the term is used to indicate that cosmetics products may contain some amount of natural ingredients which are not synthetically derived or processed. However, ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ are not synonyms in the labeling process. A product that is identified as ‘certified organic’ must comply with requirements indicated by the USDA’s National Organic Program (in the USA) and the regulations of the FDA. The term ‘natural’ can be used by manufacturers if a product does not contain artificial flavor, coloring, chemical preservatives or synthetic/artificial ingredients (Duber-Smith et al., 2012).

Natural raw materials are vegetable or mineral products, most often produced in a conventional condition and not always adhering to the criteria established for organic production. A natural raw material is not necessarily organic. (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015:19)

Instead, the term organic is used in cosmetic products when:

at least 95% of the formulation components, less water, are organic raw material with extraction certificate or raw materials that follow strict standards of production, extraction, purification and processing. [...] The last remaining 5% of the formulation may be composed of water, natural raw materials, coming from agriculture or non-certified allowed extractive for organic formulations. (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015:19)

If in America there is more attention towards ingredients’ origin and safety, in Europe the focus is more on the impact that cosmetics products may have on the ecosystems. As a matter of fact, in Europe the Ecocert certification guarantees that a product has a lower impact on the environment and a higher quality of natural ingredients. In Europe there are also important associations such as Soil Association (UK), BDiH (Germany), Ecocert (France), CosméBio (France), ICEA (Italy) and Ecogarantie (Belgium), that work to guarantee that those aspects are respected (Cervellon, 2011).

As written previously, the use of natural ingredients to create cosmetics products dates back to ancient societies; in the modern world, those beauty traditions have remained for some cultures, including Indian and Chinese ones. Traditional Chinese medicine based its knowledge on the observation of the human body in relation to nature; this knowledge counts on thousands of years of observation and in today’s world it is used by companies to sell anti-aging products – a market that is worth more than 14 billion dollars. Therefore, Chinese herbs are frequently mixed in skincare products with the aim of reducing fine lines and wrinkles by deeply moisturizing and nourishing the skin. The Indian medicine as well tries to reduce wrinkles and fine lines, both with moisturizing and nourishing creams, but

also with oils and sunscreens. Determining the quality of those substances and whether or not there are active ingredients in the products, though, is practically impossible for the consumer that has to rely on brands' claims (Duber-Smith et al., 2012).

Overall, consumers perceive cosmetics products that have natural ingredients to be much more efficient and safer for their body in comparison with standards products, probably due to the claims that they have active ingredients. However, the origins of the ingredients in a cosmetic product are not a guarantee of its safety. Some natural products may contain toxic substances that lead to allergic reactions or may sensitize the skin as much as standard cosmetic products could potentially do.

The main challenge for green cosmetics is the biodegradability of their products, which means that the formulation must, not only ensure a good performance, but also ensure microbiological stability. To guarantee that, there are numerous processes such as the extraction of raw materials with "cold, pressure, water or steam distillation percolation and concentration by physical or mechanical methods" (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015: 20) that create products such as "Vegetable butters and oils, lanolin, natural dyes, essential oils, plant extracts (glycolic, tinctures and dried extracts), minerals and natural polymers (xanthan, alginates and starches)" (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015:20). The ingredients that, instead, are not allowed in a natural or green cosmetic product are "synthetic dyes, synthetic fragrances, polyethylene glycols, quaternary ammonium, silicones, synthetic preservatives, diethanolamides and petroleum derivatives" (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015:21).

If Aloe Vera and Argan oil (*Argania Spinosa*) are examples of natural ingredients that are good for the body for their moisturizing and nourishing properties, the ingredient that has to be avoided in any kind of cosmetic product is fragrance, both synthetically and naturally derived. Fragrances and preservatives are two of the most irritant or skin sensitizers ingredients in cosmetics products. Some natural ingredients such as Tea Tree or Propolis may have irritant effects as well, but this is due to their strong anti-microbial characteristics. Fragrances, instead, are present in cosmetics products just to influence consumer's purchasing behavior. An article shows the results on the presence of preservatives and fragrances on the label of 204 cosmetic products (Yazar et al., 2010). The main categories analyzed were shampoo, hair conditioner, liquid soap, wet tissues but also washing-up liquids and multi-purpose cleaners. The study took into consideration 58 skin sensitizers preservatives and 26 fragrances.

The fragrance industry has maintained a system of safety assurance since 1973. IFRA sets standard that are intended to ensure the safe use of fragrance ingredients for the consumer and the environment. These standards are based on scientific principles and address both natural and synthetic materials. (Duber-Smith et al., 2012:7)

Even though IFRA – International Fragrance Association, present in every country of the world – works to guarantee a safe use of fragrance in cosmetics products, on the long run any kind of fragrance can sensitize consumer’s skin, so it would be better to avoid it in cosmetics product. For instance, IFRA does not allow the use of the natural ingredient figus leaf *Ficus carica* as added fragrance in a beauty product because of its phytotoxic proprieties – it would make the skin sensitive and irritated by sunlight (Duber-Smith et al., 2012). Other natural ingredients that have been prohibited for the same reason, but are quite common in cosmetics products, are bergamot and grapefruit oils – which are citrus oils – and others similar oils that contain Furocoumarins phytotoxins proprieties (Duber-Smith et al., 2012).

In a previous study, 50% of the 204 cosmetic products analyzed contained at least one of the 26 fragrances taken in consideration. Just 13% did not contain fragrance, but the remaining 87% contained the word ‘parfum’ on the label. The more frequent fragrances in cosmetic products are “linalool (38%), hexyl cinnamal (32%), butylphenyl methylpropional (29%), limonene (28%) and citronellol (20%)” (Yazar, 2010:268-269); the percentage was even higher in detergents, respectively 91%. With regards to preservatives, the most common were “methylparaben (in 41% of the products), phenoxyethanol (39%), sodium benzoate (34%), propylparaben (25%), and methylchloroisothiazolinone/methylisothiazolinone (MCI/MI) (22%)” (Yazar et al., 2010:268).

Recently, another study has been conducted (Lin et al., 2018) on consumer’s attitude toward green cosmetics in the UK market. The study shows that more than 50% of the respondents are interested in this new trend. The same respondents that valued positively green cosmetic products have also supportive attitudes towards others responsible behavior such as avoid buying cosmetics that use animal testing or products that are not vegan. This suggests that buying green cosmetics with great active ingredients that are safe for the human body and safe for the environment is correlated to positive ideologies and lifestyles. Furthermore, the study claims that socio-demographic and psychographic elements are fundamental aspects that influence consumer behavior when it comes to green cosmetics. A smaller percentage of the same respondents pays more attention to the ingredient list of

cosmetic products and to recyclable packaging; overall, the same people showed a higher knowledge of the world of green cosmetics – both for the ingredients’ properties and measurements standards. The majority of respondents, though, claimed that the information on green cosmetics is not enough suggesting the need for more authoritative sources. The respondents look for information on the internet and on magazines, however, demand more honest advertising campaigns and a more diffused use of certifications for green products. Furthermore, it seems that, for the same persons, word of mouth is one of the most influential factors when it comes to buying green cosmetics. Indeed, the article suggests that celebrities, with a positive image, may have a strong impact on educating and creating a responsible and healthy behavior for citizens in UK. The authors suggest also that the government may also give financial support to develop the green cosmetic industry (Lin et al., 2018).

Considering the aspect of price, in general, green cosmetic products have a higher price compared to standard cosmetic products – both because of their uniqueness and because it is a new market and the production processes are more expensive. The respondents that are predisposed to buy those kinds of products have, not only a higher education in respect of the remaining ones, but also a higher financial stability. Indeed, when those persons find cosmetics product that are labeled as ‘natural’ but are low cost, did not trust the brand’s claims. The study claims that the respondents prefer green cosmetics that have a more ‘luxury appeal’ together with all the beneficial aspect of natural or organic products. Price is the second most important aspect that influence consumer’s behavior; the first one is the function of the product, and then there are: ingredients; packaging and, ironically, fragrance. Other factors that influence consumers’ attitudes are internal factors – such as psychological and emotional feelings – and external ones – such as family’s opinions, social and cultural status (Lin et al., 2018:3).

The article entitled ‘Natural cosmetics’ (Duber-Smith et al., 2012) reports some of the most successful brands that sell cosmetics products that are labelled as ‘natural’ and others that sell organic cosmetics product. In the first category the article reports big companies such as Burt’s Bees (Clorox) and Aveda (Estée Lauder) that in 2010 had sales between 250 to 350 millions of dollars, followed by Aveeno (Johnson & Johnson), The Body Shop (L’Oréal) and N. V. Dr Perricone MD cosmetics with sales of 150-250 millions of dollars; between all of them, just The Body Shop had a 20% of sales of certified organic products. By contrast, companies that had a significantly smaller net of sales (between 30-50

millions of dollars) had higher percentage of sales of certified organic products. The first one in the list of the article's table is Aubrey Organics (100% sales of certified organic products) followed by Giovanni (60% sales of certified organic products), Dr Bronner's (40% sales of certified organic products), Dr. Hauschka, Nature's Gate (Levlad) and Weleda with 20% sales of certified organic cosmetics.

Looking at the website of Aubrey Organics, it seems that their products contain 75% of certified organic ingredients; indeed, they claim that "A number of our products have been certified organic by the USDA National Organic Program and carry the USDA Organic seal."³⁰

Considering the website of The Body Shop, the first information available directly close to the brand's name is 'Nature Inspired Beauty. Never Tested on Animals'³¹; secondly, there is the association to fair trade to many products collections, suggesting that the brand want to create a positive brand image targeting consumers that are inclined to those ideologies or lifestyles. However, in the website description of the "soothing day cream" product there is not a symbol that certify the origins of the ingredients³². Additionally, at the same link, the brand claim that the aloe contained in the product is made in "Pure Community Trade aloe from Campeche, Mexico" but there are not additional information about this claim.

Lastly, and more interestingly, the brand Burt's Bees – which is one of the most successful natural brands according to the article entitled 'Natural Cosmetics' (Duber-Smith et al., 2012) – uses the words 'natural products' in its product's packaging to sell more. Indeed, for the "sensitive skin day cream" product the brand claim that the product is 99% natural – even though the label³³ and their website does not certify that or the origins of the ingredients.

³⁰ Information taken at the brand website.

³¹ Information taken at The Body Shop website.

³² Ingredients of this face product: Aqua/Water/Eau, Isononyl Isononanoate, Glycerin, Pentylene Glycol, Cyclopentasiloxane, Butylene Glycol, Cetearyl Alcohol, Myristyl Myristate, Sesamum Indicum Seed Oil/Sesamum Indicum (Sesame) Seed Oil, Cyclohexasiloxane, Cetyl Alcohol, Myristyl Alcohol, Stearic Acid, Cetearyl Glucoside, Palmitic Acid, Aloe Barbadensis Leaf Juice Powder, Myristyl Glucoside, Acrylates/C10-30 Alkyl Acrylate Crosspolymer, p-Anisic Acid, Sodium Hydroxide, Bisabolol, Xanthan Gum, Disodium EDTA, Stearyl Alcohol, Lauric Acid, Myristic Acid, PEG-30 Dipolyhydroxystearate, Trideceth-6, Avena Sativa Kernel Extract/Avena Sativa (Oat) Kernel Extract. Information taken at the brand's website at the link: <https://www.thebodyshop.com/face/moisturisers/aloe-soothing-day-cream/p/p000225> (last accessed in August 2019).

³³ Information taken at the website page, at the link: <https://www.burtsbees.co.uk/product/sensitive-skin-day-cream/> (last accessed in August 2019).

Ingredients on the label: Aqua (water, eau), helianthus annuus (sunflower) seed oil, glycerin, cetyl alcohol, CI 77947 (zinc oxide), zea mays (corn) starch, gossypium herbaceum (cotton) flower extract, oryza sativa (rice) extract, beta vulgaris (beet, extrait de racine de betterave) root extract, artemisia umbelliformis extract,

Looking at the price of those three face creams, the Aubrey one costs \$22.99 for 50ml product, The Body Shop one costs £13 for 50ml product, and finally the Burt's Bees one costs £16.49 for 50 ml product. Considering that the only brand that give a guarantee on the origin of the ingredients of the face cream has the highest price, is not too expensive in comparison with the other two for the same amount of product. The article 'How Green is Green?' (Cervellon et al., 2011) analyzes how price influence consumers' purchase intention of green cosmetics and outlines that consumers would be prepared to pay 40% more a green cosmetic product that claim to have between 10% to 50% of organic ingredients; furthermore, they would pay 60% more if the product contains between 75% to 95% of organic ingredients.

In conclusion, the green cosmetic market is growing rapidly with percentage sales much higher annually than the regular cosmetic market; however, the advertising of green products may be misleading for consumers, especially considering the fact that some brands – as in the case of Burt's Bees face cream – use general terms such as 'natural' to sell more expensive products and to obtain higher profits without giving certifications or guarantees to their consumers. Indeed, a proper education on this subject is necessary to help consumers to be aware of what they buy and how safe those products are for them. At the same time, brands should create more trustworthy marketing campaigns in order to ensure good quality products and build loyalty towards their products.

2.3.1 Cosmeceuticals

Another cosmetic market that is growing as fast as green cosmetics is the one of cosmeceuticals. The term 'cosmeceutics' was created in 1962 by Raymond E. Reed, the President of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists (Kwan et al., 2014); the term defines:

a product that produces a useful and desired effect; gives desirable aesthetic properties; meets fixed chemicals, physical and medical standards; and is scientifically designed product to apply to the human body externally. (Kwan et al., 2014:2)

euphrasia officinalis extract, butyrospermum parkii (shea) butter, saccharum officinarum (sugar cane, extrait de canne a sucre) extract, aloe barbadensis leaf juice, jojoba esters, hydrolyzed jojoba esters, kaolin, lecithin, sucrose, fructose, glucose, inositol, citric acid, benzoic acid, trehalose, xanthan gum glyceryl laurate, potassium sorbate, sucrose stearate, sucrose polystearate, sodium benzoate, sodium stearoyl lactylate, sodium PCA, alcohol denat., phenoxyethanol.

Marketers are using the term ‘cosmeceuticals’ to sell the idea that those products have higher qualities than regular cosmetic products – but are not as good as pharmaceuticals products. If cosmetic products are produced and sold with the aim of improving the appearance of a person, cosmeceutics products, thanks to their active ingredients, change the structure of the skin at a deeper level, depending on the function of the product.

Cosmeceuticals, however, are not regulated by FDA, indeed:

The term "cosmeceutical" has no meaning under the law. While the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) does not recognize the term "cosmeceutical," the cosmetic industry uses this word to refer to cosmetic products that have medicinal or drug-like benefits. A product can be a drug, a cosmetic or both. The FD&C Act defines drugs as those products that cure, treat, mitigate or prevent disease or that affect the structure or function of the human body, if a product makes such claims it will be regulated as a drug. Cosmetics are intended to beautify, promote attractiveness, alter appearance or cleanse; they are not approved by FDA for sale nor are they intended to effect structure or function of the body³⁴.

As a matter of fact, cosmeceuticals products are not tested and regulated enough and give consumers ‘a false sense of security’ when it comes to product safety (Brandt et al., 2011). For this reason, people need more information before taking into consideration using cosmeceutic products:

one should know that the rigour, adequacy and types of tests are at the discretion of the manufacturers. [...] we should also note that the proving of claims might be done so as to gain a marketing advantage, but these are very expensive and may not make economical sense for cosmeceutics companies to carry out. [...] T. Josephin Lin, an author for the *Journal of Experimental and Clinical Medicine*, has mentioned that testing is a matter of ethics. (Kwan et al., 2014:3-4)

The only countries that regulate this market and distinguish drugs to functional cosmetics (quasi drugs) and cosmetic products are Japan and Korea (Lintner et al., 2009). The majority of consumers, though, are not aware of that and, on the contrary, are willing to pay more to have products that claim to be beneficial to their skin (Draelos, 2019). Indeed, Statista confirms the exponential worldwide growth of this market between 2011 and 2017 in the graphic below.

³⁴ Information taken at the FDA website, at the link: <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetics-labeling-claims/cosmeceutical> (last accessed in August 2019).

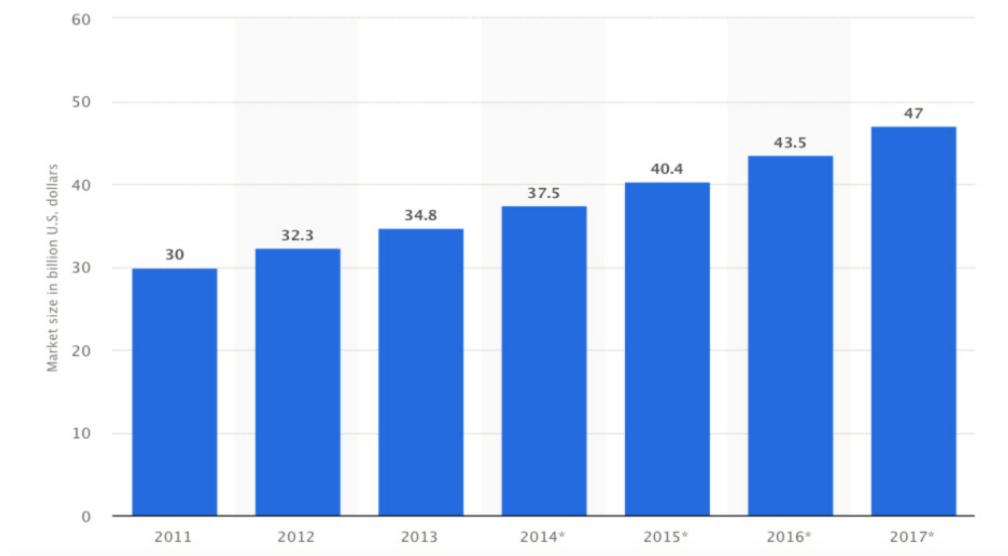


Figure 8. Sales, in billions of dollars, of the cosmeceutical sector³⁵.

In the US market there are at least 400 cosmeceutics manufacturers and the greatest ones are: Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, L’Oréal, Estée Lauder, Avon, and Allergan. Secondly, there are: StriVectin, N.V. Perricone, Murad, DDF, Hylexin, MD skincare, Dr Brandt, Erno Laszlo, Peter Thomas Roth and Rodan + Fields which claim to be developed by doctors (Brandt *et al.*, 2011).

Maria Cavinato, in her article “Cosmeceutics and Cosmeceuticals” (2018) analyzes not only the major classes of cosmetics and cosmeceuticals but introduces two other correlated markets which are nutricosmetics and nutraceuticals.

³⁵ Image taken at the Statista website, at the link: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/621345/value-of-the-cosmeceuticals-sector-worldwide-globally/> (last accessed in August 2019).

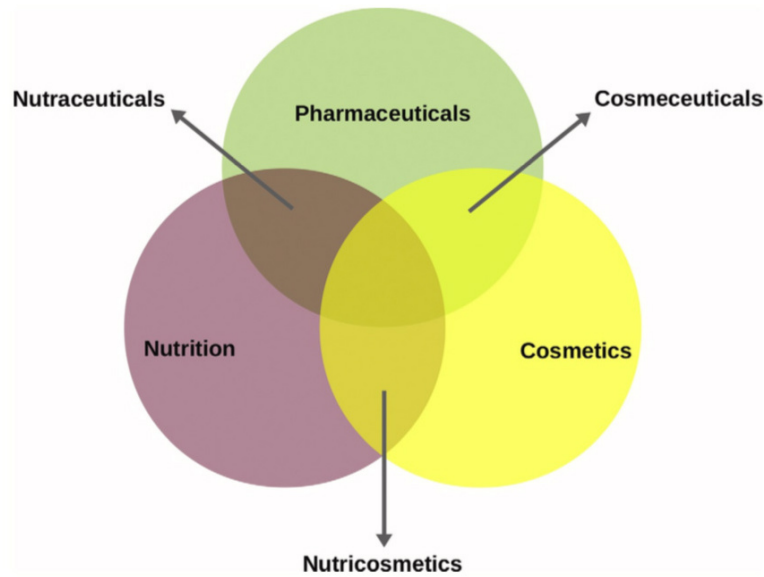


Figure 9. Creation of new markets.

Source (Cavinato,2018:2).

Nutricosmetics are food components that improve the appearance of the skin and hair texture when ingested and incorporated to a diet. Nutraceuticals, instead, give beneficial results to the general health of an individual (Cavinato, 2018).

As written previously, the main categories of the cosmetic industry are: skincare, haircare, coloring agents, fragrance and general care. Skincare is the most important category for the cosmeceuticals market; indeed, it counts for 80% of the US and European market (Brandt et al, 2011). In 2001 the global market for cosmeceuticals was worth \$2.8 billion and was expected to grow in the following years at a percentage of 7,5% with expected sales of \$9.4 billion in 2012 (Brandt et al, 2011). As seen in Statista’s graphic, though, cosmeceuticals grew much more than what was expected reaching \$32.3 billion in 2012.

This success may be due to the fact that firstly, marketers advertise those products as better performing than any other cosmetic product, and secondly, to the fact that the majority of those products are sold as ‘anti-aging’ which is the most appealing category of the cosmetics and cosmeceuticals markets.

The skin ages because of “an inevitable consequence of physiological and genetic changes” (Cavinato, 2018: page) which are defined as ‘intrinsic’ components; however, there are also ‘extrinsic’ components such us sun exposure, pollution, bad dietary habits – as well as smoking – which contribute to almost 80% of the aging process. The most

harmful of the ones just cited, is sunlight, whose effect is commonly indicated as ‘photoaging’ (Cavinato, 2018: page). Some of the effects may worsen the appearance of the skin and lead to the development of deeper wrinkles and pigmentations, influencing the quality of life. Other discomforting effects of aging may be the loss and graying of hairs, which have equal consequences on people’s confidence.

Knowing all those important aspects, marketers have studied strategies to prevent the process of aging – with the help of ingredients that may be synthetically derived or may come to the natural or animal world. Furthermore, they developed multiple types of products that arouse in consumers’ minds the necessity of creating their own skincare routine. Normally, few products are needed to maintain the skin hydrated and nourished, such as a cleanser, a moisturizer and a sunscreen to protect it from sun damage. However, marketers sell the idea that to create a good skin care routine is necessary to follow many steps: cleanser; toner; serum; moisturizer; oils; sunscreen; a mask two times a week and/or different kinds of exfoliators – chemicals ones like acids, or physical ones like scrubs or through cosmetic devices which oscillates and remove dirt and dead skin.

Toners are used to clean what is left from the first step of cleansing, and might have astringent properties. However, its use is optional especially because most of them have irritant substances – such as fragrances or ingredients like menthol or camphor – that create a tingling sensation. Serums as well are optional and are used to add substances to the skin to treat certain issues; however, their formulations, most of the time, are not occlusive enough to avoid the epidermal water loss, requiring the use of a moisturizer to achieve the right level of hydration. Masks may be useful but have temporary effects; for this reason, consumers have to buy lots of them and use those products constantly to achieve a good result on the long run. With respect to oils, there are many uses of those products; in general oils are applied to obtain an emollient effect, especially for people with dry skin. However, some of them may be irritant especially for people with impure skin – an example of this is coconut oil (Cavinato, 2018).

Considering the aspect of active ingredients, the main substances that are used nowadays in skincare cosmeceuticals product are: retinoids, vitamins, peptides, botanicals, and HAs (hydroxy acids). In general, all those ingredients are sold in cosmeceuticals product with anti-aging functions. Retinoids are synthetic vitamin A derivatives, and could be divided into: retinol, retinyl esters, retinoic acid (tretinoin) and retinyl palmitate.

Retinoids are present in drugs with percentages that start from 5% of concentration, and are generally prescribed by doctors to prevent collagen degradation, reduce wrinkles and fine lines and improve the texture of the skin as a whole. In the cosmeceuticals market, instead, are present – with the same aim and claims – products that contain retinol, which may or may not be easily assimilated by the skin and may lead to irritation because of its instable nature once exposed to the sun and to oxygen (Draelos, 2019). The majority of consumers do not know that there is a difference between the formulation of retinoids and retinols and take for granted that skincare products that contain retinol are just as effective as drugs – an advantage for marketers that sell those products to higher prices and obtain a greater profit.

Another active ingredient that is popular in this market is vitamin C which is normally sold as 10% of ascorbic acid, for its antioxidant functions. Vitamin C lightens the skin and helps with pigmentation problems but has a low stability and degrades quickly if exposed to sun and oxygen. Cosmeceutical brands are creating different kinds of product in order to stabilize the vitamin in the best way. Some brands may use packaging that allow no air and no light to enter in contact with the ingredient (or single use products); other brands develop the product under powder form to be used with some water. With those precautions the price of the products containing vitamin C may drastically increase due to expensive processes of production. The constant use of products with vitamin C at higher percentages may lead to an increased sensitivity of the skin, especially if exposed to sunlight without sun protections (Cavinato, 2018).

The only vitamin that is better tolerated by the skin and does not cause irritation, instead, improve problems of redness and pigmentation, is vitamin B3 called niacinamide or nicotinamide. Niacinamide is frequently used in cosmeceuticals products and is especially good for people with acne prone skin. Indeed, niacinamide helps reconstructing the barrier of the skin and reduces hyperpigmentation softening the skin. (Cavinato, 2018).

A similar function is performed by peptides, another popular active ingredient in cosmeceuticals products. Peptides have been shown to be useful in repairing the skin barrier and in wound healing thanks to their ability of stimulating the synthesis of collagen. The most advertised products, at the present moment, are Alpha-hydroxy acids and Beta-hydroxy acids used as chemical exfoliators to improve the overall texture of the skin. The most famous HAs are glycolic acid, malic acid or lactic acid. Those same ingredients are used by dermatologists to deeply exfoliate the skin, with percentage of concentration around 15-25% but also up to 70% to treat problems such as acne, ichthyosis, keratoses,

warts, psoriasis (etc.) (Kornhauser et al, 2010). Those same ingredients are present in cosmeceutical products, at lower percentages, to be used by every consumer. The main issues caused by the use of those acids are skin photosensitivity, erythema and skin flaking (Cavinato, 2018).

With regard to BHAs, the most common one is salicylic acid which has always been used as an anti-acne treatment to unclog pores and exfoliate the skin. Salicylic acid is a well-known product but has been recently denominated BHA in cosmeceutical products to create the expectation of something new for consumers. Differently from alpha-hydroxy acids, salicylic acid should not be more concentrated than 2% in cosmeceutical products, otherwise consumers would need the monitoring of their doctors to be able to use it safely (Cavinato, 2018). Another type of acid that creates fewer irritation problems to the skin, is PHA (polyhydroxy acids, such as lactobionic acid and gluconolactone) but is less advertised by marketers and less frequently produced by cosmeceutical brands. These kinds of acids protect the skin from the damage of the sun and UV radiations and are stronger humectants compared to AHAs and BHAs (Cavinato, 2018).

Cosmeceutical products, however, are also advertised as containing natural products to have a younger and healthier skin. In the article entitled “Novel cosmeceuticals from plants – An industry guided review” (Dorni et al, 2017) the authors explain which are the main and greater family plants that are used also in cosmeceutical products to restore and protect the skin from the environment and from the process of aging. The main family plants are Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, Fabaceae, Poaceae and Malvaceae . Asteraceae is one of the largest plant families; some examples of this plant family are Lad’s Love (*Artemisia abrotanum*) which has an anti-wrinkle function, and *Calendula*, which is a potent anti-inflammatory and wound-healing plant. Lamiaceae is the most used family plant in skin care for the anti-aging and anti-cellulite proprieties of its herbs. The plants that belong to the family of Fabaceae are known for their ability of collagen synthesis and skin repairing. In regards to Poaceae, there are many plants that have protective and repairing functions such as *Avena Sativa*. Malvaceae plants as well have moisturizing and anti-aging properties (Dorni et al,2017).

Cosmeceuticals brands are also using fashionable ingredients such as green tea and matcha in many cosmeceutical products. Green tea is well known for its anti-inflammatory properties and is often associated to the concept of anti-aging because of its ability to increase the epidermal thickness and inhibit cancer cell formation (Amer et Maged, 2009).

If on the one hand, some cosmeceutical products may be good for consumers despite the potential problems they could create, on the other, marketers take advantage of the insufficient knowledge that consumers have of those ingredients to obtain higher profits. Furthermore, cosmeceuticals products are not FDA approved, as much as the use of marketing terms such as ‘fragrance free’ or ‘hypoallergenic’ on the label of cosmetics and cosmeceuticals products. Indeed,

It is worthwhile noting that a label of “fragrance-free” identifies products that seem to lack any actual fragrance, but indeed may have the masking fragrances to get rid of unpleasant odors in the product as it is compounded.

Similarly, hypoallergenic products do not guarantee total freedom from allergic reactions, but are certainly important in the allergic patient’s awareness if cosmetics are deemed important in spite of a high level of sensitivity. For the acne prone patients, noncomedogenic similarly has validity but no official status, and sometimes the testing with rabbit ears is the hallmark for this claim but not always. (Millikan, 2001:373)

Even though the category of nail care is not as successful as skincare, it is worth mentioning that this category is not regulated by FDA.

2.4 Packaging and brand image

If packaging was not considered an important element of business at the beginning of the cosmetic industry, nowadays things have significantly changed. Generally speaking, the main functions of cosmetic packaging are: to prevent the contamination of the products’ ingredients; to guarantee the functionality of the product and that the product is sealed and brand new; to protect the product during transportation (etc.). There are three main types of packaging: the primary packaging is the packaging that is in direct contact with the ingredients of the product itself; the secondary packaging is the one that holds and contains the primary one; and the third packaging is generally used to ship the product safely (Sahota, 2014).

The main materials used to obtain those effects for cosmetics packaging are glass, plastics, metals, fibrous materials; each of them may be useful or not depending on the category of the cosmetic product they have to protect, or on the characteristics of the product itself. The type of containers and the types of closure of the products are also important aspects for the protection and conservation of the ingredients. For instance, for products such as face or body lotions capped plastic tubes are not recommendable because

the product may build up and cake around the opening, making it less stable and more prone to bacteria growth (Muralidhar et al., 2016).

Nowadays packaging not only has the aim of attracting consumers, but also to associate the image of a brand to the quality of a product. Indeed, there is a positive relation between brand awareness, quality of its products, and consumers' loyalty. The more a consumer perceives that the quality of a product is good, the more he or she is loyal to a brand; moreover, if a consumer is loyal to a brand he or she is likely to repurchase the product they were satisfied of (Chinomona et Maziriri, 2017).

The consumption of cosmetics depends on different variables such as price, quality, brand name and brand loyalty (Anjana, 2018). Recent studies analyze if and how packaging could have an impact on the association of a brand image and consequently, the impact that packaging may have on consumers' purchase behavior. According to the author, the packaging of a cosmetic product acts as a mediator, or as a carrier, of a brand's image and messages to consumers, creating a symbolic relation between the brand and the consumer (Anjana, 2018). Indeed:

clients make purchasing decisions in just a few seconds; there is a greater trend towards self-service; the relationship between marketing and design is key to success; and packaging contributes to identity and differentiation. Packaging acts as a "silent salesperson" that influences the purchasing decision beyond the other aspects of merchandising such as lighting, music, and colour. (Gómez et al., 2015)

Packaging communicates brand identity and, at the same time, positions the product in a defined category; moreover, the design of the packaging adds value to a cosmetic product. There are some characteristics, such as product's weight, that create associations between a cosmetic product and a brand's image; moreover, there are also sensorial elements that contribute to this indirect communication between the two parts: color; design; form and message (Gómez et al., 2015).

Another study was conducted to analyze how packaging's colors of cosmetic products influence consumers' behavior, especially under time pressure (Javed et al, 2015). This study shows that the color and the name of the product written on the packaging strongly influence the perception that a consumer has of the cosmetic product. Indeed, the color of the packaging resulted to be three times more influential than the price of the product itself. Furthermore, the article claims that consumers are more likely to remember colorful ads than non-colorful ones. The preference for some color instead of others depends on the culture and on consumers' personal experience. As to choosing a product under time

pressure, the article claims that while time pressure had a moderate effect on the buying preference, the color and the attractiveness of the packaging are still more influential on consumers' behavior (Javed et al., 2015).

Another study (Jame et al., 2016) outlines how graphical and physical characteristics of cosmetics packaging may influence consumers behavior. According to the author, the aesthetics of the packaging is an important influence on the purchase intention of a cosmetic product. This aspect can be so powerful that a consumer may decide to buy a product from an unknown brand just for its appearance – having a short period of time to make a decision – increasing competition between cosmetic brands.

The article entitled “The Influence of Textured Surfaces of Cosmetic Packaging on Consumers' Feelings”, (Ritnamkam et al., 2016) outlines that, in addition to the aesthetics of a cosmetic packaging, also sensory perceptions of a product affect the purchase intention. The authors of this article tested consumers' sensory perception of some cosmetics' packaging by doing blind tests and analyzed how they may create assumptions on the products through tactile sensations. The results of the blind tests confirmed the fact that consumers create associations between a kind of texture of a cosmetic product and the message that a cosmetic product conveys. For instance, depending on the group of products tested, respondents defined the products as “childlike, adolescent, cute, uncomplicated, gentle, sentimental, cherished, tender, and informal” or “ultramodern, working woman, tasteful, confidence, seductive, appealing, interesting, strong, secure, repeating, busy, warm, stylish, chic, health-conscious and slick” (Ritnamkam et al., 2016: 128). Furthermore, Asiya Faisal Khan and Mohd Faisal Khan conducted a study in the city of Indore (India), and tested how skincare products' packaging affects women's behavior. The results show that, of 125 respondents, 39.40% are influenced by the information and/or instructions reported in the packaging regarding the application or use of the product. By contrast, 27.20% is influenced by the ingredients list reported in the back of the packaging, meaning that the written messages that a cosmetic product conveys, are important factors that increase the purchase intention. This confirms that receiving information is getting more and more important for consumers, and the fact information is necessary to distinguish a product from another due to the saturation of this industry (Khan et al., 2013).

Lastly, in the last few years, the green beauty trend has changed how a packaging should be produced and recycled as well; indeed, many companies are trying to develop packaging that are more sustainable. However, it is difficult to understanding whether or

not this is a marketing strategy or if it possible to create less impactful packaging maintaining a the attractiveness of the product and protecting the ingredients from contamination at the same time. As mentioned previously, consumers express the desire to have more eco-friendly products with sustainable packaging; however, the idea that cosmetics packaging degrades with time does not go hand in hand with the microbiological risk of contamination. The article “Packaging, Cosmetics and Pharmaceuticals” explains that some containers can be more prone to compromise the stability of a product; for instance, “jars and bottles, are more likely to develop microbial contamination issues than are the less accessible configurations of aerosol cans, airless pumps, flex packages and other sealed packages” (Rosette et al., 2012:7). The same author proposes the possibility of reusable or refillable systems; however, the reused packages must be sanitized properly before use to avoid the risk of contamination.

Another article entitled “Sustainable Packaging” discusses how big cosmetic companies are trying to cut the environmental footprint of their packaging’s product and explains what the term ‘biodegradable’ means with regards to cosmetics packaging. Indeed, “There are various ways to reduce the packaging impact of cosmetic products. Apart from reduction, the other R’s in the now infamous 3R’s of packaging are reuse and recycle” (Sahota, 2014: 127-128). Many companies are now promising to use more recycled plastic to create new packaging such as P&G³⁶ and other natural cosmetic companies such as Neal’s Yard Remedies, that is using 100% PRC plastic for its products. Other companies such as Physician’s Formula uses more natural materials like bamboo and wood for its compact foundation and bronzers (Sahota, 2014). This new perspective is not only good for the environment but, from a marketing point of view, it also creates a competitive advantage for companies that follow this path.

³⁶ The brand is already using PRC plastic to some of its product but is promising to reach 100% PRC plastic on all products for 2030. The information is taken in the article written in the original page of the brand, at the link: <https://news.pg.com/blog/Plastic50by2030> (last accessed in August 2019).



Figure 10. Packaging and brand value.

Source: (Sahota, 2014: 142)

The perfect way to add value to a product while reducing the impact on the environment.

A sustainable packaging, therefore, should balance the aesthetic aspect of a product to a reduced quantity of packaging, without losing the protective function of this. If on the one hand recycled plastic reduces the environmental footprint, on the other, it is not biodegradable. The term is generally misused and may create misleading claims; indeed, according to the same author, the term should be used to guarantee that a material is completely biodegradable in a short period of time (between 1-2 years) (Sahota, 2014). There are many companies that are now switching to an eco-friendlier perspective; however, more research and studies need to be carried out to be able to sell cosmetic products that are totally safe for people and for the environment as well.

3. Worldwide advertising social media and influencer marketing

As said in previous chapters, the Internet has become an important tool for businesses that want to increase their sales with marketing strategies. There are many possibilities to achieve this goal – mobile marketing, e-mail marketing, web marketing – but, nowadays, the most important one for the cosmetic industry is marketing through social network sites. Social media allow businesses to show texts, images, videos, networks useful both for the interaction between customers – and between customers and firms – creating a significant change in the way brands communicate with the consumers, from delivering information to exchanging it. This bidirectional communication not only leads to better collaboration between the two parts, but also, facilitates the sharing of useful content, critiques and opinions. A person, thanks to these applications, can be, not only a user, but also a producer. The consumer – and user – becomes more empowered with all the information that finds online together with all the opinion that shares in his/her channel. Therefore, consumers no longer depend on the information that marketers provide them ‘in golden words’; on the contrary, have the power to question the authenticity of a brand’s claims on their cosmetics products. Statistics (Javadian et al., 2012) claims that:

70% of customers use social media for getting information, 49% of above figure do their purchase decision based on information that they get from social media, 60% declared that they tend to get the information from social media. That research also shows that 45% people who reach to information by social media site are involved in word of mouth. (Javadian et al., 2012:121)

These numbers show how the process is changing especially for younger persons, which are becoming more influential on other consumers’ purchasing intention and behavior. Furthermore, social media offer the possibility of collecting important data of cultural differences and human activities between users. Considering that the cosmetic industry is strongly related to the concepts of self-perception and self-representation – but also to beauty ideals, social and moral norms – those applications become fundamental for the businesses’ success.

There are different types of social media; the most common are social network sites such as Facebook, where people share their personality, their tastes, beliefs, information, and chat with other people. Then, there are blogs which are indicated as CMS (content management systems) and have no restraints towards the content they share. Blogs are written by individuals or a group of people that shares beliefs and information to a large audience in internet. Compared to Facebook, the content may be even more subjective and less controlled. In the category of blogging there is also the section of microblogging whose difference consists in writing a limited number of words, as for the famous social media, Twitter.

Facebook was the first to be created, among the most famous social networks; it was launched in 2004 and generated, since the beginning, a great and large audience. Nowadays more than 1,86 billion people are monthly active users in the platform, generating a high interest for businesses visibility. Facebook, thanks to its own structure, allows businesses to present themselves in a more friendly and familiar way to consumers, aspect that encourages them to open discussions in the comment section of brands' pages. Consumers are also likely to share products' preferences with their friends, increasing word-of-mouth and, potentially, brands' sale. One of the most distinctive aspects of Facebook for brands, is the fact that this website can create targeted advertising for users depending on demographics, age, gender, location and interests.

The authors of the article entitled "Social Media, Social Me: A Content Analysis of Beauty Companies' Use of Facebook in Marketing and Branding" (Shen and Bissell, 2013) analyzed Facebook posts of six famous cosmetics brands and claimed that "63.2% of Estee Lauder's posts, 30.6% of MAC Cosmetics, 26.2% of Clinique, 46.9% of L'Oréal, 48.3% of Maybelline, and 52% of CoverGirl's posts were related to what was coded as entertainment" (Shen et Bissell, 2013:640). This outlines not only the importance of doing Q&A, polls, surveys etc. to engage the audience, but also the fact that posting such content in conjunction with interesting information about the brand is a new and more interactive model of communication in comparison to traditional promotional strategies with discount codes and products promotions. In the same article, they suggest that:

the two-way interaction in social media may give brands/companies better engagement control and allow them to react quickly to market developments. [...] Collecting thoughts and advice from consumers via other activities, such as Q&A or calendar sharing, may be more helpful to achieve brand loyalty, which can ultimately translate into long-term efficacy for brands/companies. (Shen et Bissell, 2013:647-648)

Nowadays, it is essential for cosmetics brands letting the beauty community share their opinion about brands' products and increasing the Word of Mouth through social network websites. Combining traditional marketing techniques to this new reality is more profitable to cosmetics brands.

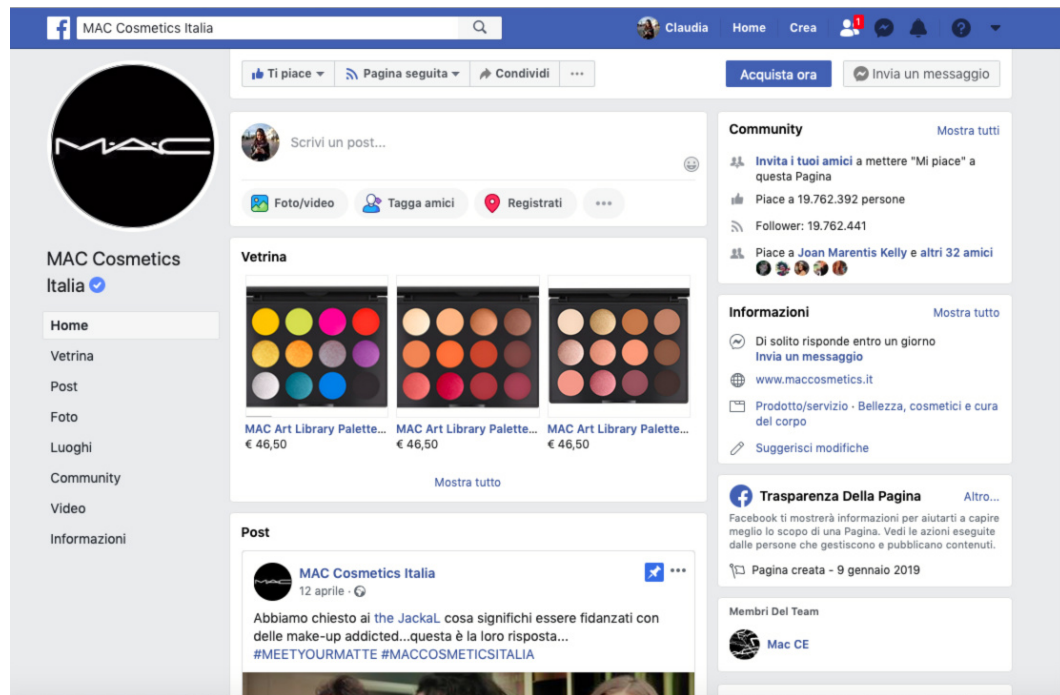


Figure 11. Mac cosmetics official Facebook page³⁷.

In this case it is noticeable how easy the navigation is through the page: the section on the left allows you to browse through a brand's posts, photos, places, videos, general information and information about the community. In the center of the page there are the products that the brand advertises and sell, and informative posts about the brand itself and products campaigns (etc.). On the right side of the page there is the possibility to chat with the brand to ask information or assistance; indeed, as soon as you access to their page the chat opens automatically offering help and guarantying a response within 19 hours. On the right side as well, there is the number of followers – 19 million subscribers, almost 20, in June 2019 – which confirms how successful this platform is for the brand Mac Cosmetics.

Comparing numbers of followers – in this platform – of cosmetic brands, pages such as Mac Cosmetics (19.762.441 followers in June 2019), Estée Lauder (2,4 millions followers in June 2019), L'Oréal Paris (35.404.074 followers in June 2019), Cover Girl

³⁷ Image taken at the original Facebook page of Mac Cosmetics. At the link: <https://www.facebook.com/MAC-Cosmetics-Italia-284366708937648/> (last accessed in August 2019).

(4.517.457 followers in June 2019) and Maybelline (35.299.336 followers in June 2019) are more successful than beauty influencers' pages. Indeed, Facebook ranked as the least successful tool for beauty channels like Nikkietutorials (1.131.246 followers in June 2019), Lisa Eldridge (502.856 followers in July 2019), Glamlifeguru (405.354 followers in June 2019), Patrickstarr (485.195 followers in June 2019) and Kathleenlights (73.016 followers in June 2019).

The second famous social media is YouTube, founded just one year later, in 2005. This platform is important for the cosmetic industry because offers the possibility of sharing vlogs (the visual version of blogs) in which the user can express personal opinions, preferences and experiences of cosmetics products. Those vlogs are important parts of online marketing strategies because those videos attract a potential large audience and they contribute to build the online beauty community as well. The aim of vlogs is to give useful information while entertaining the audience. There are different types of vlogs: the most frequently searched ones are 'how to' videos, beauty tutorials and products reviews. What engage the viewer to these types of videos is the storytelling aspect of them; indeed, a good story about a product or a beauty technique (or a beauty experience) may be a good visual persuasive tool to engage followers to a creator's content. In 2013, 1 billion users were active members monthly in this platform; nowadays the frequency is much higher, 1,9 billion active users monthly, fact that highlight the growing interest for visual content and the efficacy of this platform. YouTube is mostly used by people aged between 18-49 years old, that are spending more time on this social network rather than watching television. This social media is the third site visited after Google and Facebook, and it is present in 91 countries with the possibility of navigation in 80 different languages; 400 hours of video are uploaded every minute and the 70% of views come from mobile phones³⁸.

Cosmetic brands have recognized the importance of YouTube videos and YouTube creators (called YouTubers, or later on, 'influencers') and their ability to build trust in the beauty community. It is for this reason that in the last few years beauty companies started to send for free PR packaging to YouTubers and organize PR activities – and beauty experiences – with beauty YouTubers with the aim of receiving free products promotion but also to benefit of the influencer's audience.

³⁸ Information and statistics found at the website Brandwatch, at the link: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/youtube-stats/> (last accessed in August 2019).

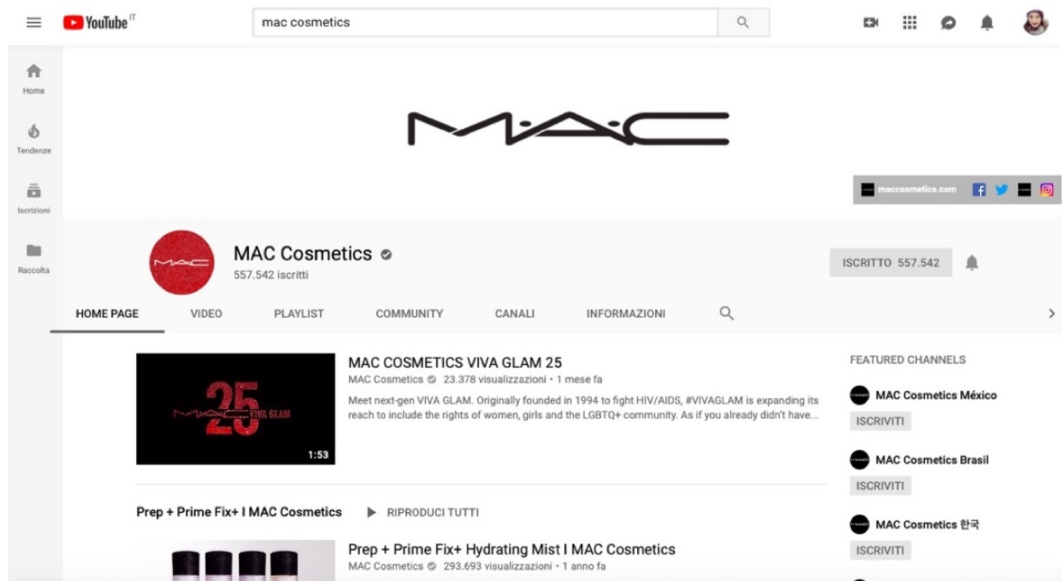


Figure 12. The official YouTube page of Mac Cosmetics³⁹.

With regard to the effectiveness of YouTube for cosmetic brands' pages, the situation is the opposite: for the same cosmetics brands cited before⁴⁰ YouTube is in the last position, with the exception of L'Oréal Paris channel. Whereas, for beauty influencers YouTube is the most successful platform sometimes with Instagram as well. Indeed, Nikkietutorials has 11.988.714 followers, Glamlifeguru 10.061.120, Patrickstarr 4.400.368, Kathleenlights 4.103.648, and Lisa Eldridge 1.921.043 followers (all in June 2019).

This might be due to the fact that brands offer direct information to consumers through their Facebook page making the shopping experience easier for them – at a lower cost in comparison with the resources that are necessary to create content on YouTube. For influencers, or beauty creators, the situation is the opposite: since they communicate their opinion directly through videos – and photos on Instagram – having a Facebook page to do the same may be redundant for some followers. However, through Facebook, beauty gurus share the links of their latest YouTube contents to encourage the remaining audience to watch their videos.

A similar, and more recent, social network is Instagram, founded in 2010. This platform combines the aspect of visual persuasion of images to short videos called 'Instagram Stories'. Those short videos are available just for 24 hours, but the platform

³⁹ At the link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MACcosmetics> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁴⁰ In this case Mac Cosmetics has 557.542 followers, Estée Lauder 82.384, L'Oréal Paris 150.379, Cover Girl 513.332, Maybelline 274.471 (for every brand page the data has been extracted in June 2019) (last accessed in August 2019).

recently allowed to upload longer videos in the IGTV section that are permanent. In 2012 Instagram had ‘just’ 30 million users; nowadays, instead, is as powerful as Facebook and YouTube with 1 billion active users monthly. Compared to Facebook, Instagram too has a young audience; Instagram users are aged between 18-24 and 24-35 years old⁴¹. Indeed, Instagram is an important tool to drive engagement for cosmetics brands since it offers the same possibility of a two-way communication and visual content as for YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. At the same time, though, Instagram allows brands to track information about consumers’ preferences and attitudes thanks to the technology of the application, but also by looking at the #hashtags they use or search. Moreover, through the short Instagram Stories it is possible to do Q&A, polls and surveys that are useful to learn more about the target and to improve the content the users wants to see. From the consumers’ point of view those surveys may be useful to express their needs and desires to the brand.

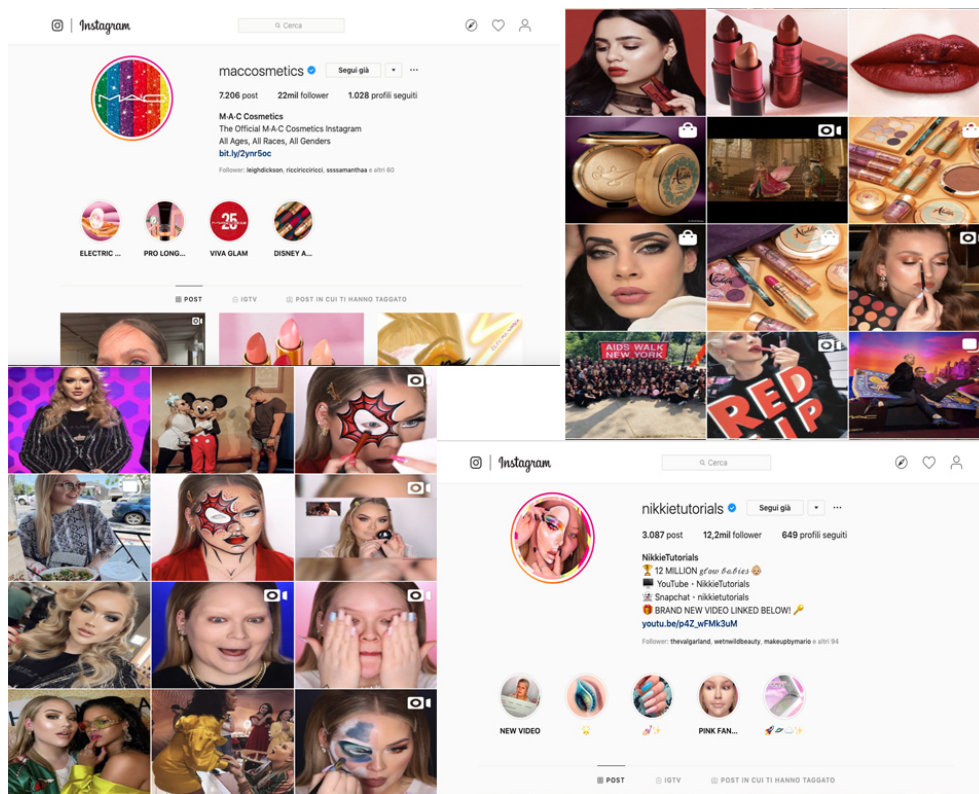


Figure 13. Instagram pages of Mac Cosmetics and Nikkietutorials⁴².

⁴¹ Information found at the website Statista.com at the link: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/248769/age-distribution-of-worldwide-instagram-users/> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁴² At the link: <https://www.instagram.com/maccosmetics/?hl=it> and <https://www.instagram.com/nikkietutorials/?hl=it> (last accessed in August 2019).

In this case, the social network Instagram is very successful both for brands and for influencers. Mac Cosmetics achieved the best results (22 millions of followers in June 2019), as well as Estée Lauder (3,2 millions of followers in June 2019); for Maybelline New York Instagram is the second most successful platform (9 millions of followers in June 2019) as well as for Cover Girl (2,5 millions of followers in June 2019), but is less successful for the brand L'Oréal Paris (6,6 million followers in June 2019).

For beauty creators Instagram has almost the same impact as YouTube has on the beauty community. Nikkietutorials obtained the best results in this platform (with 12,2 millions of followers in June 2019) as well as Glamlifeguru (3,1 millions of followers in June 2019), Patrickstarr (4,7 millions of followers in June 2019), Kathleenlights (2,1 millions of followes in June 2019) and Lisa Eldridge (with 1 million subscribers in July 2019).

The social media that ranked as third for both brands and 'beauty gurus' is Twitter, probably due to the fact that it's easier to communicate short messages and have a quicker response for both parts. In this case brands post short communications, but also images and videos that advertise their products; whereas, influencers post images of their works but also images about lifestyle and personal subjects⁴³.

⁴³ For the Social Network Twitter, brands in June 2019 had: Mac Cosmetics (1,56 millions of followers), Estée Lauder (424 thousands of followers), L'Oréal Paris (78,200 followers), Cover Girl (645 thousands of followers) Maybelline New York (704 thousands of followers). Whereas beauty gurus: Nikkietutorials (1,63 millions of followers), Glamlifeguru (1,39 millions of followers), Kathleenlights (659 thousands of followers), Patrickstarr (526 thousands of followers) Lisa Eldridge (172.176 followers). Looking at numbers Twitters seems again more powerful for beauty influencers in respect of beauty brands (last accessed in August 2019).

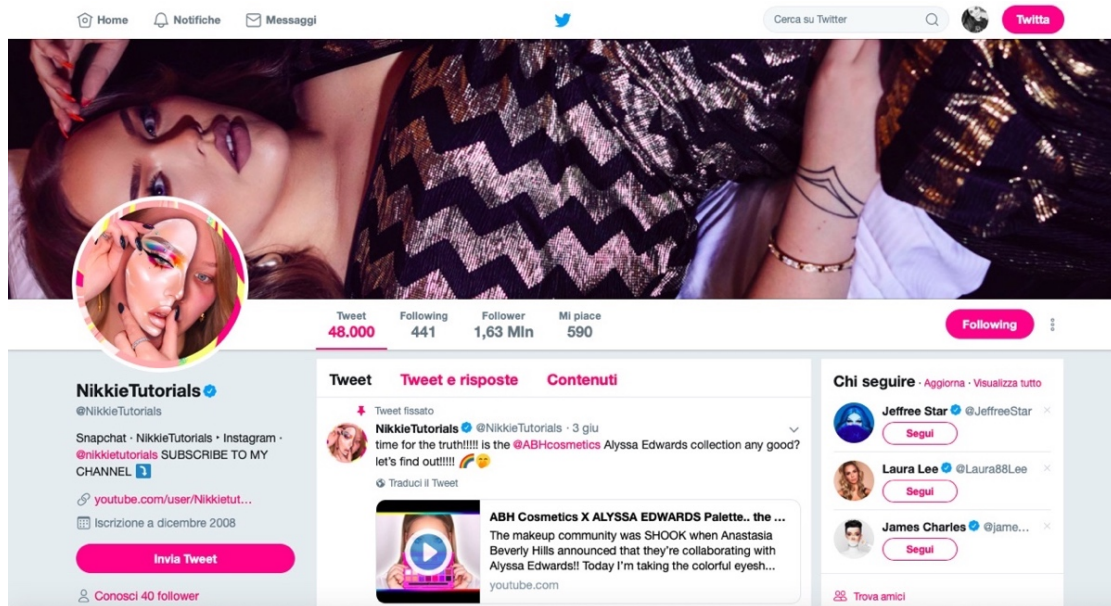


Figure 14. NikkieTutorial's official Twitter page⁴⁴.

In the last 10 years sharing opinions and creating reviews about cosmetic products has had a strong impact on people's attitude towards brands and has also changed the way consumers behave and think before purchasing a product. Consumers spend an extended period of time before taking the decision of buying a product; indeed, online reviews are becoming significantly influential on the last decision. Considering, then, that the amount of information available online is incredibly overwhelming and the fact that the cosmetic market is extremely saturated, having expert of this market is necessary to be guided towards the right choice.

As mentioned previously, trust is essential for brands to build stronger relationships with their consumers. Since nowadays younger people are skeptical of marketers' claims, they prefer to obtain information through influential bloggers on social networks instead of giving trust to brands in the first place.

⁴⁴ At the link: <https://twitter.com/NikkieTutorials>. As we see in this image, the beauty influencer Nikkie is sharing the link of her latest beauty video tutorial/review published in YouTube (last accessed in August 2019).

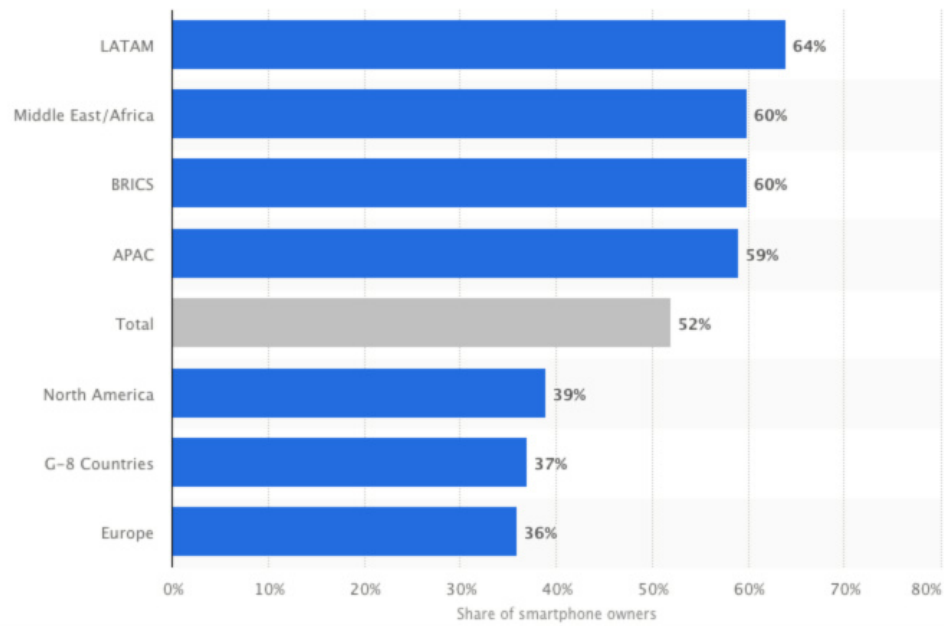


Figure 15. Social media’s influence on user’s online shopping behavior, in March 2018.

An interesting study (Goh et al., 2012) outlines how creators and marketers influence the purchase intention of consumers by sharing creative contents in Facebook. The results suggest that creators influence other consumers’ opinions thanks to information and persuasion, whereas marketers influence them just with persuasive communication. Furthermore, they have concluded that undirect (untargeted) contents are more persuasive for consumer-to-consumer communication; whereas, a direct communication is more effective for a persuasive marketer-to-consumer type of communication. According to the same article, joining a brand’s community, on their Facebook page, influence the purchasing decision of \$25 per person. Indeed, consumers’ participation, identification and communication are three elements of engagement that affect positively not only consumer’s purchase behavior, but also their attitude towards brands’ trust and commitment. The article’s data confirm that “consumers’ persuasive effect is more than 22 times that of marketer’s in terms of marginal effect. [...] Overall, UGC exhibits a more influential role than MGC in driving purchases” (Goh et al., 2012: 26).

3.1 The emergence of the beauty community

In general, a digital community could be described as a group of people that shares interests, passions ideas and believes, and that communicate with the help of technologies such as mobile phones, Internet, e-mails, but most importantly, through social networks. The information shared by the beauty community is not only useful for the users of the community, but also valuable for beauty companies. Firms do marketing research based on those personal opinions and, thanks to that, they can potentially improve their products or services at a little or no cost. Furthermore, by analyzing people's comments, marketers may improve also their communication with the consumer, gaining a competitive advantage (Kim et al., 2008).

Differently from a normal community that communicates and interacts face-to-face, an online community can get access (or add elements) to any kind of information whenever and wherever it is necessary to, eliminating limits of time and space. This constant interactivity and connection between people of different ages and nationalities is what makes a community grow; indeed, there is a relation between the number of people that belong to a community and the rapid growth of it. What enables a small community to become bigger is the level of activity: the more people talk to each other in the comment section, the more the community start to expand. The article "Emergence of online communities: empirical evidence and theory" (Dover et Kelman, 2017) analyze this aspect and outlines that the interactions between people – that belong to the community – could be represented as trees of messages and replies: the more people answer to the initial message the more levels will be formed, leading the tree to grow multiplicatively. For this reason, the growth of online communities depends strongly on people's responsiveness.

Therefore, to achieve success, cosmetic brands should understand how to create and maintain commitment to the digital community. Indeed, the authors of the article entitled "It takes a marketplace community to raise brand commitment: the role of online communities" (Kim et al., 2008) determine that there is a positive relation between an online community commitment and a cosmetic brand commitment. Indeed, consumers that participate in online communities are likely to transfer a positive attitude toward a specific brand – especially when spreading positive e-WOM, as expressed in the following graphic.

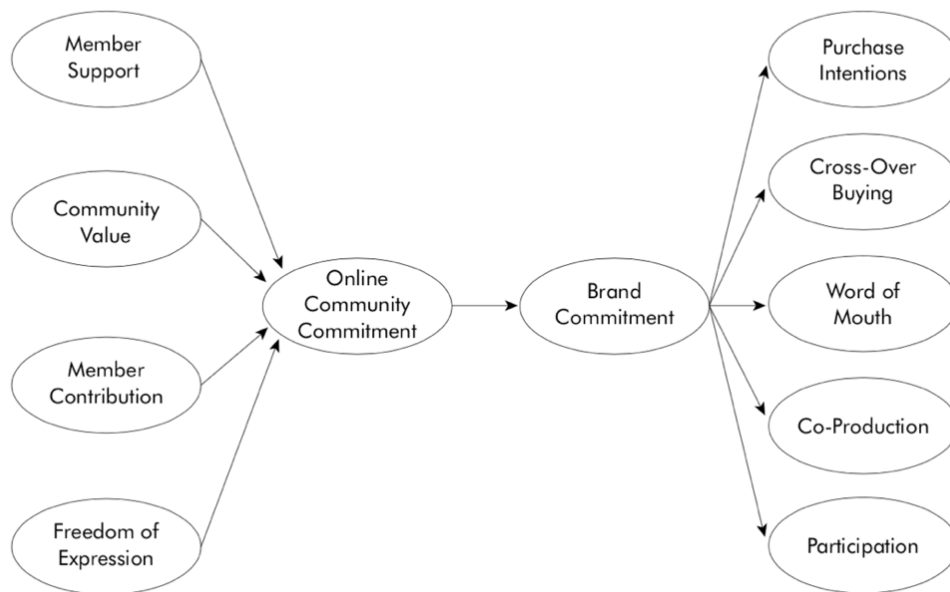


Figure 16. Brand commitment.

Source: (Kim et al., 2008: 413).

The authors of this article also claim that marketers should present clearly the aim of the community to their members, provide effective member interactions, reward the members of the community and be open to critics or complaints in order to build a high level of commitment toward the online community (Kim et al., 2008: 426).

The beauty community now counts on a group of millions of women that get informed through videos about cosmetics categories and beauty techniques. The purposes of those videos, however, are not only informational but also serve to express people's identity. According to the article entitled "Community-based strategies in action: building and sustaining a product differentiation advantage" (Roca et al., 2010), people join communities to fulfill their needs to belong to a group and, for this reason, to express their identity. This identity is also manifested through the use of language, indeed:

users in the community share a common and persistent vocabulary that is specific to the group, indicating that for them, they belong to a specific group with a shared terminology, not a random or ad hoc assemblage. (Ledbetter, 2018: 289)

Even though the beauty community is not perceived as important as other communities, it is clear that "is a particular active and large community and also a gigantic

market. [...] There are more than 180,000 beauty gurus, who, together with 215 beauty brands, upload a total of 100 hours of content a day” (García-Rapp, 2017: 229, b).

Many women that belong to the beauty community make videos about cosmetics both to inform viewers of any kind of novelty, but also to share their personality through a specific language in a dynamic and entertaining way. Furthermore, the most used strategy in those videos, to engage the audience, is storytelling. As Lendbetter writes in the article entitled “The rhetorical work of YouTube’s beauty community: relationship-and Identity-Building in user-created procedural discourse” (2018), storytelling helps video creators to build their own credibility and, consequently, to gain more audience and power.

The contents shared in online platforms are valuable both for the members of the beauty community, but also to cosmetic companies that may collaborate with video creators and offer a better and different advertising for a specific target of people. In this way, the creators would benefit financially for their work, and the viewers may obtain an anticipation and an overview of new cosmetics collections. For some consumers it may not be possible to try, smell or touch a cosmetic product before buying it; therefore, providing this information with high quality content is an added bonus for companies – especially the ones that sell products just online. Furthermore, this service could also be positive for consumers because it reduces their uncertainties about specific products or cosmetic categories, developing a higher level of credibility of the creator and helping firms to improve their products and reduce the risk of failure.

Another aspect that cosmetic brands should take in consideration, when developing a new product with a creator, is the symbolic association that a cosmetic product has to have with symbols and beliefs that are relevant to the beauty community. If a cosmetic product reflects this particular association, it may increase consumers’ loyalty towards the brand and the willingness to pay more for the product (Roca et al., 2010). For instance, the cosmeceutical brand Kiehl’s has invested, for many years, lots of money and resources in group of values that might be worth for the beauty community, such as: equality and human rights; health care issues and environmental awareness. Those groups of values, that work well together, have always been publicized through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, but also through donation of money to charities or nonprofit organizations. In order to raise more money for good causes, the brand may create limited edition products that both are appealing to consumers and make them feel part of a greater community (Roca et al., 2010).

3.2 Influencer marketing

The concept of ‘influencer’ has been previously introduced in the chapter entitled “Worldwide advertising social media”. This professional figure could be defined as:

an individual who through their expertise in a specific topic creates original content and offers their unbiased opinion to an audience gained through word-of-mouth communication that voluntarily has determined them to be a referent and trust their opinion. (Morteo, 2018: 91-92)

In the last 10 years, influencers have slowly gained an important role both for the members of the beauty community and for cosmetic companies thanks to the good content and work that are doing for this community. Influencers have become the new marketing strategy to add value to cosmetic products and improve customers’ experience through their personal but authoritative opinion.

Influencers, as the term suggests, have achieved the ability to influence people’s perception of beauty products through their expertise and knowledge and, differently from beauty companies, are able to do that thanks to their constant and genuine interaction with their audience. A beauty guru, or beauty influencer, has a stronger connection with the members of the beauty community due to this perception of familiarity and intimacy. This relation between audience and Influencer, moreover, create a greater level of trust between the two, element that is fundamental for cosmetic companies.

The most common platforms in which influencers publish their contents are Instagram YouTube and Facebook – even though, for beauty gurus, Facebook is not as successful as the other two. The content is shared with the aim of obtaining an immediate feedback and to install a conversation between members in the first place, but also between members and the influencer. The tool in which Influencers seem to invest more time is YouTube, probably because it is easier to give full and detailed information and to discuss topics through visual contents. YouTube videos, from the perspective of the audience requires a higher level of engagement, fact that arouses the interest of cosmetic companies.

What makes people subscribe to Influencers’ channels is: the honest and unbiased evaluation of cosmetic products; the fact that Influencers do what they do because they are moved by passion and the voluntary purpose of educating other people on specific topics they are interested in and they have knowledge of.

Being an Influencer, however, is more than just showing cosmetic products and talking about passions. It has been shown that beauty gurus are also sharing important aspects of

their personal life with their audience, not only to reinforce the connection and the level of trust created with them but also to share aspects, experiences and differences about their own culture. Indeed:

consistent with uses and gratifications theory and how media users want to fulfill personal integrative needs, these gurus incorporated self-confidence messages in their videos about loving oneself and embracing cultures. For example, they are not afraid to put their insecurities in front of the camera to millions of viewers because they show their faces without make-up. These gurus can also talk about their different identities. (Choi et al., 2017:84)

This personal aspect together with other features previously mentioned, lead the viewer to subscribe more easily to an Influencer's channel; the act of subscription remarks the willingness of building a long-lasting interest toward the content published on the channel as well as the updates of the beauty guru. Considering the type of content shared by Influencers, there are different categories of videos uploaded to social media, each of which attracts a different type of viewer. As a matter of fact, vlogs – videos that show personal experiences – are more likely to attract the attention of loyal subscribers firstly, because of the personal content shared, and secondly, because it is easier for a subscriber to find the vlog in their subscription list – in comparison to a casual viewer that would find the same video in the ‘suggested videos’ or ‘home’ section. Tutorials and How-To videos are going to attract on the one hand, loyal subscribers' attention because of the usefulness of the video, and on the other, are likely to attract casual viewers that are more interested in a specific cosmetic product rather than someone else's personal life. Indeed, vlogs are good for building viewers' engagement and improving the credibility of the beauty guru; tutorials, product reviews and how-to videos are important market-centered aspects of YouTube – and Instagram – as a business platform (García-Rapp, 2017). Florencia García-Rapp, author of the article entitled “Popularity markers on YouTube's attention economy: the case of Bubzbeauty” proposes a categorization of beauty influencers' videos based on the content shared. The first category is the one of content-oriented videos – such as tutorials – that have a precise structure, are objective and share lots of knowledge about a specific topic. The second category is based on videos that are market-oriented; that includes reviews and hauls that do not have a precise structure but offer the personal and influential opinion of the beauty guru. The third one is the category of relational videos such as vlogs; differently from the others, vlogs are spontaneous and very personal. The last category is the one of motivational videos, which includes self-help guides. Those

videos show a deeper, more intimate and inspirational content; in this case, the structure of the video is fixed and has a precise motivational aim (García-Rapp, 2017). Generally speaking, those four categories are present in almost every beauty channel and are very useful to build a stronger relationship with the audience. Cosmetic companies are not able to reach the same level of connection with their consumers and it is also for this reason that lately cosmetic brands are working a lot with those professional beauty figures.

Considering the commercial aspect of the platform YouTube, beauty influencers can monetize their work not only by showing advertisements on their videos, but also through products promotions or sponsorships. Indeed, Youtubers may suggest links to products recommendations on the description box of their videos. These links may be part of affiliate marketing programs, that consists of guiding viewers to a brand's or a retailer's page with a specific discount code to insert right before the purchase of a recommended product. By doing so, on the one hand, the consumer is satisfied of the purchase because the product is recommended and is cheaper, on the other, the beauty influencer obtains a commission depending on how many people used the code to purchase the product (Schwemmer et Ziewiecki, 2018). Analyzing the presence of referral links in YouTube videos, it is possible to claim that:

While the estimated number of referral links in the first years⁴⁵ was roughly 0.8, the trend consistently increased, and in the most recent years, videos description boxes are estimated to contain on average more than three links for product promotion. The development from 0.8 links in 2009 to 3.3 in 2017 represents an increase of more than 310%. (Schwemmer et Ziewiecki, 2018:8)

The use of referral links for product promotion is particularly common for videos and channels that talk about cosmetic products and are classified as How-to, Style & Blog. Being aware of the importance of product promotion, cosmetic brands send PR packages to beauty influencers hoping to have their products positively promoted on their videos. Many beauty gurus do that and create apposite series of videos just to show the products they have received in their PR box. Some beauty guru may also create special 'giveaways' videos with some of those products to raise the number of views and increase loyalty towards their channel. For cosmetic brands those types of videos are a good way to obtain free visibility and possibly to persuade the viewers to purchase their products.

⁴⁵ The article here refers to a graphic present at page 8, and specifically to the year 2009.



Figure 17. Tati's PR video on her YouTube channel⁴⁶

This video belongs to a playlist that the well-known beauty guru Tati has published in her YouTube channel with the aim of promoting products and to show to her audience novelties of the cosmetic industry.

As written in the title of this video, Tati also created a special 'giveaway' for her subscribers, a strategy that increases the number of viewers of the video. The video has been seen more than 1,5 million times, has been liked by more than 151 thousand people and has generated more than 86 thousand comments, resulting to be a great success and free promotion for beauty companies.

Other two successful strategies that beauty companies use to promote their product, through the help of Influencers, are the 'beauty trips' and the 'meet ups'. The 'beauty trips' consist of inviting beauty influencers to a specific and appealing location for the launch of a new product or for a beauty campaign. The influencer is invited to join the event and, besides receiving food, drinks and other benefits for free, they get the entire new collection of cosmetic products; in exchange, though, he/she has to pay for the flight and create a video – or short stories to be published in their social platforms – that shows the positive experience and how exciting the new products are.

⁴⁶ The image is taken as a screenshot of the video "My BIGGEST PR Unboxing EVER w/ MASSIVE MAKEUP GIVEAWAY" published the 06/03/2019 in her YouTube channel, at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuJkni9C7o8> (last accessed in August 2019).



Figure 18. Images of trips in collaboration with beauty brands by Melissa Alatorre⁴⁷

In this case the beauty guru Melissa Alatorre shared with an Instagram post her experiences with the brands Nars and Clinique in two exotic locations, such as Bora Bora and Bali, for the launch of new cosmetic products.

The other option is the ‘meet up’, which is an opportunity both for brands (or retailers) and beauty influencers to connect the online interaction to the offline one. Indeed, brands and/or retailers organize an event specifically for followers to let them meet their favorite influencers and to buy the products created by the influencer as well (Gannon et Prothero, 2018).

⁴⁷ The images are taken at the original Instagram page of the Beauty Influencer Melissa Alatorre (that has 259 thousands of subscribers on her page, accessed in August 2019) named “alatorreee” at the link: <https://www.instagram.com/alatorreee/?hl=it> (last accessed in August 2019).

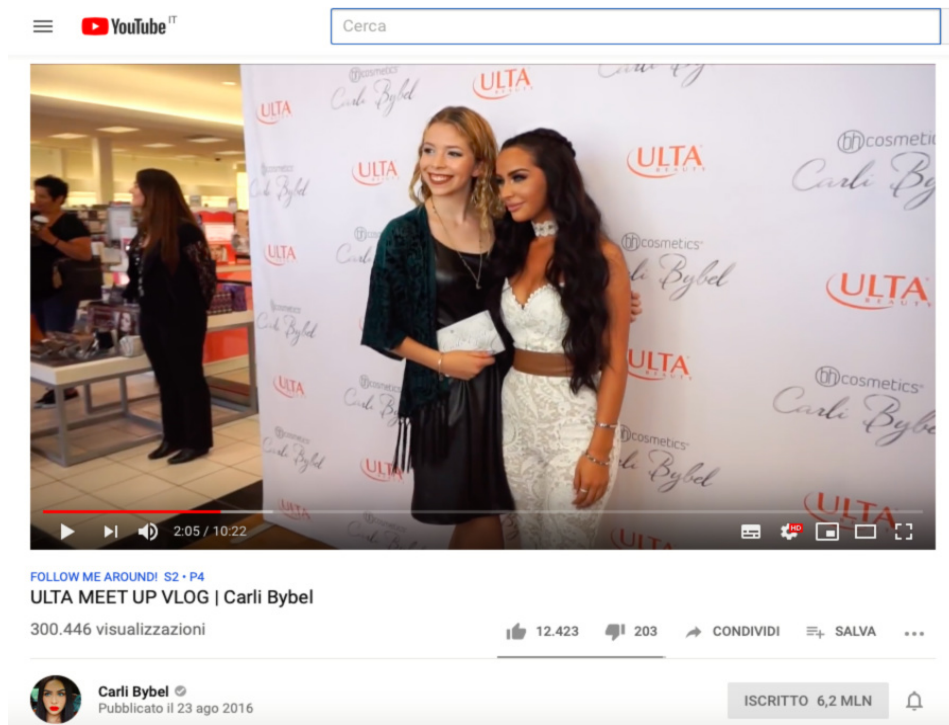
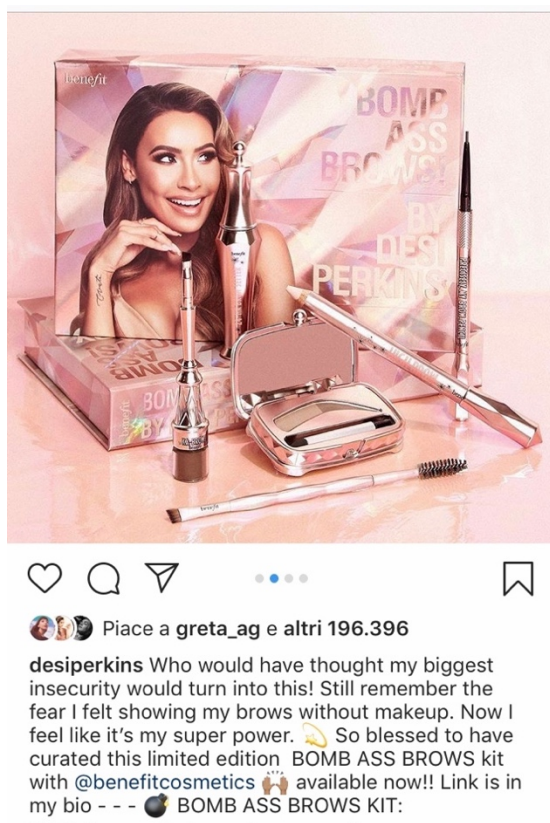


Figure 19. Carli Bybel’s video of her ‘meet and greet’ on her YouTube channel⁴⁸

In this case the video shows Carli Bybel’s experience at Ulta Beauty in which she had the chance to talk with her followers but also to promote the palette she created with BH cosmetics (a cosmetic brand sold at Ulta). The follower in this image is, indeed, holding the palette created by Carli in collaboration with the brand.

Lastly, the most common and preferred marketing strategy that beauty companies use to gain more profits and new consumers at the same time is the creation of cosmetic products with beauty influencers, as seen in the previous image. Nowadays there are many examples of those collaboration because of their successes and their profitability. On the one hand, the beauty guru has finally the opportunity to show her audience how she would create ‘the perfect’ cosmetic product for them, demonstrating her credibility; on the other, the brand would gain much more attention and possible new loyal customers, especially if those experiences get repeated in the following years – fact that happen frequently between some cosmetic brands and beauty gurus.

⁴⁸ Image taken at the original YouTube channel of Carli Bybel from her video “ULTA MEET UP VLOG | Carli Bybel” at the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnP_6p_1rzc (last accessed in August 2019).



Figures 20 and 21. Original Instagram pages of two successful beauty influencers, Desi Perkins on the left and Camila Coelho on the right⁴⁹.

In this case Desi Perkins collaborated with the brand Benefit cosmetics to create the so popular Brow Kit; whereas Camila Coelho created an entire collection of lipsticks of the line L'Absolu Rouge with Lancôme. Considering that Benefit cosmetics and Lancôme are two great cosmetics companies – Benefit cosmetics is one of the top 10 influential pages on Instagram for numbers of followers according to Statista⁵⁰ – working with such a great team is an incredible business opportunity for Desi and Camila. It could also be noted that a prestigious and luxurious brand such as Lancôme chose Camila for this collaboration because of her constant association with luxury fashion brands and for her Instagram reach (about 8 million followers in July 2019). It is probable that Lancôme wanted to collaborate

⁴⁹ Images taken at the correspondent Instagram pages, at the links: https://www.instagram.com/desi_perkins/?hl=it and <https://www.instagram.com/camilacoelho/?hl=it> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁵⁰ Information taken looking at the graphic of Statista's website, at the link: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/536991/leading-beauty-brands-instagram-followers/> (last accessed in August 2019).

with a beauty guru that could influence a specific niche of followers, interested in spending more money for a prestigious lipsticks collection.

On the other hand, Desi – that has approximately 3,8 million followers in Instagram, July 2019 – was probably chosen by Benefit cosmetics because her target is younger, wider and is probably more likely to buy this kit. Benefit cosmetics is not a luxury brand, but the prices of their products collocate the brand towards the higher-end category; the packaging is also less prestigious, or luxury looking, and target a younger clientele.

3.2.1 The role of authenticity, credibility and intimacy

Authenticity, credibility and intimacy are three key words for influencers' and brands' success. In relation to a community-defined social construct it is possible to define authenticity as an original and honest set of relationship between the beauty influencer and their audience – viewers and/or subscribers – through their affective and relational labor (Cunningham et Craig, 2017). This authentic relation is built through conversation and interaction in an online context, and by indirect norms and expectation respected by a community.

For an influencer, obtaining authenticity is really important to share their 'real' self, demonstrating availability and accessibility to their audience. Another essential aspect that beauty gurus have to avoid, in order to keep their authenticity, is showing interest in money or fame rather than showing dedication and creativity. This is particularly true when it comes to reviewing products: if the beauty guru does not remain transparent and honest with their audience, he/she would lose trust and credibility. The financial aspect seems to be legitimized when a beauty guru is strongly defined as authentic; therefore, if an influencer is considered honest and trustworthy by their audience, they would gladly support their success, because they would perceive their financial gain as acceptable.

The key aspects to achieve authenticity and the title of 'real' beauty influencer are the combination of being honest, open and trustworthy with an audience, in conjunction with a strong and positive motivation – such as inspiring other people to achieve a goal or to help them to find a solution to some problems (García-Rapp, 2017). A study (Choi et Behm-Morawitz, 2017) shows that there is a relation between exposure and motivation and the perceived attractiveness of a beauty guru. The aspect of attractiveness has a strong impact

on the influencer's success, since viewers are more likely to "yield observational learning" (Choi et Behm-Morawitz, 2017:89). However, the perceived attractiveness is not only physical, but also, and more importantly, considered as social attractiveness. This means that the more an influencer is perceived as a good-looking person, a friend, and, at the same time, an authoritative and credible person, the more he/she would get a mentorship status. Attractiveness could be defined as a combination of similarity (considering social values and personality), familiarity and likability (physical appearance) (Ananda et Wandebori, 2016).

Being real on social media, however, is not enough to maintain or to build a stronger community. To remain successful and to get recognized as a 'celebrity' or micro-celebrity, an influencer need to demonstrate also their talent and or expertise on everything that concerns the cosmetic industry. To demonstrate their talent, beauty gurus need to show their hard work, creativity, know-how, and innovative techniques – especially to distinguish themselves in a highly competitive environment. Likewise, the information they give to their audience must be useful, reliable, and has to meet the audience's needs. Indeed,

it was found that high source credibility induces greater positive attitude toward the position advocated. Specifically, these previous studies found that high source credibility leads to higher persuasion than low source credibility; hence source credibility plays a key role in the transmission of information and subsequent decisions to adopt content or suggestions provided by the source. (Coursaris et Van Osch, 2016:18)

Giving quality information means that the information must be accurate, comprehensive, current, reliable and valid (Coursaris et Van Osch, 2016). Those aspects are particularly important for the beauty community, since consumers and viewers do not trust completely cosmetic products' advertisings and prefer to rely on beauty influencers for a more accurate and trustworthy opinion before buying a product.

The concept of credibility is strongly linked to the effectiveness of e-WOM; the more a source gives quality information the more a social exchange relation would be created, defined as 'tie strength' (Brown et al., 2007). Indeed, there are two types of source credibility:

source expertise refers to the perceived competence of the source providing the information. Source bias, also conceptualized as source trustworthiness, refers to the possible bias/incentives that may be reflected in the source's information. [...] A source should be perceived as more credible when it (1) possesses greater expertise and (2) is less prone to bias. (Brown et al., 2007:6)

The same article (Brown et al., 2007) claims that the more individuals are in a strong tie relationship, the more they would exchange information. What makes a tie stronger is: the feeling of closeness, intimacy, support and association between individuals – in this case between viewers and beauty gurus. Some of those elements, such as intimacy, are key words for consumer-brand relationship as well. Other important aspects that a brand should show to their consumers, in order to create an emotional bond, are love and passion, interdependence, self-connection, commitment and interest in producing quality products (etc.) (Brown et al., 2007). Beauty gurus have a great opportunity and responsibility towards the success of cosmetics products launches or cosmetics brand in general, considering that for brands word-of-mouth is a difficult thing to manage or to control – since it depends on independent opinions.

Another important element that is positively valued by the beauty community, is the aspect of intimacy. In the context of an online community the term intimacy not only expresses a feeling of proximity, but also an affective relationship built with their audience and mediated by a screen – or the so called ‘technologies of intimacy’ (Berryman et Kavka, 2017). According to the authors of the article entitled “I Guess A Lot of People See Me as a Big Sister or a Friend’: the role of intimacy in the celebrification of beauty vloggers” there are four types of registers that help the Influencer to create intimacy: the spatial register, because it gives the feeling of closeness; the temporal one that indicates a direct and honest communication; the social register, that is used for self-representation; and the medial one which indicates the use of specific cinematographic techniques to make the viewer feel more close to the speaker. Other elements may give the same feeling of closeness to the viewer, such as the setting and the framing of the video. For instance, casual talks recorded by the Influencer in her bedroom gives the viewer a sense of home and may create a more intimate and ‘truthful’ atmosphere (Berryman et Kavka, 2017).

Authenticity, credibility and intimacy are, in conclusion, three important aspects not only for beauty influencers but also for cosmetic brands. The article entitled “Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude” outlines which are the factors that a marketer should consider for the success of a cosmetic brand. In this case, the authors claim that even though an influencer, that has a higher number of followers, may be perceived as more influential and more successful, he/she may not be always a guarantee of success for cosmetic brands. Indeed,

the influencer's number of followers may change perceptions in the sense that when a product with a divergent design is endorsed by an influencer with a high number of followers, perceptions of uniqueness and eventually attitudes towards the brand are lower compared to when it is endorsed by an influencer with a moderate number of followers. A high number of followers triggered the idea that the product is not that unique after all, as many others are interested in it. (De Veirman et al., 2017:813)

This suggests that working with an influencer that is authentic, credible and creates a more intimate relationship with his/her audience is much more valuable and profitable than a more commercial or 'bigger' influencer. Indeed, having more followers is not a guarantee for success (De Veirman et al., 2017).

3.2.2 The importance of language in make-up tutorials

Beauty gurus are not only passionate for cosmetics but are also considered by their audience motivational and inspirational guides. For a beauty influencer, the language is an important tool that allows the interaction between followers and influencers, but also to express properly the informative content to their audience. In order to do that, beauty influencers use specific phrases and fixed structures in each of their YouTube videos.

In the case of make-up tutorials, the language is used more importantly to define how and when the main steps have to be done, in order to guide the person during the recreation of the look. In the first part of the video the beauty influencer welcomes the viewer and summarize the content she is going to share. In this part, the expert shall use a language that makes the listener interested in the topic, but also that makes him/her feel comfortable – as if it was a virtual conversation within friends in an informal environment (Riboni, 2017). In this part, from a linguistic point of view, beauty gurus use many formulaic expressions in order to distinguish themselves from other YouTubers; some examples are: 'Hey gorgeous', 'Hi guys', 'Hi everyone' (Riboni, 2017:236).

With regard to the second part of the video tutorial, which is the instructional and informational one, beauty gurus use a narrative and expository style to engage the audience through the process of make-up application. Two modes in this case are predominant: the use of the first personal pronoun and the indicative mode, which is a more informal and personal way to interact with the viewer; the imperative mode, which is more formal and detached. Furthermore, the use of the structure if + second-person pronoun indicative

(simple present) + imperative mode is also frequent, as in the case “26. *If you get lash glue on your eyeshadow don't worry because it dries clear (TB)*” (Riboni, 2017:197) to give quick beauty tips.

During the tutorial, beauty gurus use other linguistic formulas both to describe what they are doing – like changing the perspective and/or zooming in to get closer to the viewer – but also to allow the audience to start a conversation in the comment section of the video, like “Let me know what you think..” (Riboni, 2017) or “is it just me?” and “trust me!” to give the impression of an interaction between the two. In the same part, evaluative devices and deixis as well are very important to describe in the best way possible the process and the product used to achieve a look and to give the idea of proximity.

The article entitled “Languages for Specific Purposes on YouTube: A Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Analysis” analyzes the influence that American beauty gurus have on the use of language of Italian make-up artists. An example reported by the author of the article, is the use of the *going to* form, frequently used to describe their actions during the application of make-up; this form is directly translated as *andare a* to give the same sequential effect, rather than to express movement from a place to another. An alternative example is the use of specialized lexicon. This is used to underly and express the credibility of the beauty guru's and their talent and expertise, giving, at the same time, the impression of an expert-to-expert communication. Italian influencers do the same keeping the specialized terms in English, to communicate the importance and the prestige that the American beauty culture has on their identity. Indeed, it is also common for them doing code-mixing even if in the Italian language exists equivalent terms to specialized lexicons, as in the case “24. *Credo che ormai la maggior parte degli ombretti, se non tutti, sono [sic] wet or dry (GA)*” (Riboni, 2017: 241). Other Italian beauty gurus may also assimilate the foreign term adding an Italian affixation to give a sense of friendliness, as for the case of “palettina” and “microglitterini” (Riboni, 2017).

In the last and final part of the video the beauty expert thanks the viewer for watching the video and invites them to give the video a ‘like’, to subscribe to the channel and to leave a post in the comment section, adding expression such as “I love you and I'll see you in my next video” (Riboni, 2017:195). Some YouTubers may not explicitly ask for it and leave those expressions as text forms in the video itself.

Furthermore, there are YouTubers like Michelle Phan⁵¹ – one of the first and best YouTubers in the American beauty community – that through the language combine not only the educational aspect but also the creative and inspirational one by associating the creation of a make-up look to the concept of realizing a dream; indeed, she used to conclude every videos with the phrase ‘good luck’ (Riboni, 2017). This is very important because it adds a symbolic value to a standard make-up look and helps the viewer to identify themselves with the beauty expert, creating a special bond.

This demonstrates how language may be a powerful vehicle of positive messages – or negative, as for the case of negative reviews or videos that show ‘flop’ products – but also an important tool to guide the viewer through the process of product applications, or review, and to install a relationship between influencers and followers. Indeed:

Collective postings refer to the online community as a group. The use of collective words such as “our”, “we”, and “us” in the context of group feelings and opinions suggests members perceive the community as a unit that thinks and feels in a convergent way. (Brown et al., 2007:11).

3.3 How do vlogs influence consumers’ purchase intention in the beauty community?

Authenticity, credibility and intimacy, as mentioned previously, are important elements both for the potential success of a beauty vlogger but also for cosmetic companies. Indeed, the main reasons why a cosmetic brand would choose an authentic beauty influencer is not to drive fast sales – even though it may be possible depending on the collaboration, and other factors – but to increase brand awareness and build a stronger relationship between brand and consumers. This would be possible thanks to a long-term strategy of engagement, that may eventually lead to a stronger purchase intention. For this reason, the budget for influencer marketing is expected to grow in the next years with the aim of

⁵¹ Michelle Phan could be considered the original and the greatest American beauty guru. She started her career in 2007 by showing beauty techniques, how-to videos, DIY tips and tricks, in a very authentic and creative way. Once she reached her greatest success in the YouTube platform, she received the opportunity to create her own brand (called ‘Em’) financed by one of the most important beauty companies in the cosmetic market, L’Oréal. She then found her e-commerce community called ‘Ipsy’ which is one of the most successful beauty subscription box services (cited in previous paragraphs). She demonstrated through many other businesses to be the greatest American beauty influencer and her fortune was estimated by Forbes to be over \$500 millions (Cunningham et Craig, 2017).

maintaining this strategy and monitoring the return of the investment on the long run. Indeed,

As of 2016 (Ma 2016), brands spend approximately \$1.5 billion on influencer marketing, with projected revenue expected to reach \$15 billion to \$20 billion by 2020 (MediaKix 2016). Among marketers who have used influencer marketing, 81% judged it to be effective, with 51% believing that they get better customers and 37% reporting better retention due to consumers trusting influencers more than traditional ads. (Evans et al.,2017:139)

It is known that social media have changed the way consumers buy cosmetics products and how they are influenced to choose between one product to another. The rapid growth and development of Internet and the eWOM is believed to be even more impactful on people than traditional advertising. A study that involved 261 persons, (Chen et al., 2014) confirms the positive correlation between the eWOM and the purchase intention. Thus, the more eWOM there is in a platform, the more this would lead to a higher purchase intention; the quality and the quantity of the messages shared would be more influential for consumer's purchase intention. The results of the study refer also that if the eWOM is negative about a specific cosmetic product or topic, the effects on satisfaction and purchase intention would be even stronger in comparison to the effects that a positive eWOM would have on the same person. Another element that interacts with eWOM is the price of a cosmetic product. According to the authors of the same study, if the price of the product is high the influence of the eWOM would be lower on the purchase intention (Chen et al., 2014).

Considering the factors that affect the consumer/viewer's purchase intention, the most important aspects are the perceived credibility and usefulness of a video – and of its creator – confirming what has been said previously about authenticity, credibility and intimacy. The perceived usefulness of a video could be defined by a viewer as the possibility of obtaining relevant information and a different perspective about a cosmetic product's use, that could enhance their job performance with the advantage of not losing time (Yüksel, 2016). The perception of usefulness of a video and its effects on the viewer are strongly connected with the credibility of the content creator; indeed, the more credible the source is, the more a positive attitude would be developed. Furthermore, the same article claims that numbers of views, likes and comments have a positive effect on the perceived credibility of the content creator, but do not seem to alter the perception of usefulness of the video itself. Another important thing that contribute to influence viewers' purchase intention is the perceived structure of the video, such as: its quality, duration,

preparation and presentation of the content. The results, thus, demonstrate that those characteristics determine the perceived usefulness of the video, the perceived credibility of the source and have, consequently, a strong impact on the purchase intention. Lastly, the same study claims that consumers which are habitually watching make-up/beauty related videos on YouTube are more likely and more prone to purchase the product shown on those videos, demonstrating the effects that those contents have on consumer's purchase intention (Yüksel, 2016).

The same important aspects such as trustworthiness, expertise and social attractiveness were confirmed in a study that analyzed the impact of drugstore products' reviews by beauty vloggers (Ananda et Wandebori, 2016). The authors indeed claims that:

Trustworthiness of beauty vlogger is a part that constructs consumer attitude that influences purchase intention, quality of product review is a part that constructs consumer attitude that influences purchase intention, and there is a relationship between consumer attitude based on drugstore makeup product reviews by beauty vlogger towards intention to buy. (Ananda et Wandebori, 2016:272)

The same results, though, exclude the attractiveness of the vlogger as a source of influence in drugstore beauty products reviews. Considering all those positive results for beauty influencers, and consequently for cosmetic brands that work with them, it is possible to draw conclusions also on whether beauty gurus are influential for luxury products or luxury brands.

As the term suggests, luxury products distinguish themselves from standard products for the concept of uniqueness, quality, rarity, exclusiveness, prestigiousness of the product. Luxury brands, moreover, tend to associate their cosmetic products to emotional/hedonic values, or to symbolic meanings, to give a more exclusive experience to their consumers (Lee et Watkins, 2016). This definition indicates that those products are not available or accessible for everyone and target people that are wealthier and belong to a niche; however, in some societies more people are now wealthier and can potentially afford to buy luxurious cosmetic products. For this reason, luxury brands such as Chanel, Dior, Burberry (etc.) are improving their social media marketing, in order to increase the attractiveness of their brands, and the desire for luxury beauty, for a new target of consumers.

A study (Lee et Watkins, 2016) analyzed the effects of vlogs in consumer's perception of luxury brands, and demonstrated that consumers "compare their consumption of luxury brands with that of vloggers they admire, that interaction increases positive brand

perception for the consumer” (Lee et Watkins, 2016:5757) suggesting that a luxury cosmetic brand should invest on vloggers that target consumers with similar beliefs and desires and that are socially attractive in order to obtain a positive influence on brand perception and also on the purchase intention. The authors recommend also to choose a beauty vlogger as ambassador for a luxury brand because it could have positive outcomes. This proposal was recently adopted by the luxury cosmetic brand Marc Jacobs, who decided to have Nikkietutorials – famous beauty influencer mentioned previously, with more than 12 million follower both in Instagram and YouTube – as brand ambassador. In the Allure article, entitled “Nikkie de Jager (AKA YouTube’s NikkieTutorials) Is Marc Jacobs Beauty’s New Global Artistry Advisor” the brand confirms the partnership:

Earlier this week, Marc Jacobs Beauty announced that de Jager is now the brand’s first-ever global artistry advisor. “In this newly created role, Nikkie will be integrated into the brand’s product development process, as well as share her incredible talent and expertise to expand unique content and artistry around the world on both marcjacobs beauty and her own channels” a press release reads.⁵²

The results of the study conducted by Lee and Watkins outline that people that were exposed to the vlog, that was showing luxury products, had higher evaluation of those same luxury brands in comparison to people that did not watch it (Lee et Watkins, 2016). Those successful results, though, may depend on the type of beauty influencer or on the prestige that the luxury brand has already acquired with time. A study (Jin et Muqaddam, 2018) that replicated the same analysis on beauty influencers that targeted more luxury fashion brands (not cosmetics ones) obtained weaker results in comparison to studies previously cited. This particular study did not find a mayor difference in terms of influence – toward purchase intention or brand perception – comparing pictures of luxury products’ exposition and pictures of luxury products with influencers. The authors of this study claim that it would be more beneficial to the credibility of the beauty influencer working with a fashion luxury brands rather than the opposite; suggesting that more studies should be done about how this process works and for which market.

Furthermore, there is another element that is strongly influential when it comes to vlogs’ efficacy, which is sponsorship disclosure. Since more and more content creators started to promote products on their platforms, the Federal Trade Commission introduced

⁵² Allure’s article, published in January 26, 2019, entitled “Nikkie de Jager (AKA YouTube’s NikkieTutorials) Is Marc Jacobs Beauty’s New Global Artistry Advisor” at the link: <https://www.allure.com/story/nikkietutorials-marc-jacobs-beauty-global-artistry-advisor> (last accessed in August 2019).

stricter guidelines to advertise products on social platforms, distinguishing what content has been paid for promotion – sponsored – or what is just gifted (Evans et al, 2017).

To clarify if a post or a video is sponsored, a beauty vlogger should use the term ‘Paid Ad’ in order to have a stronger advertising recognition by the viewer. This is important because if an advertised post is not disclosed properly by a beauty influencer, it could have a stronger negative effect on the purchase intention and WOM of the sponsored product compared to a properly disclosed one (Evans et al, 2017). Instead, for people that are already interested in the content related in the sponsored video, it has been registered a stronger positive effect that leads to a better perception of the brand. This is particularly true for loyal subscribers that are more likely to give a satisfactory outcome for a sponsored post of their loved YouTuber. For this specific category of viewers, it has been demonstrated that the effects of the sponsored video would strengthen the purchase intention of the sponsored product. An interesting factor that was analyzed by the same study (Gozegir et Gocer, 2018), was the fact that the YouTuber was perceived, by respondents, more trustworthy when the published content was not sponsored, because trustworthiness depends on the intention of the creator: if his/her intentions are related to financial gain, and the viewer perceives it, the trustworthiness and the efficacy of persuasion strongly decreases. However, the results also showed that the YouTuber was perceived to be more expert in sponsored videos since to do those kinds of videos it is necessary to have a higher knowledge and a greater experience about the product (Gozegir et Gocer, 2018).

3.3.1 Differences between celebrity and beauty influencer endorsement

According to what has been previously said about beauty influencers, it is possible to say that those professional figures are being used as a new hybrid method, a different model of advertising in comparison to the traditional way of endorsement. Beauty influencers could be divided into categories depending on how wide their audience is: a “mega influencer” could be compared or entitled as celebrity or “micro-celebrity” if she/he has more than 1 million followers on their platform; a “macro influencer” is defined in this way when his/her audience is between 10 thousands to 1 million followers; finally, a “micro influencer” has between 5 hundred to 10 thousand followers (Carpenter Childers et al., 2018).

To understand when and why to use a beauty influencer or a celebrity for a marketing campaign, it is necessary to analyze which are the differences in terms of endorsement of both categories.

Celebrities are normally used to advertise cosmetics products because:

are well recognized personalities having a strong attractive and impressive power to pursue the audience either by their likeliness, attractiveness, trust or by their congruency with brand which leads in creation of strong brand image and value in viewers' minds. (Hassan et Jamil, 2014:2)

This suggests that the value of a celebrity is automatically transferred to the promotion of a product and the effects on brand awareness depend on celebrity's credibility, attractiveness and image congruence – between a brand and a celebrity (Hassan et Jamil, 2014). Furthermore:

consumers, in the field of cosmetics frame their purchase intention in favor of those cosmetics which are endorsed by such celebrities who have some expertise in that field and are considered to be trustworthy. When these two conditions meet, a celebrity becomes credible and positively influences the purchase intention of female consumers in the field of cosmetics. (Adam et Hussain, 2017:123)

In percentage, in USA celebrities are used to advertise brands or cosmetic products for at least a 20%, in UK for a 17%, whereas in Japan for more than 48% (Elberse et Verleun, 2012).

Those same characteristics, though, are required also for beauty influencers in brands partnerships, so it is necessary to analyze the differences between the effects that a celebrity endorsement can create in comparison to a beauty influencer's one on consumers.

A beauty influencer is perceived to be more credible and more trustworthy thanks to the expertise and feeling of intimacy that they create with their audience, in comparison to a celebrity that uses the power of his/her fame to influence other people's purchase intention. As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of endorsing both professional figures correspond to their ability of giving the impression of using and enjoying the characteristics of the product they are advertising. Indeed, "Due to strong affiliation of people with brands they are not much inspired by attractiveness but care more about taste, quality and affiliation with product" (Hassan et Jamil, 2014:14). Additionally, the more a celebrity works with numerous and different brands, the more he/she loses worth and influential power (Hassan et Jamil, 2014).

The endorsement of a celebrity is more effective if the aim of the brand is to give a more homogeneous, admirable, aspirational and cultural presentation of its cosmetic products, especially if the advertising message is spread through media such as the television – which potentially has a wider and more heterogeneous audience.

The endorsement of a beauty influencer, instead, could be more effective because of the ‘personal’ nature of the relationship with their audience and is, for this reason, more useful if the target of the advertising is a niche group or a very specific group of customers, which has similar tastes to the beauty influencer. Moreover, this personal relationship combined with the expertise of the beauty guru, would make the content of the message more meaningful to customers. This is particularly effective if the advertising message is spread through social media – such as Instagram and YouTube – were those customers choose voluntarily to follow a beauty guru’s advice (Carpenter Childers et al., 2018).

Indeed:

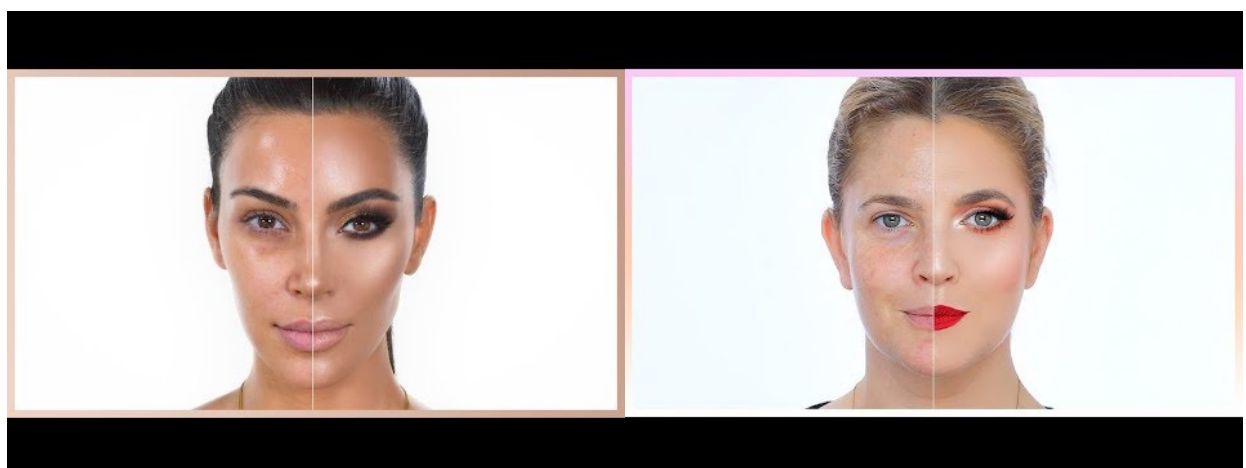
They saw influencers as a brand resource, offering value beyond the typical model of using endorsers in traditional media. SMIs enhance credibility beyond what traditional endorsers do. For example, SMIs bring enhanced credibility because they talk about brands in authentic ways in an authentic media environment, whereas the endorser speaks scripted lines or is associated with advertiser-written copy delivered to a mass audience. (Carpenter Childers et al., 2018:12)

3.3.2 Examples of successful beauty channels

In the last five years some beauty channels resulted to be more successful than others; in this section, some beauty influencers’ stories are going to be presented and the possible reasons why they achieved more success than other YouTubers. The first one is the most successful make-up artist, Nikkie de Jager, a talented 25 years old beauty influencer based in Netherlands. She started publishing videos on YouTube when she was just 14 and reached 700.000 followers in 7 years. One day she posted a video entitled ‘The power of makeup’ that was quickly seen by millions of people because of the messages shared in the video about her passion and the incredible power that make-up has on the confidence and on the creativity of a person. The video, published in 2015, became viral in the beauty community, but was also shared by traditional media, for instance by magazines like *Huffington Post*, *Marie Claire* and *DailyLife* underlying the importance that the cosmetic world has for every woman in their daily life (Kennedy, 2016).

The video has been seen 40 million times in 4 years and inspired hundreds of people to do their version of the ‘Power of Makeup’ creating a ‘movement’ in the beauty community. Moreover, in the following years, Nikkie decided to create a series of videos entitled in the same way but recreated the look with two important celebrities: Drew Barrymore and Kim Kardashian West. The two celebrities are owners of the cosmetic brands Flower Beauty and KKW Beauty.

The video with Kim Kardashian West was published in 2017 and achieved 13.5 million views; whereas, the video with Drew Barrymore was published in 2018 and achieved 5 million views.



Figures 22, 23 and 24. Nikkietutorials YouTube's videos on the Power of Makeup⁵³.

⁵³ The images and the information about the videos' views are taken respectively at the links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4Ov8qvZ2_w, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYTFx26-S1A>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSYtRcrr1do> (last accessed in August 2019).

The success of her video seems to rely on the fact that she made her viewers reflect upon the meaning of being authentic (or real) with or without make-up, but also on the strong intimacy and feeling of connection that she created with her viewers. Furthermore, she is very talented in the make-up artistry and thanks to that and to the popularity of her video she draws the attention of other people to her tutorials. After the great success of this video her career took off, indeed, she collaborated with many cosmetic brands, such as Too Faced and Ofra Cosmetics in the creation of palettes and highlighters – her most loved products. At present time, in 2019, Nikkie de Jager has 12 million subscribers both in her YouTube channel and in her Instagram page, and has been recently hired as beauty ambassador for the luxury brand Marc Jacobs.

Huda Kattan is another very influential beauty guru. She is 33 years old, a famous make-up artist – she did the make-up of Eva Longoria and Nicole Richie – beauty blogger and lately also entrepreneur: she found an incredibly successful cosmetic brand, named Huda Beauty, which is also the same name of her beauty platforms. Huda was born in Oklahoma, but her family is from Iraq. She majored in finance in the University of Michigan-Dearborn but decided to start her career in the cosmetic industry. After working as a make-up artist, she decided to start her beauty platforms where she shared her beauty tips. Her YouTube channel was founded in 2007 and now counts of more than 3 million followers; in Instagram Huda has major success, with more than 38 million subscribers.

Her strengths are her authenticity – she is one of the few successful beauty influencers with a darker skin tone and a different ethnicity – and the perceived usefulness of her videos/post. However, what made her reach the top is the foundation of her cosmetic brand in 2013. Her first product sold at Sephora, was fake eyelashes (her signature look). Once her fake lashes achieved success and started to be worn also by celebrities such as Kim Kardashian West, she started to expand her line with other best seller eye palettes and lip kits. Most importantly, though, she understood the importance of making the consumer feel included by producing a new line of foundation with 30 shades of colors from the lightest tone to the darkest one. In her Instagram page she shared a picture of 30 models representing different skin colors both man and women, in order to make everyone feel included. An article by Allure, entitled “Huda Beauty Just Swatched Its 30 Foundation Shades on a Super Inclusive Group of Models”, claims:

The photo shows 30 people, all wearing the #FauxFilter foundation, meant to be a guide of sorts to help people pick the shade of foundation closest to their own skin tone. However, the

photo shows both men and women wearing the product, which is a great move for inclusivity. Makeup is for everyone and yet there's often a stigma against men who choose to wear makeup. A brand like Huda Beauty normalizing men wearing makeup by including them in the swatching photo may seem like a small gesture, but it's actually a pretty big deal⁵⁴.

The aspect of inclusivity is an important element for cosmetic brand's success. Indeed, the famous singer Rihanna, that has a darker skin tone as well, uses the same strategy to make her brand more competitive in comparison to other traditional cosmetic brands. Her cosmetic brand named Fenty Beauty founded in 2017 is advertised as 'Beauty for All' and is not only offering 50 shades of different skin tones (light, medium, olive toned, dark) but is also reasonably priced – collocating the brand between low and high end⁵⁵.

Tati Westbrook is another example of successful make-up artist and entrepreneur that built her success on the YouTube platform. Tati started her YouTube channel, GlamLifeGuru, in 2010 by uploading tutorials and beauty tips on cosmetic products, remarking, through the years, her strong credibility and authenticity. Tati is followed for her unbiased, objective and professional opinions on cosmetic products.

As Nikkietutorials, Tati made a video with Drew Barrymore to try on camera her new Flower Beauty products. The video, entitled "GET READY WITH DREW BARRYMORE"⁵⁶ obtained more than 2 million views, which again outlines how important is the collaboration with beauty influencers especially for new cosmetic brands. Recently, Tati Westbrook recreated a similar video with Jessica Alba, founder of Honest Beauty, a brand marketed as 'healthier and cleaner' in comparison to standard cosmetic brands. The video, entitled "GET READY with JESSICA ALBA"⁵⁷ obtained 1,9 million views in just 5 days, suggesting the importance that a new and apparently 'safer' category of cosmetic brands may have on consumer's opinion. Tati, however, did not stop at beauty videos production: in 2019 she became founder of Halo Beauty⁵⁸, a brand of vitamins for hair, skin and nails, which has quickly obtained great results. This fact confirms the correlation anticipated in the section 3.3.1 entitled 'Cosmeceuticals' that exists between the world of cosmetics, and nutrition, named 'nutricosmetics'.

⁵⁴ Allure's article published in October 2017 entitled "Huda Beauty Just Swatched Its 30 Foundation Shades on a Super Inclusive Group of Models", at the link: <https://www.allure.com/story/huda-beauty-faux-filter-foundation-inclusive-photo> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁵⁵ All the information about the shades are available at her website: <https://www.fentybeauty.com>

⁵⁶ The video is present in Tati's YouTube's channel at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsqDfoE4gaM> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁵⁷ The video is present in Tati's YouTube's channel at the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2TJ_4SoV3I (last accessed in August 2019).

⁵⁸ All information about the brand are available at the link: <https://halobeauty.com> (last accessed in August 2019).

Michelle Phan is another American famous YouTuber that laid the foundation of the beauty community. Phan, 32 years old, has Vietnamese origins and started her YouTube career in 2007 with creative beauty videos inspired by celebrities' looks. In 2010 she became the first Vietnamese spokesperson⁵⁹ for Lancôme, a sign that her career was starting to take off. As said in previous chapters, Michelle Phan the following year (2011) founded the successful beauty subscription box service named Ipsy⁶⁰ that is now one of the greatest in the online cosmetic market.

In 2013 L'Oréal decided to finance and own her cosmetic brand named Em cosmetic, which unfortunately did not have as much success as her other businesses. After the fall of Em cosmetic Phan decided to take a break and to focus on other businesses before buying back the company and relaunching it⁶¹. In 2019 Michelle Phan is still considered one of the greatest and wealthiest beauty gurus of all time.

The cosmetic brand L'Oréal has recently shared a new marketing strategy named #BeautySquad which consists in a long-term collaboration with beauty influencers.



Figure 25. Image of the #BeautySquad campaign.

⁵⁹ Information found in the article of *Harper's Bazaar* magazine at the link: <https://www.harpersbazaar.com.au/beauty/five-minutes-with-lancomes-beauty-guru-michelle-phan-4409> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁶⁰ Information about Ipsy are available at the link: <https://www.ipsy.com/about> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁶¹ Information taken in the article of *Teen Vogue*, entitled "Michelle Phan Relaunches Em Cosmetics and Explains Her Social Media Detox" at the link: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/michelle-phan-social-media-detox-em-cosmetics-relaunch-interview> (last accessed in August 2019).

Instagram⁶² official page of Lydia Elise Millen

Originally, L'Oréal started the #BeautySquad program with five UK beauty influencers, and now, seeing the positive results of the first trial, decided to increase the budget and work with eight beauty influencers improving diversity and inclusivity, two important aspects for their consumers. The influencers that now work with L'Oréal in this project are (in the photo, from left to right): Amena Khan (British influencer with 637 thousands of followers in Instagram, in July 2019); Victoria (account named 'inthefrow' with 851 thousands of followers in Instagram, in July 2019); Ling Kt (with 1,4 million followers in Instagram, in July 2019); Ruth Crilly (her Instagram account is named 'modelrecommends' and has 174 thousands of followers, in July 2019); Patricia Bright (named in Instagram 'thepatriciabright' with 1 million followers, in July 2019); Lydia Elise Millen (named 'lydiaemillen' in Instagram with 765 thousands of followers, in July 2019); Emily Canham (with 662 thousands of followers, in July 2019); Kaushal (872 thousands of followers in July 2019).

By looking at their numbers of followers, those beauty influencers should be considered less influential compared to other beauty gurus with larger communities; however, this choice made by L'Oréal Paris confirms the intention of working with influencers that create more engagement with their audiences, that are more authentic – some of them are also mothers of one or more children – and are perceived more honest by their followers. Indeed, the brand seems to prefer to work with more beauty influencers that reach different audiences – different ethnicities and cultures – widening the areas of influence instead of working with fewer and bigger channels that may give the wrong and negative perception of sponsorship. The brand publicizes the #BeautySquad campaign with the phrase “BECAUSE WE ARE *ALL* WORTH IT” remarking this intention of inclusivity and positive diversity; moreover, in their website there is also a program to help people find their worth and confidence in collaboration with The Prince's Trust centres⁶³.

Lastly, it is known that beauty gurus are now considered almost an essential tool for marketing strategies to drive engagement and brand awareness in long-terms for cosmetic brands. However, authentic beauty influencers may also drive negative responses if some cosmetic products are not good of if their marketing claims are misleading. Two clear

⁶² Image taken at Lydia's official page in Instagram at the link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWNkDtNnr1z/>

⁶³ Information taken at the L'Oréal original website, at the link: <https://www.loreal-paris.co.uk/worth-it-course> (last accessed in August 2019).

examples of wrong marketing claims that have led to negative responses in the beauty community are both for color shades inclusivity of foundations. Foundation is one of the most important things when creating a make-up look since it is the base for every possible look. Claiming that a range of foundation is inclusive and differentiated when in reality just offers 4 or 5 darker shades targeted for darker skin tones and the other 35 for white girls is a risky statement. Many influential channels did negative reviews about those specific products, which are: Tarte cosmetics Shape Tape foundation and the Beauty Blender Bounce Liquid Whip Long Wear Foundation. The most viewed negative video about the Shape Tape Foundation is the video entitled “THE TRUTH... TARTE SHAPE TAPE FOUNDATION REVIEW”⁶⁴ by JeffreeStar – one of the most influential American male beauty gurus on YouTube with 15 million followers – with more than 5 million views. At the beginning of the video Jeffree describes the brand’s claim as ‘infamous and controversial’. During the video Jeffree underlies his negative opinion about the shade range and drives people towards a better and inclusive product such as the Fenty Beauty foundation.

Another influential American male beauty guru named Manny Mua – with 4,8 million followers – did the same and reached more than 2 million views with his honest video⁶⁵.

Jeffree did also a negative review about the Beauty Blender foundation entitled “SHADE RANGE WHO?? THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BEAUTY BLENDER FOUNDATION”⁶⁶ which obtained more than 10 million views and 325.805 likes. Those and other video reviews were so impactful that Tarte cosmetics and Beauty Blender had to apologize and promise more deeper shades to their consumers. In the *Cosmopolitan* article entitled “Tarte Apologizes Following Controversy Over "Shape Tape" Foundations”, Tarte Cosmetics, indeed, claimed:

It may be too little too late, but we can assure you this was not meant in any kind of malicious way. We all just got so caught up in #shapetapenation and seeing your tweets asking for it... We wanted to get the product out as fast as possible, & we made the decision to move forward before all the shades were ready to go. We know there is no excuse, & we take full responsibility for launching this way. We lost sight of what's really important in this industry, & for those who feel alienated in our community, we want to personally apologize. We're doing everything in our power to bring those unfinished shades to market as fast as we can, at any cost. We CAN and WILL DO BETTER⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Available in his YouTube official channel at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNC8XT93rds>

⁶⁵ Video at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQYbYMfKta8> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁶⁶ Video at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7PY5XsjmNg> (last accessed in August 2019).

⁶⁷ *Cosmopolitan* article entitled “Tarte Apologizes Following Controversy Over "Shape Tape" Foundations” published in January 2018, available at the link: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/style-beauty/a15583788/tarte-cosmetics-shape-tape-foundation-shades-apology/> (last accessed in August 2019).

This and many other examples confirm how beauty influencers and social network are important marketing agents when it comes to a success or a failure of a product launch or a positive or negative opinion of a cosmetic brand in general. Therefore, cosmetic brands – both low-end and high-end – should be studying a marketing strategy to work with beauty gurus to improve the communication with their consumers and to slowly build and increase their trust.

Conclusions

The aim that motivated this thesis work was to find what made the cosmetic industry work and grow constantly, even through difficult times, both in the past and in the present. In order to do that I analyzed social, cultural, psychological and economic factors that contributed to influence consumers in the use and purchase of cosmetic products, but also marketing strategies that helped cosmetic brand to communicate and to build strong relationship with their consumers.

The first aspect that I've analyzed in the first chapter of this thesis, entitled "The beginning of the cosmetic industry" is the importance of culture. The meaning of the term "beauty" and its related use of cosmetic products has changed a lot through centuries and through years.

The cultural value that cosmetic products had in ancient, modern and present societies is very different: for Egyptians, Greeks and Romans the use of cosmetics was important to show how their societies were civilized, elegant and made a mark of beauty and hygienic techniques to future societies. The use of color cosmetics strongly depended on the cultural values they gave to some techniques or colors. If for Egyptians the use of the color red was associated to magic, for Greeks – and later on, because of the Christian Church, also for Romans – was associated to prostitution. Those different assumption about color cosmetics continued even in more modern societies, and sometimes, as written in the first chapter, were political strategies to mark a distinction between strong nations, such as France and Britain. However, the most important difference is that in more modern societies the use of cosmetics was associated to a high social status. Indeed, for many societies emphasizing the whiteness of the face by bleaching the skin – with poisoning ingredients – was important to mark a distinction between higher and lower social classes.

In the same chapter I also report examples of successful cosmetic brands both for white and black people from the beginning of the 20th century to almost the end of it. The majority of the brands mentioned in this chapter still exist today, and few of them are the most important in this market, such as Estée Lauder. Unfortunately, after the economic crisis of 1929 only the most successful brands for white and rich people kept selling products, whereas, brands targeted for black people slowly disappeared. What both categories had in common and made them successful, though, was the relation and communication between brands and consumers. It was very important for Estée Lauder,

Elisabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein, Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C. J. Walker create solutions for their consumers' problems or necessities. Their businesses were all consumer-oriented and they developed a system to maintain a strong and personal relation with all their consumers. Higher-end cosmetic brands used their salons not only to present, explain and apply cosmetic products, but also to understand women and their desires. Black women did not have the right to open salons or to sell their products in specialized shops, so their strength was selling their product door to door. Another important aspect that those women had in common was the fact that all of them were immigrated to America and were determinate to succeed in their dreams.

I decided to write this part not only to present how the cosmetic industry was born in America but also to underly how cosmetic brands used to communicate with their consumers, in order to compare it to the present day. This element is relevant nowadays and it is also discussed towards the end of the thesis with the emergence of beauty influencers and the role of celebrities.

The second important aspect analyzed in the first chapter is correlated with psychological, social and personal factors that influence consumer behavior in the cosmetic industry.

Comparing the past to the present, there are some factors that keep being important for consumers that belong to any kind of society. Those aspects are social and subjective norms. What is perceived to be right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, by a large group of people is a strong force that drive purchase intention. Culture and religion are two other important forces that drive purchase intention and are strongly related to social and subjective norms.

Cosmetic products are, for their nature, enhancers of someone's beauty and for this reason those products are perceived to be able to manage also social perception and social attractiveness. Consumers believe that a person that is beautiful has more or better opportunities in his/her life whether it is a job opportunity, or marriage, or other social aspects. Furthermore, women tend to consider attractiveness a basic aspect of their life: they overestimate their beauty when wearing cosmetic products but underestimate their attractiveness when they are not wearing it.

A difference with the past, though, is the added value that cosmetic products have in present societies. If beauty products in the past were a tool to enhance beauty, a social and political statement, in the present day those same products are also a representation and manifestation of a consumer's self-image and self-concept. The factors that help a person

to shape their self-congruity are linked with religious, environmental and cultural aspects, but there is also the perception of freedom and creativity in the representation of a subjective self-image.

Furthermore, buying cosmetic products is an extension of someone's personality and beliefs. People nowadays want to buy products that are congruent with what they believe in; consumers want cosmetic brands to create something that reflects the culture they live in but also the diversity of other people and the causes they support.

In the second chapter of this thesis, entitled "Globalization of beauty ideals", I analyze how the cosmetic industry sells products all over the world and how products are advertised in different countries. The most successful cosmetic brands of the American beauty culture, such as Elisabeth Arden, Estée Lauder and Helena Rubinstein, together with Revlon and Max Factor (and many others), started to develop the market worldwide by opening salons in big cities such as London, Paris, Sidney (etc.). Their products were starting to be sold worldwide in specialized shops as well during the '70s – such as Sephora, Ulta Beauty, Macy's – and in tax-free shops of airports. But what made the industry grow at a global level, from 1990 to nowadays, was selling products online and a combination of standardization and adaptation advertising campaigns of their products abroad.

E-marketing strategies are a great way to improve the relationship between brands and consumers, to manage consumers' personal information and preferences and to give them personalized and better services or price promotions. The efficacy of this approach is demonstrated also by the success of beauty subscription-based services, that offer between 3 to 6 cosmetic products in a box at a small price; those services are able to track the investment (and information) by offering a discount code for the purchase of those same products on their websites.

When it comes to standardization or adaptation of an advertising campaign cosmetic brands should evaluate if the barriers of culture, social perception and politic beliefs are acceptable or too high to maintain the brands' images. For countries in which cultural aspects, social perception and political beliefs are similar to what the brand resembles, it could be adopted a standardization process, because it would reduce the costs and maintain the prestige of the brand. For countries that are quite dissimilar, instead, the advertising campaign should be at least more adapted to local preferences. The brand may also change the formula of the product itself using local ingredients depending on the level of diversity and importance of culture of the country; this process, however, is much more expensive.

Nowadays is quite common using a combination of the two strategies in order to obtain more benefits and profits.

In this same chapter I also talk about how beauty ideals changed and diffused worldwide. Culturally speaking, since the cosmetic industry grew and developed in America, western beauty ideals achieved a great importance all over the world, especially in Asian countries where cosmetic surgery is used to obtain western features. The cultural exchange, however, is mutual. Globally speaking the importance of the Asian know-how on the application and production of skin care products is becoming more and more relevant; cosmetic companies are using Asian ingredients – such as natural plants or herbs – to sell more prestigious products in western countries.

The use of natural ingredients on products that have similar function to pharmaceuticals is becoming extremely valuable in the cosmetic market nowadays. In the last section of the second chapter I explain how marketers use values and causes that are perceived important for consumers to improve sales and profits, taking advantage of the fact that many consumers have a limited knowledge of what those marketing claims really means.

More and more people, especially in emergent markets such as China and India are willing to buy and use products that are ‘greener’ – with organic ingredients and more sustainable – because of how important the climate change is on their lives. However, green cosmetics is just another market of the cosmetic industry that is not necessarily safer or more sustainable, since it is not regulated by government. Indeed, the use of terms such as ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ is liberal and many times is misleading. The same happens with cosmeceuticals, another market of the cosmetic industry that is growing as fast as green cosmetics. Cosmeceutical products are sold as cosmetic products that have great qualities and resembles pharmaceutical and drugs properties. As for green cosmetics, consumers are willing to pay more for a product that ensures pharmaceutical benefits; however, also this market is not regulated by the government and its safety depends on the intention of cosmeceuticals brands to test their products on a large amount of people before selling the product. In this part of the chapter I present the growth of those sectors and examples of marketing claims and cosmetic products that are successful. I then conclude with a presentation of the qualities that make the packaging of cosmetics an important element that drives purchase intention.

In the third and last chapter of this thesis, entitled “Worldwide advertising social media and influencer marketing” I present the most used social networks in the beauty

industry and the changes that those technologies have created in the way people communicate with each other, how they increase word of mouth's power, how cosmetic brands can lower barriers to entry and increase their profits quickly and at a lower cost thanks to a new professional figure, that is the beauty influencer.

With the traditional method of advertising people used to have a one-way communication with cosmetic brands and just one perspective of how the beauty culture should be. Nowadays with social media things are totally different. Social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter have changed the way people can obtain information and diffuse them. It is thanks to this process that the beauty community was created, with the aim of sharing knowledge, express identity, fulfill the need to belong to a group, but also sharing passions and talents related to the cosmetic world. In this online beauty community, any information is available worldwide at any time of the day, eliminating the limits of time and space. Considering that before social media people used to get informed mainly by traditional advertising, family and friend's opinions, the fact that now anyone can listen to experts' opinions and create their own objective thought is a drastic change for cosmetic brands that lose the control of the information about their image or products. The e-WOM created in this community could be very positive for cosmetic brands if the opinion shared is in favor of those brands but could be very negative – even more powerful than the positive one – if people are disappointed by a product or a brand. Brands, on the other hand, know that the commitment created in the online beauty community could be directly transferred into brand commitment and increase trust and the purchase intention in a long-term relationship; to do that they could use the help of beauty influencers.

A beauty influencer could be defined as an expert in the cosmetic field, that uses his/her expertise to create original content with unbiased opinion to be shared with an audience that voluntarily follow, listen, trust and comment his/her work. The social media in which beauty gurus are more active and achieve an instant feedback are YouTube and Instagram, where they install a conversation with their audience and create engagement. Beauty influencers normally share different types of videos: content-oriented, market-centered, motivational videos and personal content videos. The one that are important for cosmetic brands are content-oriented and market-centered, where beauty gurus share information about product they have received in PR, product they have bought and reviewed, product they are showing in tutorials and how-to videos. All of this, for cosmetic brands is free advertising at little or no cost. From a marketing perspective, the advantage

that both categories could have in sharing this kind of content is the use of affiliate links that propose the consumer what to buy at a lower price, with a discount code. In this case the beauty guru receives a commission for each purchase with the discount code, and the cosmetic brand is able to track the ‘investment’ and the engagement created with the influencer.

Another strategy that cosmetic brands use to drive engagement is offering beauty experiences to influencers in exotic locations where they would record both information given by the cosmetic brand about the products they want to sell, but also the experience they are living and enjoying thanks to the brand’s trip. Another possible experience brands or beauty retailers would do is the ‘meet up’ (or ‘meet and greet’) where beauty influencers invite their audience to have a party with him/her and the cosmetic brand (or beauty retailer) at a specific shop. Both strategies would give to brands the opportunity to increase positive WOM, but also to improve the relationship and communication between the two in the long run.

A strategy that would drive sales and improve popularity and trust both for brands and influencers, is the collaboration between the two to create cosmetic products. In this chapter I present examples of strategies mentioned before, but also of products collaborations. The collaboration between beauty influencers and cosmetic brands is a strategy that aim to build stronger relationship on long terms between consumers and brands. Consumers that have lost faith in brands’ claims or that are not experts in this field and are confused by this saturated market, trust the beauty influencer that guide them towards the right choice. For this reason, cosmetic brands should choose a beauty guru that give useful information to their audience, create good quality content, has expertise on the cosmetic field and is credible and authentic. Choosing the right beauty influencer to work with could create a positive influence and a higher purchase intention towards the brand, whether it is drugstore or luxury.

As I wrote in the first chapter of this work, celebrities such as Hollywood’s actresses or models used to be fundamental for cosmetic brands to increase the production and the sales of cosmetic products, but most importantly to diffuse beauty ideals to every women of the world. However, as I write in the last chapter of this work, the role of celebrities is different compared to the one of beauty influencers. The difference between the two does not consists only on the number of people they influence, but on which kind of relation they create with them and the brand they work for.

Celebrities are chosen because their fame and image are similar to the brand they are going to be associated with, and their positive image is directly transferred toward the brand in a collaboration. For this reason, celebrity endorsement could be very profitable for cosmetic brands since they increase sales temporarily. The endorsement of a celebrity seems to be more effective if the brand wants to diffuse a more homogeneous, admirable and aspirational presentation of its cosmetic products, especially if those products are advertised through the television.

Beauty influencers, instead, are chosen because of the ‘personal’ relationship they build with their audience, because of their credibility and expertise rather than their image or popularity. This relationship and the ability of the beauty influencer would make the product more meaningful and more valuable to the consumer. In this case, though, the target of the brand’s campaign is more precise, is familiar with the beauty guru and has similar tastes to him/her. The advertised message would be more effective, in this case, if shared through social media and with the authentic words of the influencer rather than a script given by the brand.

I then conclude this chapter by presenting the stories and the possible reasons why some beauty influencers became as successful as they are today. Many of them and others that I have not mentioned in this work have become also entrepreneurs, some of cosmetic brands and others created products related to this business such as vitamins or beauty merchandise or beauty accessories. In the last few years, celebrities as well are creating their own cosmetic brands, such as the singer Rihanna, and the actress Jessica Alba – as I write in the last part of the third chapter– but also many others. Considering what has been previously written about how celebrities and beauty influencers have an impact on consumers, it would be interesting studying strengths and weaknesses about the two parts for this new change but also a comparison with traditional cosmetic brands, studying what those two professional figures offer in respect to the traditional method. Nowadays, however, there are not sufficient academic articles to draw conclusions on this subject.

After analyzing all those aspects, what made this industry great and keeps it growing from a marketing and economic point of view is, on one side, its fast ability to adapt to social and technological changes and, on the other, the attention towards consumers’ needs, desires and behavior. At the beginning of this industry, the most important cosmetic brands owners were always focused on giving consumer what they wanted and shaped their brands’ image according to beauty ideals American people wanted to follow and achieve. Nowadays we live in a world that is more global both in social and cultural terms,

for this reason cosmetic brands are trying to take the best out of every country and are using social, moral and environmental causes that are important for their international consumers in order to maintain a global success. The concept of the majority of the cosmetic products that exist today is not totally different from what it was in ancient societies or in more modern ones, but what is constantly adapted and create value to the consumer is this social and moral perspective.

Lastly, the way a cosmetic brand chooses to communicate with consumers impacts its success especially in long terms. The personal relation between brands and consumers that worked at the beginning of this industry is still confirmed today by the role of beauty influencers. Considering this relation, the difference with the past is that nowadays the cosmetic market is extremely saturated, and traditional advertising is no more effective; for this reason, beauty gurus are the natural result of the necessity of knowledge, information and expertise to navigate and find the best out of thousands similar products. Cosmetic brands have accepted the fact that they have no more control over the information shared about their products but know that beauty influencers have a key role on driving consumers towards the right choice and are adapting their strategies to this social and marketing change to obtain more profits. If on the one hand cosmetic brands have lost control over the information shared by others on their products, on the other, they are now able to track with precision their investments and understand consumers' preferences and tastes in order to create more successful products.

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Riassunto in italiano

L'obiettivo che ha motivato questo lavoro di tesi è stato quello di trovare i fattori che hanno permesso all'industria cosmetica di svilupparsi e crescere costantemente, anche durante tempi difficili, sia nel passato che nel presente. Per fare ciò sono stati analizzati i fattori sociali, culturali, psicologici ed economici che hanno contribuito ad influenzare i consumatori nell'uso e nell'acquisto di prodotti cosmetici, ma anche strategie di marketing che hanno aiutato i brand a comunicare e a stabilire solide relazioni con i propri consumatori.

Il primo aspetto analizzato nel capitolo intitolato "The beginning of the cosmetic industry", è l'importanza della cultura. Il significato del termine "bellezza" e il conseguente uso di prodotti cosmetici sono cambiati molto nel corso dei secoli e degli anni.

Il valore culturale che i prodotti cosmetici avevano nelle società antiche, moderne e presenti è molto diverso: per egiziani, greci e romani l'uso dei cosmetici era importante per mostrare come le loro società fossero civilizzate ed eleganti, determinando uno standard di bellezza e cura della persona anche per le società successive. L'uso del make-up dipendeva fortemente dai valori culturali che alcune tecniche o colori avevano per determinate società. Se per gli egiziani l'uso del colore rosso era associato alla magia, per i greci (e in seguito, a causa della Chiesa cristiana, anche per i romani) era associato alla prostituzione. Le stesse associazioni culturali per quanto riguarda il make-up continuarono anche nelle società più moderne e talvolta, come descritto nel primo capitolo, erano strategie politiche per marcare una distinzione tra nazioni importanti (come Francia e Gran Bretagna); tuttavia, la differenza più importante è che nelle società più moderne l'uso dei cosmetici era associato a un elevato status sociale. In effetti, era importante per molte società enfatizzare il candore del viso sbiancando la pelle (con ingredienti tossici) al fine di distinguere le classi sociali superiori da quelle inferiori.

In questo stesso capitolo sono stati riportati anche esempi di brand di cosmetici di successo sia per persone dalla carnagione chiara che per persone di colore dall'inizio alla fine del 20° secolo. La maggior parte dei brand citati in questo capitolo esiste ancora oggi e pochi di essi sono tra i più importanti del settore, come Estée Lauder. Purtroppo, dopo la crisi economica del 1929, solo i marchi di maggior successo continuarono a vendere prodotti, mentre i marchi destinati alle persone di colore scomparvero lentamente. Ciò che entrambe le categorie avevano in comune e le rendevano di successo, tuttavia, erano la relazione e la comunicazione tra brand e consumatori. È stato estremamente importante per

Estée Lauder, Elisabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein, Annie Turnbo Malone e Madam CJ Walker creare soluzioni ai problemi o le necessità dei loro consumatori. Le loro attività erano tutte orientate a sviluppare un sistema per mantenere un rapporto solido e personale con tutti i loro consumatori. I brand cosmetici di fascia alta usavano i loro saloni non solo per presentare, spiegare e applicare prodotti cosmetici, ma anche per conoscere le donne e i loro desideri. Le donne di colore non avevano il diritto di aprire saloni o di vendere i loro prodotti in negozi specializzati, quindi la loro forza era vendere i prodotti porta a porta.

Questa parte non solo è importante per presentare come è nata l'industria cosmetica in America, ma anche per capire come i brand di cosmetici erano soliti comunicare con i loro consumatori, al fine di confrontare il primo sistema con quello attuale. La comunicazione è un elemento estremamente rilevante al giorno d'oggi, infatti l'argomento viene discusso verso la fine della tesi con l'emergere del fenomeno delle beauty influencer e il ruolo delle celebrità.

Il secondo aspetto importante analizzato nel primo capitolo è correlato a fattori psicologici, sociali e personali che influenzano il comportamento dei consumatori nell'industria cosmetica.

Confrontando il passato con il presente, ci sono alcuni fattori che continuano ad essere importanti per consumatori di qualsiasi tipo di società. Tali aspetti sono le norme sociali e soggettive. Ciò che viene percepito come giusto o sbagliato, bello o brutto da un gran numero di persone è un forte impulso che guida l'intenzione di acquisto. Cultura e religione sono altre due forze importanti che guidano l'intenzione di acquisto e sono fortemente legate alle norme sociali e soggettive.

I prodotti cosmetici sono, per loro natura, esaltatori della bellezza delle persone e per questo motivo si pensa che possano gestire anche la percezione e l'attrattività sociale. I consumatori credono che una persona bella abbia maggiori o migliori opportunità nella sua vita, sia che si tratti di un'opportunità di lavoro, del matrimonio o di altri aspetti sociali. Inoltre, le donne tendono a considerare l'attrattività un aspetto fondamentale della loro vita infatti sopravvalutano la loro bellezza quando indossano prodotti cosmetici, ma sottovalutano la loro attrattività quando non li indossano.

Una differenza con il passato, tuttavia, è il valore aggiunto che i prodotti cosmetici hanno nelle società attuali. Se i cosmetici in passato erano uno strumento per migliorare la bellezza, un'affermazione sociale e politica, oggi questi stessi prodotti sono anche una rappresentazione e manifestazione dell'immagine e del concetto di sé per il consumatore. I fattori che aiutano una persona a modellare il proprio essere sono collegati agli aspetti

religiosi, ambientali e culturali, come detto precedentemente, ma c'è anche una percezione di libertà e creatività nella rappresentazione di un'immagine soggettiva di sé.

L'acquisto di prodotti cosmetici è anche un'estensione della personalità e degli ideali del consumatore. Oggi le persone vogliono acquistare prodotti coerenti con ciò in cui credono, vogliono che i brand di cosmetici creino qualcosa che rifletta la cultura in cui vivono ma anche la diversità delle altre persone e le cause che sostengono.

Nel secondo capitolo di questa tesi, intitolato "Globalization of beauty ideals", infatti, viene analizzato come l'industria cosmetica vende prodotti in tutto il mondo e come questi vengono pubblicizzati in diversi paesi. I brand cosmetici di maggior successo della *beauty culture* americana, come Elisabeth Arden, Estée Lauder e Helena Rubinstein, insieme a Revlon e Max Factor (e molti altri), hanno iniziato a sviluppare il settore in una prospettiva globale aprendo saloni in grandi città come Londra, Parigi, Sidney (ecc.). I loro prodotti iniziarono ad essere venduti, negli anni '70, anche in negozi internazionali specializzati (come Sephora, Ulta Beauty, Macy's) e nei negozi tax-free degli aeroporti. Ma ciò che ha fatto crescere davvero l'industria a livello globale, dal 1990 ad oggi, è stata la vendita di prodotti online e una combinazione di campagne pubblicitarie di standardizzazione e adattamento dei loro prodotti all'estero.

Le strategie di e-marketing sono, infatti, un ottimo modo per migliorare il rapporto tra marchi e consumatori, gestire le informazioni e le preferenze personali dei consumatori e offrire loro servizi e promozioni migliori in base a prezzi personalizzati. L'efficacia di questo approccio è dimostrata anche dal successo dei servizi di abbonamento online, che in una confezione offrono da 3 a 6 prodotti cosmetici ad un prezzo modesto; in questa maniera sono in grado di tracciare l'investimento (e le informazioni) offrendo un codice di sconto per l'acquisto di quegli stessi prodotti sui loro siti Web.

Per quanto riguarda la standardizzazione o adattamento di una campagna pubblicitaria, i brand di cosmetici dovrebbero valutare se le barriere della cultura, della percezione sociale e degli ideali politici sono accettabili o troppo elevate per mantenere immutata la loro immagine. Per i paesi in cui gli aspetti culturali, la percezione sociale e gli ideali politici sono simili a quelli del marchio, è possibile adottare un processo di standardizzazione, che ridurrebbe i costi e manterrebbe il prestigio del marchio. Per i paesi che invece sono molto diversi, la campagna pubblicitaria dovrebbe essere almeno più adattata alle preferenze locali. Il brand può anche cambiare la formula del prodotto stesso utilizzando ingredienti locali a seconda del livello di diversità e dell'importanza della

cultura del paese; questo processo, tuttavia, è molto più costoso. Oggi è abbastanza comune usare una combinazione delle due strategie per ottenere più benefici e profitti.

In questo stesso capitolo si tratta anche di come gli ideali di bellezza sono cambiati e si sono diffusi in tutto il mondo. Dal punto di vista culturale, poiché l'industria cosmetica è cresciuta e si è sviluppata in America, gli ideali di bellezza occidentali hanno acquisito una grande importanza in tutto il mondo, specialmente nei paesi asiatici, dove la chirurgia estetica viene utilizzata per ottenere tali caratteristiche. Lo scambio culturale, tuttavia, è reciproco. A livello globale, l'importanza del know-how asiatico sull'applicazione e la produzione di prodotti per la cura della pelle sta diventando sempre più rilevante; le aziende cosmetiche stanno infatti utilizzando ingredienti asiatici (come piante o erbe naturali) per vendere prodotti più prestigiosi nei paesi occidentali.

Al giorno d'oggi l'uso di ingredienti naturali su prodotti che hanno una funzione simile a quella farmaceutica sta diventando estremamente prezioso nel mercato cosmetico. Nell'ultima sezione del secondo capitolo viene presentato il modo in cui gli esperti di marketing utilizzano valori e cause che sono percepiti importanti dai consumatori per migliorare le vendite e i profitti (sfruttando il fatto che molti consumatori hanno una conoscenza limitata di ciò che tali affermazioni significano realmente).

Sempre più persone, soprattutto nei mercati emergenti come la Cina e l'India, sono disposte ad acquistare e utilizzare prodotti "green" (con ingredienti biologici e più sostenibili) a causa dell'importanza che i cambiamenti climatici hanno nella loro vita. Tuttavia, la cosmesi naturale è solo un'altra categoria dell'industria cosmetica che non è necessariamente più sicura o più sostenibile, poiché non è regolata dal governo; in effetti, l'uso di termini come "naturale" o "organico" è liberale e molte volte è fuorviante. Lo stesso accade con la cosmeceutica, un'altra categoria dell'industria cosmetica che sta crescendo quasi più velocemente della cosmesi naturale. I prodotti cosmeceutici sono venduti come prodotti cosmetici che hanno qualità migliori e rispecchiano le proprietà farmaceutiche. Infatti, i consumatori sono disposti a pagare di più per un prodotto che garantisce benefici farmaceutici, tuttavia, anche questo segmento di mercato non è regolato dal governo e la sua sicurezza dipende dall'intenzione dei brand cosmeceutici di testare i loro prodotti su un grande numero di persone prima di vendere il prodotto. In questa parte del capitolo viene illustrata la crescita dei settori precedentemente citati ed esempi di affermazioni di marketing e prodotti cosmetici che hanno successo. Infine vengono presentate le qualità che rendono il packaging dei cosmetici un elemento importante per quanto riguarda l'intenzione di acquisto.

Nel terzo e ultimo capitolo di questa tesi, intitolato "Worldwide advertising social media and influencer marketing", vi è l'analisi dei social media più utilizzati nel settore della bellezza e i cambiamenti che tali tecnologie hanno portato nel modo in cui le persone comunicano tra loro. Questo capitolo tratta anche di come aumentare il potere del passaparola e del modo in cui i brand di cosmetici possono abbassare le barriere di ingresso per aumentare i loro profitti rapidamente ad un costo inferiore anche grazie alla figura delle beauty influencer.

Con il metodo tradizionale di pubblicità le persone ricevono una comunicazione diretta e precisa dai brand di cosmetici e un'unica prospettiva di come dovrebbe essere la cultura della bellezza. Oggi con i social media le cose sono molto diverse. I social network come Facebook, YouTube, Instagram e Twitter hanno cambiato radicalmente il modo in cui le persone possono ottenere informazioni e diffonderle. È grazie a questo processo che è stata creata la beauty community, con l'obiettivo di condividere la conoscenza, esprimere l'identità, soddisfare la necessità di appartenere ad un gruppo, ma anche condividere passioni e talenti legati al mondo dei cosmetici. In questa beauty community online, qualsiasi informazione è disponibile in tutto il mondo in qualsiasi momento della giornata, eliminando i limiti di tempo e spazio. Considerando che prima delle reti sociali le persone si informavano principalmente tramite la pubblicità tradizionale, l'opinione della famiglia e dell'amico, ora chiunque può ascoltare le opinioni degli esperti e creare un proprio pensiero oggettivo. Un grande cambiamento dunque per i brand di cosmetici poiché perdono il controllo delle informazioni sull'immagine o sui prodotti del loro marchio. La e-WOM creata in questa comunità può essere molto positiva per i brand di cosmetici se l'opinione condivisa è a favore di tali marchi, ma può essere molto negativa (con un effetto anche più potente di quella positiva) nel caso in cui le persone rimangano deluse da un prodotto o da un marchio. I brand, d'altra parte, sanno che l'interesse creato nella beauty community potrebbe essere trasferito direttamente in interesse verso il brand, con la possibilità di aumentare la fiducia e l'intenzione di acquisto in una relazione a lungo termine; per farlo in maniera efficace possono usare l'aiuto delle beauty influencer.

Un beauty influencer potrebbe essere definito come un esperto in ambito di cosmesi, che utilizza la sua conoscenza per creare contenuti originali in cui esprimere opinioni imparziali da condividere con un pubblico che segue, ascolta, confida e commenta volontariamente il suo lavoro. I social network in cui le beauty guru sono più attive e ottengono un feedback immediato sono YouTube e Instagram, dove installano una conversazione con il loro pubblico e creano coinvolgimento. Le beauty guru normalmente

condividono diversi tipi di video: video orientati al contenuto, centrati sul mercato, motivazionali e video di contenuti personali. Quello più importante per i brand di cosmetici è il video orientato al contenuto e incentrato sul mercato, dove le beauty guru condividono informazioni sul prodotto che hanno ricevuto in PR, sul prodotto che hanno acquistato e recensito, sul prodotto che stanno mostrando in tutorial e altri video dimostrativi. Tutto questo, per i brand è pubblicità gratuita a costo ridotto o nullo. Dal punto di vista del marketing, il vantaggio che potrebbero avere entrambe le parti nel condividere questo tipo di contenuto è l'uso di link di affiliazione, poiché questi link suggeriscono al consumatore cosa acquistare ad un prezzo inferiore con un codice di sconto. In questo caso la beauty guru riceve una commissione per ogni acquisto con il codice sconto e il marchio cosmetico è in grado di tracciare "l'investimento" e il coinvolgimento creato dall'influencer.

Un'altra strategia che i marchi di cosmetici utilizzano per favorire il coinvolgimento è offrire esperienze di bellezza alle influencer in luoghi esotici e particolari, in cui queste registrerebbero sia le informazioni (fornite dai brand) sui prodotti che questi vogliono vendere, sia l'esperienza che vivono grazie ai brand. Un'altra possibile esperienza che possono offrire i brand o i rivenditori specializzati di prodotti di bellezza è il 'meet up' (o 'meet and greet') in cui gli influencer invitano il loro pubblico ad una festa organizzata da loro e dal brand di cosmetici (o rivenditore) in un negozio specifico per incontrarsi, salutarsi ed entrare in contatto con determinati prodotti. Entrambe le strategie darebbero l'opportunità ai marchi di aumentare la WOM positiva ma anche di migliorare la relazione e la comunicazione tra i due nel lungo periodo.

Una strategia che dovrebbe migliorare le vendite, la popolarità e la fiducia sia per i brand che per gli influencer, è la collaborazione tra i due per creare nuovi prodotti cosmetici. In questo capitolo vengono presentati esempi di strategie di marketing ma anche di collaborazioni per nuovi prodotti.

La collaborazione tra beauty influencer e brand cosmetici è una strategia che mira a costruire relazioni più forti a lungo termine tra consumatori e marchi. I consumatori che hanno perso la fiducia nelle affermazioni dei marchi o che non sono esperti in questo campo e sono confusi da questo mercato saturo, si affidano alla beauty influencer che li guida verso la scelta giusta.

Per questo motivo, i brand di cosmetici dovrebbero scegliere una beauty guru che fornisca informazioni utili al loro pubblico, crei contenuti di buona qualità, abbia esperienza nel settore cosmetico e sia credibile e autentica. Scegliere il giusto influencer

con cui lavorare potrebbe creare un'influenza positiva e un'intenzione di acquisto più elevata nei confronti del marchio, che sia economico o di lusso.

Come anticipato nel primo capitolo, celebrità come attrici (o modelle), di Hollywood erano fondamentali per i brand soprattutto per aumentare la produzione e la vendita di prodotti cosmetici, ma anche per diffondere gli ideali di bellezza ad ogni donna del mondo. Tuttavia, il ruolo delle celebrità è diverso rispetto a quello delle beauty influencer. La differenza tra le due non dipende solo dal numero di persone che influenzano, ma dal tipo di relazione che creano con loro e dal marchio per cui lavorano.

Le celebrità vengono scelte perché la loro fama e immagine sono simili al marchio a cui vengono associate e la loro immagine positiva viene trasferita direttamente al marchio durante una collaborazione. Per questo motivo, lavorare con celebrità può essere molto redditizio per i marchi di cosmetici poiché queste aumentano temporaneamente le vendite. La collaborazione con una celebrità sembra essere più efficace se il marchio vuole diffondere una rappresentazione più omogenea, ammirevole e ideale dei suoi prodotti, soprattutto se questi vengono pubblicizzati attraverso la televisione.

Gli influencer, invece, vengono scelti per la relazione "personale" che instaurano con il loro pubblico, per la loro credibilità e competenza piuttosto che per la loro immagine o popolarità. Questa relazione e la capacità della beauty influencer renderebbero il prodotto più significativo e più prezioso per il consumatore. In questo caso, tuttavia, il target della campagna pubblicitaria del marchio è più preciso, è un target che ha familiarità con la beauty guru e ha gusti simili a lui/lei. Il messaggio pubblicizzato sarebbe più efficace, in questo caso, se condiviso attraverso i social media e con parole autentiche dell'influencer piuttosto che un testo fornito dal marchio.

Il capitolo si conclude presentando le storie e le possibili ragioni per cui alcuni beauty influencer hanno avuto tanto successo. Molti di loro e altri che non sono stati menzionati in questo lavoro sono diventati anche imprenditori, alcuni di marchi di cosmetici e altri hanno creato prodotti legati a questo business come: vitamine, articoli o accessori di bellezza. Negli ultimi anni, anche le celebrità hanno creato i loro marchi di cosmetici, come la cantante Rihanna e l'attrice Jessica Alba ma anche molti altri. Considerando quanto detto in precedenza su come le celebrità e gli influencer abbiano un impatto sui consumatori, sarebbe interessante studiare i punti di forza e di debolezza delle due parti per questo nuovo cambiamento, ma anche un confronto con il brand cosmetico tradizionale, studiando cosa offrono queste due figure professionali in merito al metodo tradizionale; al giorno

d'oggi, tuttavia, non ci sono articoli accademici sufficienti per trarre conclusioni su questo argomento.

Dopo aver analizzato tutti questi aspetti, ciò che ha reso grande questo settore e lo fa crescere dal punto di vista economico e commerciale è, da un lato, la sua rapida capacità di adattamento ai cambiamenti sociali e tecnologici e, dall'altro, l'attenzione verso i bisogni, desideri e comportamenti dei consumatori. Agli inizi di sviluppo di questo settore, i più importanti proprietari di marchi di cosmetici si sono sempre concentrati sul dare ai consumatori ciò che volevano e hanno modellato l'immagine dei loro marchi secondo gli ideali di bellezza che gli americani volevano seguire e ottenere. Oggi viviamo in un mondo più globale sia in termini sociali che culturali, per questo motivo i brand stanno cercando di trarre il meglio da ogni paese e stanno usando cause sociali, morali e ambientali che sono importanti per i loro consumatori internazionali per mantenere un successo globale. Il concetto della maggior parte dei prodotti cosmetici che esiste oggi non è completamente diverso da quello che era nelle società antiche o in quelle più moderne, ma ciò che viene costantemente adattato e crea valore per il consumatore è questa prospettiva sociale e morale.

Infine, il modo in cui un marchio di cosmetici sceglie di comunicare con i propri consumatori influisce sul suo successo soprattutto a lungo termine. La relazione personale tra brand e consumatori che ha funzionato agli inizi di questo mercato è oggi confermata dal ruolo delle beauty influencer. Considerando questa relazione, la differenza con il passato è che al giorno d'oggi il mercato dei cosmetici è estremamente saturo e la pubblicità tradizionale non è più efficace; per questo motivo, i guru della bellezza sono il naturale risultato della necessità di conoscenza, informazione e competenza per navigare e trovare il meglio tra migliaia di prodotti simili. I marchi di cosmetici hanno accettato il fatto di non avere più controllo sulle informazioni condivise sui loro prodotti, ma sanno che le beauty influencer hanno un ruolo chiave nel guidare i consumatori verso la scelta giusta e si stanno adattando a questo cambiamento sociale e di marketing per ottenere maggiori profitti. Se da un lato i marchi di cosmetici hanno perso il controllo delle informazioni condivise sui loro prodotti, dall'altro sono ora in grado di tracciare con maggior precisione i loro investimenti e comprendere le preferenze e i gusti dei consumatori al fine di creare prodotti di maggior successo.