

A Snapshot of the Teen Scene: Challenging Assumptions about Teenage Cosmetics

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Abstract

'Anti-blemish', 'gentle' and 'clear' are just a handful of the established marketing claims of cosmetic products targeting teens but, with brands increasingly prioritising the teenage consumer, has the teen market moved beyond these simple messages?

The teenage personal care market possesses both indisputable commercial worth and yet relatively untapped potential. Teens are more self-conscious about their bodies than any other age group and these worries directly translate into a formidable purchasing power. For example, Mintel estimates that in 2008, products bought for or by teens accounted for 13% of the total beauty and personal care market value sales, the equivalent to £784 million⁽¹⁾. However, teens' importance to the market stretches well beyond the here and now. Companies are increasingly using extensions of existing product lines within their brands to tap into the teenage sector, recognising the 'gateway' opportunity of engaging teens into emotional attachment and thus brand loyalty at an early stage, which can then last into their 20s, 30s and beyond.

Cornelius independently surveyed 38 female respondents between the ages of 14-19 about their personal care regime, asking specifically tailored questions on topics such as their buying motivators and their understanding of the cosmetic products currently on the market. Each questionnaire was completed anonymously and individually, removing possible external influencers (such as peer pressure) from negatively affecting the originality of the results. The data was analysed and compared to other research available in the market. Examining colour cosmetics, skin care, hair care and sun care market applications, as well as decision making trends, it soon became apparent that keeping up with the 'Teen Scene' is certainly no mean feat for cosmetic manufacturers and brands alike.

Colour Cosmetics

75% of responses listed colour cosmetics as their most important sector of personal care, with 94% indicating they wear some form for a considerable length of time on a daily basis.

Within this sector, foundation, mascara, powder, nail varnish, eyeliner and others were evenly split across the panel. Foundation's predicted position as the biggest segment was supported (22%), however with the explosion of BB (blemish balm) creams - offering the triple benefit of SPF protection and skincare in addition to colour - this dominance within the facial make up sector may well be reduced in years to come.

Current trends were also supported - a foundation which matched the skin tone to give a natural look was the most desirable amongst our survey - whilst interestingly using foundation to give a tan effect was prioritised over coverage by some panellists. Somewhat surprisingly, only two panellists expressed an interest in green or organic products, suggesting this 'natural' trend stretches no further than appearances among the teenage consumer.

Despite this prevalence of colour, only 66% reported removing their makeup on a daily basis, with wipes by far the most popular method used (79%). Incorporating active ingredients into makeup ranges is becoming more popular, with several ingredients targeting anti-sebum proliferating in the market.

Nail Art

Trendy nails appear to be a true must-have with teenagers. Being relatively cheap, it is an easy way for teens to show their individuality. The vibrancy of colours, long wear (chip resistance) and quick drying were the key motivators when purchasing nail varnish. Interestingly, innovations such as crackle effects and magnetic nails were shunned by our respondents, although a majority of them were interested in trends and following trends in other areas of colour cosmetics.