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Cosmetics as Essential Everyday Companions – the Psychological and Physical Relevance of Cosmetic Products for People

H. Neibecker, I. Imdahl

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abstract

The importance of cosmetic products for people takes centre stage in this in-depth psychological-representative study. Six relevant motives for use show how essential the products surveyed, such as toothpaste, deodorant, fragrance, face care, shower gel, body care, shaving and beard care, decorative cosmetics, nail polish are for people, more particularly, also in their diversity. People perceive cosmetic products as cultivating, socially relevant, expressing values, individualising, structuring in everyday life and rejuvenating. All this contributes towards people not being able to imagine life without the products used by them and that without them, they feel drastically restricted in their self-determination, self-realisation and self-esteem. Overall, it was possible to prove that cosmetics have more than just a superficial influence on the human condition. The respondents found that all the products they use are very important. Each product is psychologically relevant in its meaning – often also in its different forms of presentation. This is because products are expected to meet diverse customer needs. The demands on the products have even increased. Because products are less and less often used in an inexperienced and unquestioned manner. More and more often, people are looking for the best possible alternative and want further specifications and offers. A wide variety of consistencies, fragrances, sizes, packaging formats for different skin types, phases of life as well as seasons and times of day is essential for almost all respondents. In addition to product performance and tolerability, sustainability is another increasingly important factor, although this was not the focus of the survey.

1. Introduction

How important are cosmetic products for people? How central is the variety of the offers or the product diversity? Would it not be sufficient to offer for each product category some sort of basic supply or only one product for all? The closure of hairdressing salons during the pandemic had already demonstrated how important hairstyle and hair care can be for culture, the society and personal wellbeing. This was the reason for researching the significance of hair care scientifically. The results from the study “Hairstyle and Dignity” were so convincing that it was more or less obvious to examine this question also for the comprehensive field of further cosmetic offers. The study wanted to find out whether and in how far physical as well as psychological sensitivities depend on the cosmetic application and are related to a feeling of human dignity. Apart from this general significance, the concrete differentiation between individual products such as toothpaste, deodorant, fragrance, face care, shower gel, body care, shaving and beard care, decorative cosmetics as well as nail polish were up for discussion. To what extent do cosmetic products have a general relevance? And to what extent can products be differentiated in each case in terms of

their special relevance for the respondents? And in how far is the diversity of the offering relevant for the personal needs?

2. Methodology

The underlying study combines two usual methods of market research. An in-depth psychology-based qualitative part with a quantitative representative part building on it: altogether more than 1,000 people were interviewed for this study on



behalf of IKW (German Cosmetic, Toiletry, Perfumery and Detergent Association) using different methods, namely an online questionnaire or a face-to-face talk.

For the in-depth-psychology part, 36 users of cosmetics all over Germany were symbolically placed on the couch by psychologists during two-hour depth interviews each (Figure 1). 21 women and 15 men, 16 to 69 years old, were interviewed. The family situation, income, educational background corresponded more or less to the average of the corresponding distribution throughout the general population. Rural and urban environments were equally considered throughout Germany.

A regular use of body and face care products as well as fragrance or perfume was a prerequisite to a participation in the interviews. The large number of products to be examined and their diversity required a rotation plan for the conduct of the interviews which allowed for different focal points and hence the nec-

essary in-depth examination and secured at the same time that a comparable basis was created in each interview (Figure 2). There were 12 participants for each of the three focal areas face care, body care and fragrance. In addition to each focal area, all female participants were asked about the use of nail polish and / or decorative cosmetics and the male participants about the product use for shaving and beard care. Based on this quota, it was possible to cover the motives for use in their full range as well as the relevance for society and culture in the depth interviews.

12 interviews Focal area: face care	12 interviews Focal area: body care	12 interviews Focal area: fragrance
Additionally for women nail polish and decorative cosmetics / for men shaving and beard care	Additionally for women nail polish and decorative cosmetics / for men shaving and beard care	Additionally for women nail polish and decorative cosmetics / for men shaving and beard care
4 interviews with additional questions on deodorants	4 interviews with additional questions on deodorants	4 interviews with additional questions on deodorants
4 interviews with additional questions on shower gel	4 interviews with additional questions on shower gel	4 interviews with additional questions on shower gel
4 interviews with additional questions on toothpaste	4 interviews with additional questions on toothpaste	4 interviews with additional questions on toothpaste

Fig. 2 Rotation plan for the interviews




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The qualitative part of the survey was carried out by means of an open guide in face-to-face interviews. The survey design and analysis were based on morphological psychology as developed over a period of more than 30 years at the University of Cologne by Professor Wilhelm Salber [1,3]. The low number of participants interviewed is sufficient, since the insight value of a study is not only measurable through the number of participants surveyed. The question rather determines the number of people who have to be symbolically placed on the couch or the method used in a depth-psychology study [2].

The question about the why and how is hence answered by an in-depth-psychology approach. The question about the how much and / or approval or rejection is, by contrast, answered with a statistically representative or quantitative approach. To this effect, 1,000 people were interviewed in a representative online panel (Figure 3).

The goal was to find out in how far they agree to the relevance of body and face care as well as fragrances found in the in-depth-psychological basis and, furthermore, which body and face care products they use how often. Finally, the question was also which products serve human motives in a special way and thus have a relevant essential function.

3. Results

The results are presented in three parts:

- I. General motives for use and areas of relevance of cosmetic products
- II. Physical and psychological relevance of the product areas
- III. Importance of product diversity and differentiating offers

I. General motives for the use and areas of relevance of cosmetic products

The use of the different cosmetic products supports the feeling of a decent human existence. Essentially, six fields of meaning can be differentiated, which characterise the cosmetic products as essential.

1. Cultural relevance: Cosmetics enable people to show themselves as cultivated. The respondents see the need to groom and shape themselves as the central difference to the animalistic, wild and uncontrolled. For them, a groomed appearance is an essential feature of being human. The topic of trend is also part of this cultural aspect. While the use of toothpaste, for example, primarily expresses the distinction from the animalistic, the trendy cultural character is more evident in the use of

decorative cosmetics. 83% of the people who use toothpaste consider it essential – for them, this oral hygiene is part of being human. 47% of women who use decorative cosmetics are, by contrast, convinced that they can show their trendiness through their makeup (Figure 4).

2. Status relevance: Cosmetics can also be an expression of social standing. This status can be determined by the use of certain brands and the price of products. Classic fragrances are often a good status indicator. 49% of users see fragrance and perfume as a status symbol. The general use of cosmetic products also testifies to the knowledge that it is an expression of respect towards others to take care of oneself. For 37% of users, wearing decorative cosmetics is a sign of respect (Figure 4).

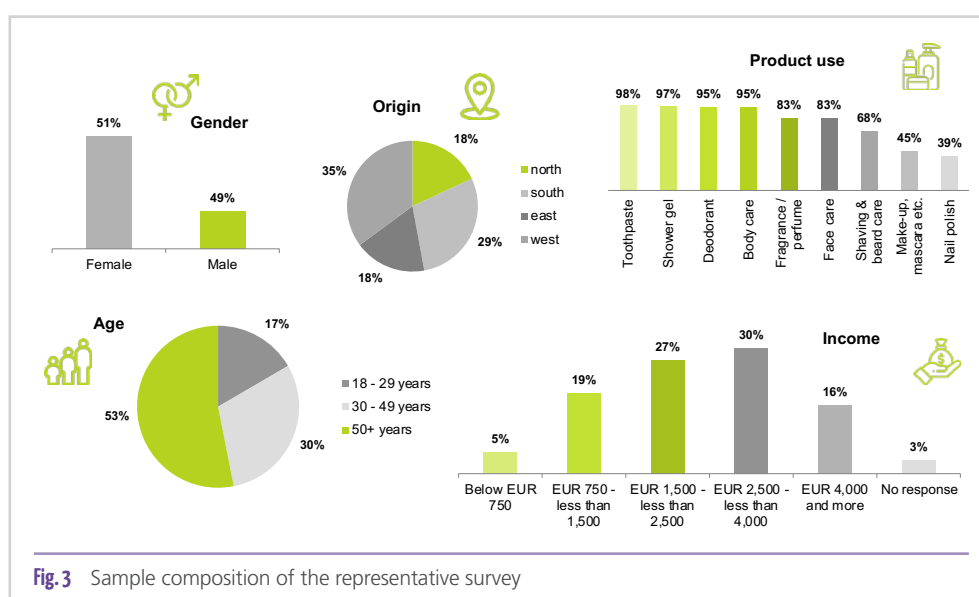


Fig. 3 Sample composition of the representative survey

3. Group relevance: As much as the use of cosmetics can be an expression of trend and zeitgeist, it can also symbolise the belonging to a community. Some cosmetic products, such as fragrances or certain ways of putting on makeup, are also an expression of belonging to a group and its values. This can often only be deciphered if one knows the respective person or if one is aware of the group codes. These codes symbolise cohesiveness and community. A certain colour choice in the field of decorative cosmetics, for example, can sometimes be associated with different generations. A certain brand choice, for example in the area of natural cosmetics can, by contrast, be an indication of political attitudes and values. 45% of female users believe that they can show their trend consciousness through nail polish and nail design – and in this sense be modern or belong to a certain group (Figure 4).

4. Personality relevance and demand for individualisation: Styling, fragrances and the way of putting on makeup can emphasise the personality and conceal defaults. Individualisation is particularly important to people. When it comes to skin and hair, they literally do not

want to be lumped together. A diversity of products, such as different consistencies, are therefore particularly important. Not only to express personality, but also because different product offers satisfy different needs. 50% of men who use shaving and beard care products agree that their well-groomed and shaved beard helps them stand out from others. 46% want to be able to choose between different fragrances, consistencies etc. – they believe that one shaving and beard care product for all is inconceivable (Figure 4).

The different motives condition and support each other.

Sophistication and status can so-to-speak be created through daily care with cosmetic products.

A demand for individualisation and personality relevance are major factors supporting diversity in the product offering.

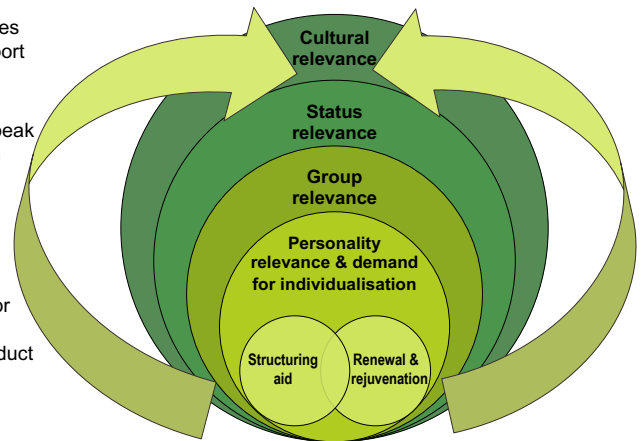


Fig. 4 Overarching motives for the use of cosmetics

5. Structuring aid: With cosmetic products, structure can definitely be brought into everyday life and the daily routine. During the Covid lockdown, many people used the care routines to maintain a structure in their daily lives which had become structureless – this is a particular testament to the essential function of cosmetic products. Morning, evening and weekly routines help people to get into a certain frame of mind that also provides security and reassurance. This is psychologically relevant. For instance, 55% of shower gel users describe shower gel as helping them to clear their heads. 52% of users feel fully dressed only after they have put on a fragrance. And 63% say that they can only go through the day carefree and relaxed with the right fragrance (Figure 4).

6. Wish for renewal and rejuvenation: Women in particular, but also many men, attach a clear desire for refreshment and rejuvenation to cosmetic products. In everyday life, this feeling of renewal and rejuvenation can be created through the daily use of products. Shower and care prod-

ucts, for instance, also contribute to evening refreshment. From a psychological point of view, this is a rejuvenation in miniature. 81% feel fresh and ready for the day or night after a shower with shower gel. Moreover, the frequent search for new and innovative products is a psychological expression of an even greater desire for rejuvenation. Only with a new product does a woman in particular feel younger – with an “older” one this is much more difficult. 57% of facial care users feel young and fresh through their cream (Figure 4).

II. Physical and psychological relevance of the product areas

The in-depth-psychological part of the survey was also able to identify the physical and psychological relevance of individual product areas and in this connection also the importance of a diverse range. Despite great commonalities on the motive level and the general desire for variety, each product has a special relevance for the users interviewed.


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Toothpaste is essential for the respondents; they would least like to do without it. Well-kept teeth are an expression of sophistication. Bad teeth are a sign of destitution and lack of prosperity. Good teeth are also a kind of showpiece. They are essentially obtained by daily brushing and express: "I am a well-groomed person", "I take care of myself". And also: "I am considerate of others – I don't want to bother anyone with bad teeth or bad breath". Communion and, above all, intimacy often only become possible through the use of toothpaste.

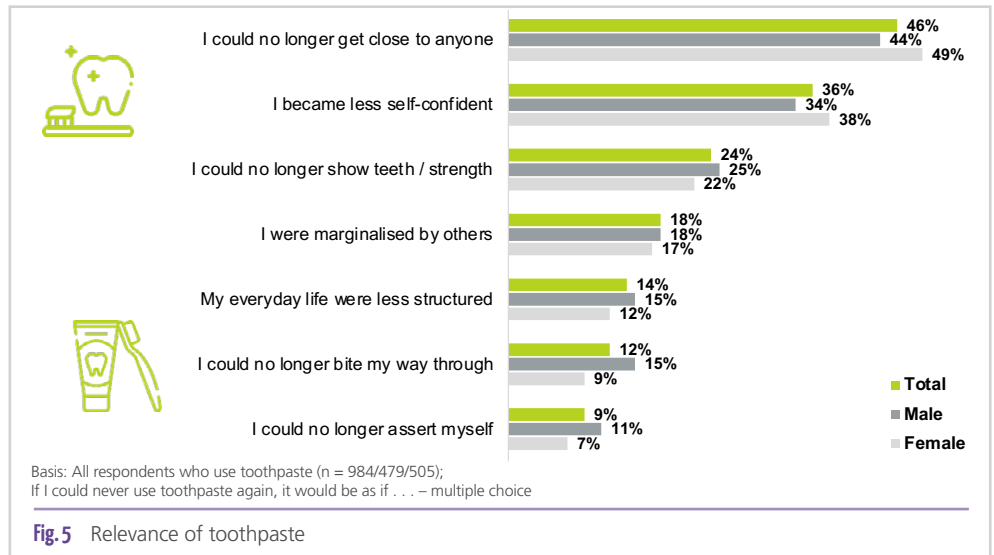
Getting closer to one another can otherwise become unpleasant to disgusting. With 46%, almost half of the toothpaste users are worried that they will no longer be able to get close to anyone if they are no longer allowed to use toothpaste. 22% have the impression that others would no longer talk to them if they could no longer use toothpaste. And 18% even fear marginalisation by others.

But other aspects likewise play a role in its use: by maintaining and caring for their teeth and gums, people want to slow down the passage of time, stay young and continue to be able to show teeth in order to assert themselves and "bite through". 24% of respondents fear that without toothpaste they will no longer be able to show their teeth and demonstrate strength (Figure 5).

The choice of toothpaste is based on an inner self-assessment and less on an external appraisal. For most respondents, a wide variety of products is imperative. For young men, it is most important to buy a special toothpaste that suits them individually: 67% would want this. 50% of young women likewise find an individually fitting toothpaste important. The sensory, sensitive, whitening and smoothing can become an expression of individualisation.

Toothpaste is, furthermore, essential for the change of one's frame of mind. The mouth connects the inner and the outer, similar to a portal. Consequently, the application of toothpaste creates transitions from day to night and vice versa – it enables connections between the inside and outside, between the soul and the body. When brushing one's teeth, one frees oneself and one's mouth from daily and nightly – also mental – ballast. One creates space for something new and feels fresh, clean, alert and ready for the day or night.

Deodorant is also on the list of indispensable, essential products for the respondents. For 65% of the deodorant users interviewed, deodorant is an expression of being a cultured human being. Among women, even 70% see it that way, among men this applies to 59%. Almost all of them want to prevent unpleasant odours such as the smell of sweat. Overall,



53% of deodorant users feel that others think they are disgusting and badly groomed without deodorant. The younger people are, the more important it is for them to cover up their own smell and prevent the embarrassment of "smelling like oneself" – being able to perceive a good smell is figuratively a sign of attractiveness. The fact that one's smell might not be liked by others hence fuels a great deal of insecurity among young people. The fear of being rejected, therefore, often leads to very intensive deodorant use during the development of self-esteem and personality. 40% of deodorant users have the general fear of being marginalised from the group without deodorant. Going outside without deodorant is also inconceivable for 66% of the adult respondents who use deodorant – and for 73% of women even more than for men with 57%.

Deodorant thus provides and upholds the security and freshness for everyday life. Sweating, attracting others and their attention are hence prevented. 72% have the feeling that they can go through the day or night relaxed and carefree only with deodorant. With 75%, this is especially true for women, who feel less fresh and in a metaphorical sense less young and attractive without deodorant.

A very decisive factor when choosing a deodorant is the fragrance. With the fragrance you choose, you can develop your own personality and set your own scent notes. In addition, you can decide to what extent you would like to emit a scent or remain more "neutral". One is sure: "The others don't smell anything or can smell me pleasantly." 41% of deodorant users fear not being able to get close to anyone without deodorant. 37% even have the feeling that they can feel less attractive without deodorant. As far as the fragrance is concerned, but also in terms of presentation, product variety is therefore as important as the diversity of personality. 63% of the deodorant users interviewed would like to see variety in the fragrance and 60% also in the design of the deodorant.

Fragrance and perfume are amongst the strongest highlights of the culture of people in the view of the respondents. For 52% of the users surveyed, scent and perfume are an in-

tegral part of being human. In extreme cases, they even represent an alternative to cleansing, as was appreciated in the baroque era, for example, or as scented powders ensure. Fragrance can also easily overdo things. Extreme perfume scents can be off-putting and unpleasant. It is also often a question of whether one can “already” afford a good perfume. Perfume is an expression of social status and personal development. You can also tell what stage of development you are in by the perfume you wear. For younger

people, perfume is often the desirable goal as an enhancement to deodorant, which of course continues to be used.

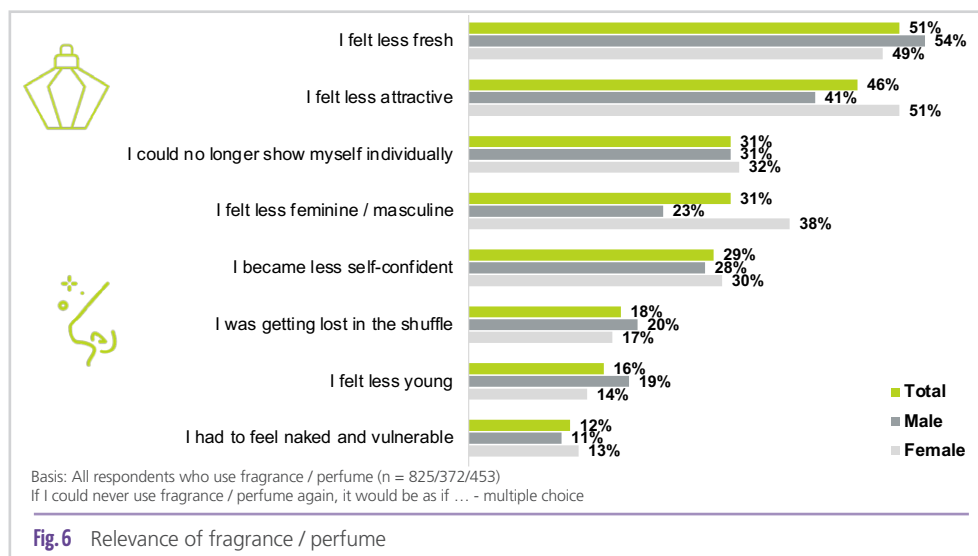
Fragrances are closely linked to images around femininity and masculinity. 65% of the users interviewed think that they can particularly emphasise their femininity or masculinity through fragrances and perfume. With 73%, women are even more likely to see it that way than men – with 55% of them sharing this view. The use of fragrances is intended to have a certain effect on others: to seduce, attract, set oneself apart or define and portray oneself as a certain type of woman or man. In everyday professional life, women or men can equip themselves or try to subtly influence through scent.

Compared to other fragrances, deodorants, shower lotions, body lotions etc., perfumes are experienced as more intense and are thus much more strongly associated with being a woman or a man. “Perfume is for me a lot of femininity in a small space – it only takes a few dashes to emphasise the feminine”, “I use aftershave. It smells really awesome because it is very masculine and tart”.

Group affiliations are revealed by what perfume you use and how you use it: what is trendy? What do you smell like? Is it too much? Is it too little? Do you impose yourself on others, do you overwhelm them with your scent? Do you stay discreet? Can I decode the code of others? Am I among the younger ones? Am I among the older ones?

With a fragrance or with fragrances in general, you can also underline your personality, leave a positive impression, set an individual scent mark, and become recognisable and special. In the interviews, one’s own scent is also described as a “fingerprint” that others can recognise. The diversity of perfumes makes it possible to emphasise one’s own personality – to adapt one’s “fingerprint” as desired. With 78%, women in particular want to find the fragrance that suits them. For men, the figure is 63%. One fragrance for all is, therefore, not an option for them. 66% of the users interviewed think that they can show their individuality and personality with fragrance and perfume.

In everyday or Sunday care, perfume is the final chord. A small droplet becomes a complete fragrance robe that provides se-



curity throughout the day. 52% of the respondents only feel fully dressed when they put on a fragrance or perfume - this applies to women with 57% even more than to men with still 45% (Figure 6).

Face care serves essentially to positively influence the future and to combat the past. The central motive here is, therefore, the desire for renewal and rejuvenation. Slowing down, stopping or even reversing the natural “deterioration” of the skin is the objective. Traces of time, such as wrinkles or age spots, are to be controlled. With 58%, it is even more relevant for women that they can conceal the traces of time with face care. For men, this concerns 40%. Without facial care, a world would collapse for most women. With impurities, dry skin, feelings of tension, women believe they can no longer show their face in public. Because their face symbolises their youth, femininity and beauty. Older women in particular use face care to symbolically preserve their visual fertility. 67% of face care users want to preserve the youth and freshness of their skin. Among men, the figure is 55%. 65% of the respondents mention that face care is essential for being human. For women, with 72%, products in this cosmetics category are even slightly more relevant than for men – 56% of whom agree.

Face care also enables the “unfolding” of the personality in the truest sense of the word. 67% of women and 50% of men feel that face care helps them to unfold their skin and thus their personality and let it shine.

Diversity is relevant for almost 64% of the users – one care for all would be rejected by most of them. Because every skin is different, has different needs and “preferences”. Irritated, sensitive skin also receives individual care. Women want different products to meet the individual needs of their skin. Anti-wrinkle, moisturising, sun protection are just a few examples of an extremely relevant broad spectrum in the skincare sector. For younger men, the topic of “unfolding aids” in the area of face care is becoming increasingly important: 65% of them agree that face care helps to “unfold” their skin and thus their personality, to let it “shine” - 51% of young wom-

en share this view. Innovations are particularly relevant in face care. Since it is all about youth and remaining young, women cannot use the same cream all their lives. They need innovations, because they can only achieve the feeling of being young with a new cream. Old products that you have used for a long time cannot make you feel younger.

For many, face care also creates a good framing for the day: the start and end of the day are linked to these products. Although the care product is absorbed, it “somehow also stays on the skin” and hence forms a protective barrier that wards off negative influences. 64%, therefore, experience face care as a barrier that protects from everyday influences (Figure 7). Face care products can contribute to external and internal relaxation in a special manner. 66% of the respondents experience face care as a helper against the tension of the skin, but also against their inner tension.

Shower gel is not only about superficial cleansing. Shower gel is also a genuine deep cleansing of the soul. Besides removing skin flakes, real dirt, this can also be anger, rage and inner tension. The immersion in self-indulgent worlds is intensified with shower gel. After showering, we feel refreshed and revitalised. For men and younger people, the external and internal cleansing process with shower gel is even more important than for older women. Among men and younger people, a certain autoeroticism is also described more often and probably also practised. If shower gel is no longer there, then the desire to shower is lost, showering becomes more functional, the different scents are lost, the freshness kick, the drive, the motivating element are lost.

Along with shampoo, shower gel is an essential component of cultivated showering. It is, therefore, part of being human for 68% of the people interviewed. 56% fear the threat of neglect without shower gel. It also helps internally to become a sophisticated person again, for instance to reduce aggression, etc. “With water I may get clean on the outside, but I still feel dirty afterwards”. For 74% of users, shower gel is therefore an absolute “must” to feel really clean inside and out. For about 52% of people

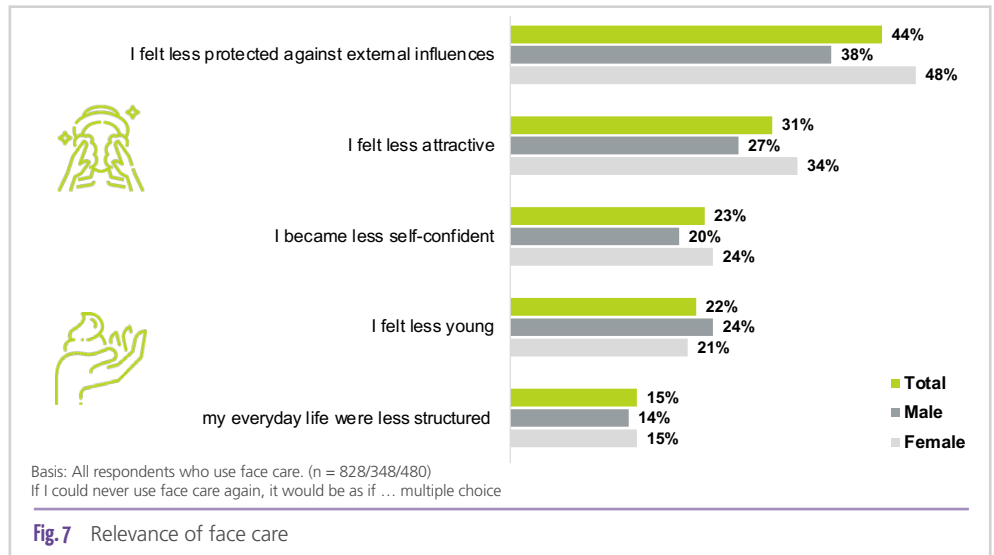


Fig. 7 Relevance of face care

who use shower gel it is, therefore, a helper with which they can free themselves not only externally but also internally, e.g. from stress and anger.

The diversity of products and essentially the variety of fragrances are also very important for the respondents. In contrast to perfume, it is less about the individual scent and more about immersing oneself in winter, summer, Caribbean or fresh fragrance worlds and relaxing. 71% of women want different fragrances depending on their mood and hence want to immerse themselves in different worlds. 49% of men would want this.

Body care is essential – without it, one’s skin becomes “tight”, one dries out and “scratches oneself to death” (Figure 8). For 74% of the users, body care is part of being human. 76% of women also feel that body care breathes new life into their skin and that cracked, dry patches disappear – 57% of men share this view.

63% of the body care users interviewed want body care that is adapted to their needs. On the one hand, they want to find the “right” care for their skin. On the other hand, they want to have the perfect mix in terms of fragrance and consistency.

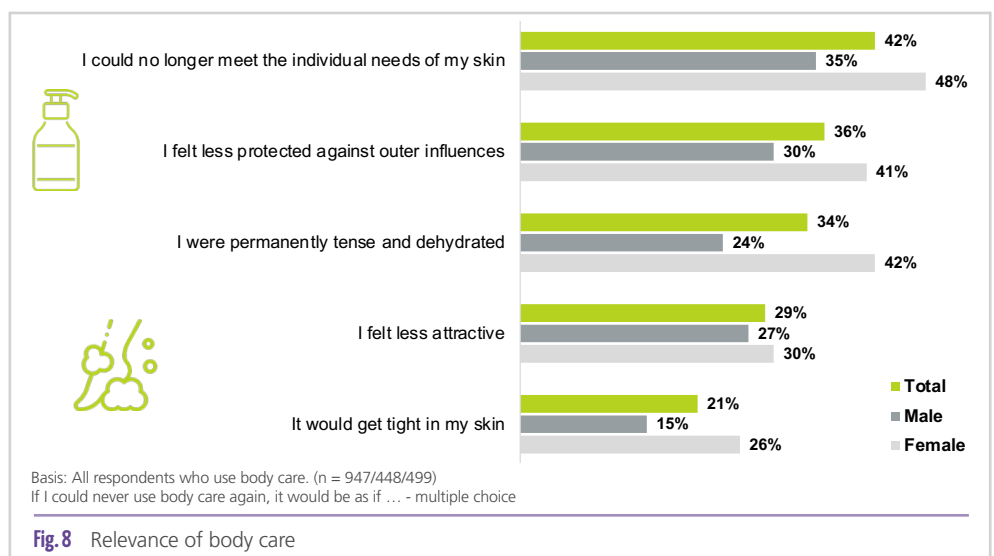


Fig. 8 Relevance of body care

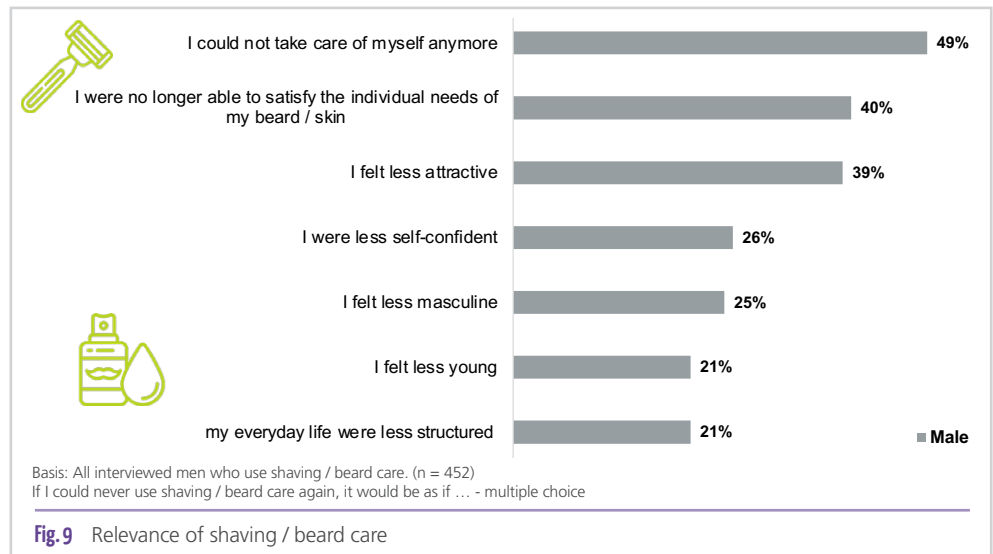
cy so that they can enjoy the creaming and the sometimes autoerotic massaging. 73% of women who use body care especially enjoy the feeling of body care on their skin when they massage it in. Among men, this applies to 56%.

Body care helps many people to get into an everyday frame of mind. The skin and oneself become supple, more elastic and stretchy for the day, more relaxed instead of tense and supplied with nutrients and also mental energy. In addition, the skin receives a “protective film” that protects the skin and oneself from daily influences: 67% of body care users agree. Body care also helps to nourish, repair and relax dry and chapped skin. And you feel younger and more flexible overall – as a person and in your daily routine. 62% of users feel transformed after use, like a new person.

Shaving and beard care not only serve for mere hair removal but are also a treatment of one’s own masculinity (Figure 9). For 66% of the men who use shaving and beard care, a well-groomed and shaved beard is part of being a man. Men model their masculine appearance for special occasions and everyday life. Shaving and

beard care is often the only reason to care for the face at all, a legitimisation for men to pamper themselves, so to speak. Beard growth itself stands for the nature of men. Beard care stands for culture. For 72%, shaving and beard care are even part of being a man. Shaving the beard and shaving the body in general are strong interventions in natural growth. Whether one shaves completely or only “brings the beard into shape” depends not only on trends, but also on individual growth. Social standing can also be determined by the beard and beard care – whether one is a mature man or a youthful one can be seen immediately. 53% of men who use shaving and beard care find that a well-groomed and shaved beard can emphasise their masculinity. However, young men in particular often suffer from a lack of beard growth. The type of beard growth also symbolises certain religious or other cultural affiliations. Especially well-groomed full beards show that one knows what is trendy. You can always tell from your beard whether you have decoded the trends of the time. How and whether a man wears a beard always shows something about his personality. Smooth boy or wild guy – a beard allows for individual appearance and behaviour. 58% think that they can express their individuality and personality with a well-groomed and shaved beard. 50% agree that it allows them to stand out from others. The products also play a major role here: frequently mentioned “sensitive” products show that beard is a sensitive male topic – and especially here an individual and sensitive approach is desired.

Shaving and beard care also helps to get into a certain mental state. If the beard is groomed and shaved, 64% feel care-free and relaxed throughout the day and night. Especially for business meetings or more official occasions, men shave and “smooth” themselves to get flexibly through the day. Leaving the beard standing can also add structure to everyday life: consciously staying “stubby” helps to be resilient, expresses relaxation or “erotic” conditions, such as a three-day beard. Shaving the beard can also be visually rejuvenating. This is seen both positively and negatively. 57% feel attractive with their well-groomed and shaved beard – 49% feel young.



Decorative cosmetics serve in many cases for rejuvenation and renewal. Beyond that, however, makeup also functions as an everyday finishing touch that provides confidence and brightens the mood. Without decorative cosmetics, women feel more tired, less fresh and less alive. They worry about looking sick. 60% of women who use decorative cosmetics say they use them to cover up blemishes, signs of tiredness or age. However, decorative cosmetics are not only about concealing. Decorative cosmetics also help many women to highlight their true nature. Women who wear makeup only feel like themselves when they are using makeup (Figure 10). 48% believe that it allows them to bring out their “true self”. Blemishes in the skin’s appearance, signs of tiredness or signs of age are neutralised – in front of the eyes of others, the iconic image is created as it should be. For 42% of women who use decorative cosmetics, it is part of being human. 42% of the users do not leave their home, therefore, without makeup, mascara, etc.

Decorative cosmetics are particularly suitable for making individuality and personality visible. 63% of women who use decorative cosmetics find that they can show their individuality and personality through it. For 74% of users, decorative cosmetics are clearly to emphasise their femininity. 61% of users look for different, innovative products for this purpose – one product for all gets in the way of individuality. 48% even feel inspired by the variety to keep reinventing themselves and try out different looks.

Trend knowledge can also be displayed through the way one applies makeup. Putting on makeup the “right way”, as shown on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, is especially relevant for the younger ones. Does one know the Insta codes? Does one know that accentuating the eyebrows or doe eyes are trendy right now? Or are you a child of the 80s who has stuck to blue kohl? 47% of users believe that they can show they know what is trendy by using decorative cosmetics. Decorative cosmetics, therefore, not only support individuality, but also follow very strong – and in some cases standardised – trends. Decorative cosmetics are likewise a real mood booster for users – especially on less positive days. During the Covid-19 lockdown many women were able to describe this particularly well – makeup brought colour into an otherwise rather monotonous everyday life.

Nail polish and well-groomed nails are a showpiece. They suggest “I am worth it”, “I can afford it”, “I like to pamper myself, take the time”, and “I live well, don’t have to work with my hands”. With 48%, nail polish is clearly part of being a woman for the women who use it. 66% of nail polish users confirm that nail polish can be used to emphasise their femininity. Furthermore, the nails show which background or “educational level” one belongs to. 60% of nail polish users think that well-groomed nail polish shows that they take care of themselves. For 42%, it is also an expression of respect. The style or design of the nails and the choice of nail polish also give an indication of one’s own group affiliation. With nail polish, women can stand out from the crowd. Colourful, well-groomed nails attract attention and compliments. Here, too, variety is enormously important, because it is the only way for a woman to emphasize herself and her personality. 57% of nail polish users think that nail polish is a way to express their individuality and personality. 68% of users want to be able to choose between different nail polishes. Well-groomed, painted nails also make women feel confident – they feel feminine, sexy, strong, young and attractive (Figure 11). Brittle nails indicate a “brittle inside” – well-

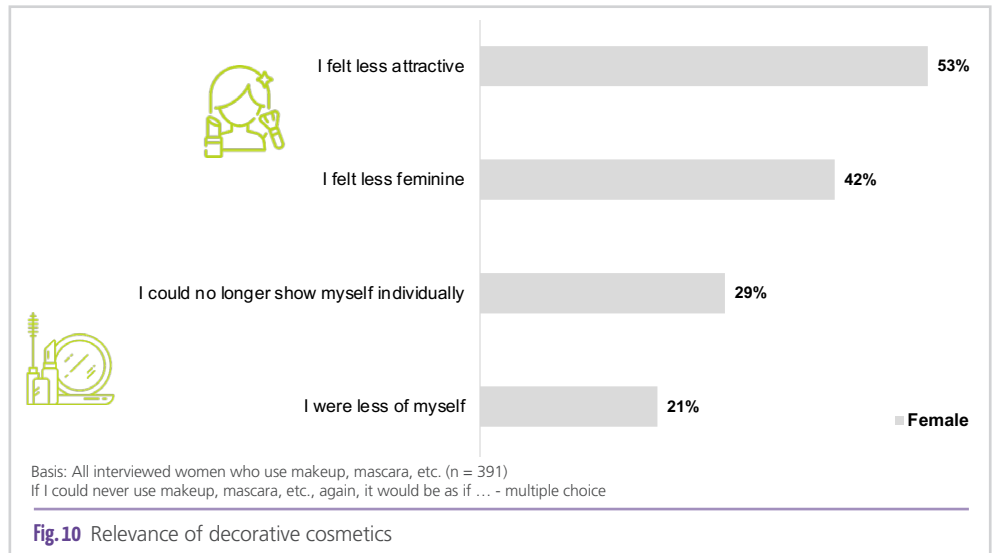


Fig.10 Relevance of decorative cosmetics

groomed, painted nails suggest that you have your life under control: 42% of users agree with this. They are prepared for everyday life and can also “put out the claws” when necessary. The routines of application are also described as relaxation and meditation, after which one can carry on in a relaxed condition.

III. Importance of product diversity and differentiating offers

People do not want to be lumped together. Thanks to the great variety of products, they can do justice to their individuality and express their personality. The desired product diversity is not only about the already very different demands that are made, for example, by different skin and hair types or different ages. Without product diversity, the otherness, the sophistication of the human being would be inconceivable.

Without diversity, pleasure and fun in body care would likewise be lost. The idea of reducing oneself to the minimum, such as caring only with water, is tantamount to a kind of punishment and penitentiary logic. Relaxation, seduction,

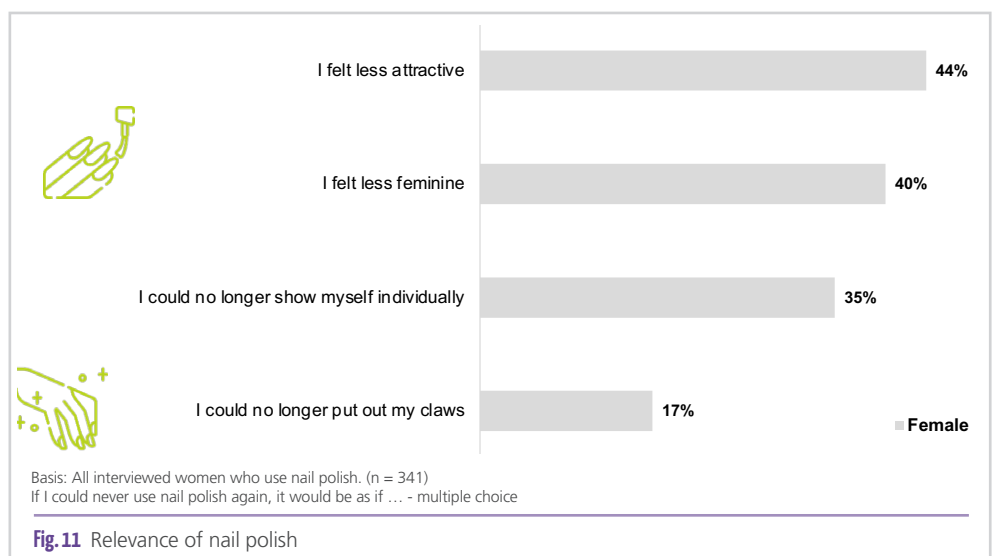


Fig.11 Relevance of nail polish

refreshment, rejuvenation – these are all human dimensions that would be lost.

In order to pick up on and shape the different mental states, not only brand diversity is needed, but also variation in terms of consistency, application form, fragrance and colour.

Consistency and fragrance are essential for the application experience and the feeling of effectiveness. People have very different requirements concerning consistency depending on the product and their own condition. For example, weather, temperature and seasons as well as age have an influence here. The time of day is relevant, too: people have completely different expectations of a product in the morning or in the evening.

Influencing factor ‘weather conditions’: Especially on hot summer days, light, oily or sprayable (sun) creams or lotions are more attractive. They are easy to spread with a gliding movement and do not leave a thick, heavy, sticky or greasy film. There is no feeling of sweating out the cream again and you are still protected from the sun, etc. For 64%, thick, heavy, sticky or greasy (sun) creams are inconceivable in summer. Almost 50% of the respondents, therefore, prefer creams that are easy to spread, oily or sprayable, and which they do not sweat out again.

When it gets colder, people want thicker creams – the constant change between cold air outside and warm heating air is hard on the soul and the skin. Cold makes you sluggish and stiff – the skin loses elasticity and becomes chapped. Warm air dries out further. Thick creams seem particularly nourishing. The sticky consistency promises to protect the skin from the outside like a “cream suit”, to relax and build it up again. 30% of the respondents prefer to use thicker creams during the cold season. And 31% feel that thicker creams keep their skin elastic and free from cracks.

Influencing factor ‘age’: One would rather not expose children to the dangerous sun with their bare skin. The consistency of solid sunscreens promises thicker, better protection. They are difficult to spread and are felt to be rubbed deep into the skin. What remains is a white layer – the “sunscreen suit”. Sprays or oily creams are, by contrast, too thin. Only a thin film, if any, remains, which does not adequately protect children’s soft skin. 64% of the respondents think that putting sunscreen on children is a sign that you take good care of them. And 34% think that you have to put thick, sticky (sun) creams on children in summer and make a kind of “sunscreen suit” to protect them sufficiently from the sun.

From adolescence onwards, however, the “sunscreen suit” becomes unattractive. One’s own vulnerability seems to be reduced – one applies the cream less thoroughly or sometimes not at all. Sprayable, oily or aqueous products are more common. They are easy to dose, easy to spread and almost invisible after their application.

Influencing factor ‘skin condition’: In addition to the specific skin type, what the skin needs is also occasion-related, for example, after bathing or showering. When bathing, you dissolve much longer and more intensively than during showering. It needs more nourishing, somewhat firmer lotions or creams to cream oneself back into shape. The thick consistency conveys hold and security – it not only helps you get into shape, but also keeps you in it. 32% of women and 27% of men want a thicker cream after a shower or bath to help them and their soaked skin get back into shape.

Influencing factor ‘condition of the day’: Thick, slower absorbing creams or lotions are a hindrance if you want to put on socks, trousers, etc. immediately afterwards – it is difficult to get into the clothes, you feel sweaty and sticky. If, on the other hand, you wear summery, airy clothes, the product can take longer to absorb and be richer. If you go to the beach, however, you need light, non-sticky creams – after all, you don’t want sand sticking everywhere. 56% of the respondents want (sun) creams to be absorbed immediately if long clothes are waiting for them afterwards. For 37%, it can take a little longer for the cream to be absorbed if they are dressed in floaty clothes.

Packaging and application form

Large or small, jar, screw lid, hinged or dispenser – depending on the state of mind, usage situation and household size, different things can make sense. Larger packs are more likely to be seen in one’s own four walls. This is where people set up, need and use a lot of their products. Standard products such as soap, shower gel, shampoo, etc. are usually bought on stock – 63% of the respondents agree that this is how they secure their basic supplies. For travel, it may be smaller and more practical – smaller, sometimes self-filled versions of one’s own products are then taken along. When travelling abroad, people take some of their “own”, their basic supplies, with them. But only as much as they need. Small travel products are like a spiritual connection to one’s home, to one’s own self, to the basic supplies. This view is shared by 38% of the respondents. 54% of the respondents also want to maintain their normal care routine when they are travelling.

Colour

Colour diversity of cosmetic products is very important and closely linked to the fragrance. Especially with shower gel, the colour must support the dissolution together with the fragrance. A tropical fragrance, for example, must also be yellow, orange or green. White, for instance, is too neutral and does not support the fragrance and dissolution experience. White or creamy products, by contrast, basically suggest purity and cleanliness – 38% of the respondents agree to this. Bad, harmful things are apparently not contained in these products. This is especially important for creams. The skin should be cared for, nourished and its own natural and mental shape restored.

Fragrance

The variety of product fragrances is highly relevant from a psychological point of view. A selection of fragrances offers a variety of possibilities to emphasise the individual personality. In addition, one can get into a different state of mind with the help of different fragrances. 46% of the respondents feel, for instance, reminded of holidays and put in a positive mood when applying the scented sunscreen.

4. Conclusion & Discussion

Cosmetic products are essential everyday companions for people. From a psychological point of view, they are more than a mere treatment of the exterior. In addition to the physical aspect, the psychological condition is strongly influenced by the cosmetic products examined – and vice versa. Besides the feeling that the application of cosmetic products is what makes one human, profound human needs are satisfied. For many, the idea of no longer being allowed to use the preferred cosmetic products leads to feeling torn out of life, unable to cope with the daily routine and not very socially acceptable. This will also be true if the variety and range of products were no longer available. Because it is the possibility of individualisation that is particularly relevant in the cosmetics sector. Many people today think carefully about what they use and how they do so. Having variety and different options that are tailored to their needs is key in this connection and increasingly concerns the issue of sustainability, which, however, was not the focus of this study.

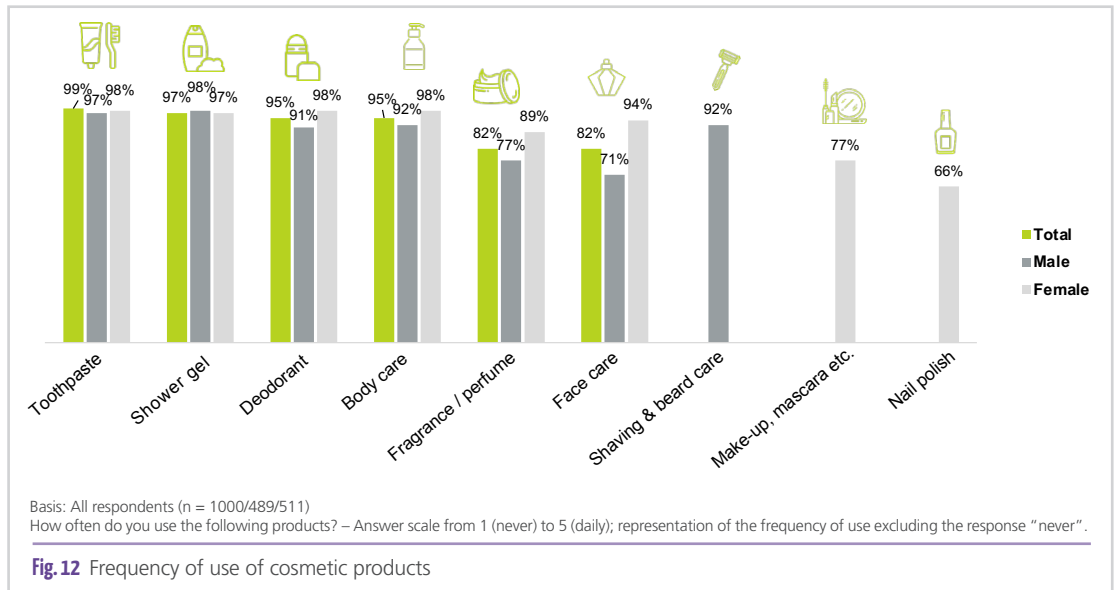
Renouncing diversity or even reducing the range of options is not conceivable for people. It would amount to a kind of “de-individualisation”, almost a kind of punishment. Moreover, people would be deprived of a central possibility to organise their everyday life in a supportive way. The pandemic

has shown during the lockdowns how important cosmetic products and related services are to this end. If people were deprived of this option, unnecessary additional psychological stress could be created and a central help for self-help could be taken away. Psychological and physical consequences are conceivable. The daily, weekly and monthly use of a wide range of cosmetic products is, therefore, perceived as indispensable by people in Germany (Figure 12).

The study was conducted on behalf of the Beauty Care Department of the German Cosmetic, Toiletry, Perfumery and Detergent Association (IKW).

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