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## abstract

The importance of hairstyle and hair care products for people takes centre stage in the in-depth psychological-representative study. Six relevant motivations were decrypted and the different hair care products serve these motives in different ways. People perceive hair care products and their hairstyle 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 these products.

## 1. Introduction

How important is the topic of hairstyle and hair care for people? And to what extent do hairstyle and dignity belong together? The closure of hairdressing salons during the COVID pandemic has demonstrated how important hairstyle and hair care can actually be for culture, the society and personal well-being. This was the reason for researching the theses around the topic of hair care. The starting point included, amongst others, the many discussions, e.g. in the media, about the subject of system relevance and dignity. The study wanted to find out whether and in how far physical and psychological sensitivities depend on hair care and how strongly a well-groomed hairstyle is related to a feeling of human dignity. Apart from this general significance, the concrete differentiation between individual products such as shampoo, hair coloration, styling or masks and intensive treatments were up for discussion. To what extent do products have a general relevance? And to what extent can products be differentiated in each case in terms of their special relevance for the interviewed people? Although it was to be expected that all products have a general significance for the human sense of dignity, it is nonetheless surprisingly different if one considers the special and relevant roles of the different product offerings in the hair care sector for users.

## 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 using different methods.

For the in-depth psychology part, 20 users of hair care products as well as regular visitors to hairdressers were interviewed all over Germany during interviews of two hours each. The selection of the participants was determined by the following quota: 10 women and 10 men, 16 – 69 years old, with a balanced age distribution. The family situation, income, educational background were taken into account in accordance with the average population distribution. Rural and urban environments were equally interviewed at the interview locations Hamburg, Munich, Cologne and Berlin. The minimum prerequisite was four to six visits to a hairdressing salon per year and at the salon, beyond the mere haircut also at least every second time the use of further applications such as hair coloration or styling. At home, more than one hair care product was used on a regular basis. This quota allows in the in-depth interviews to cover the motivations for use in their full range as well as the relevance for society and culture.

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



Fig. 1 Sample composition of the qualitative interview

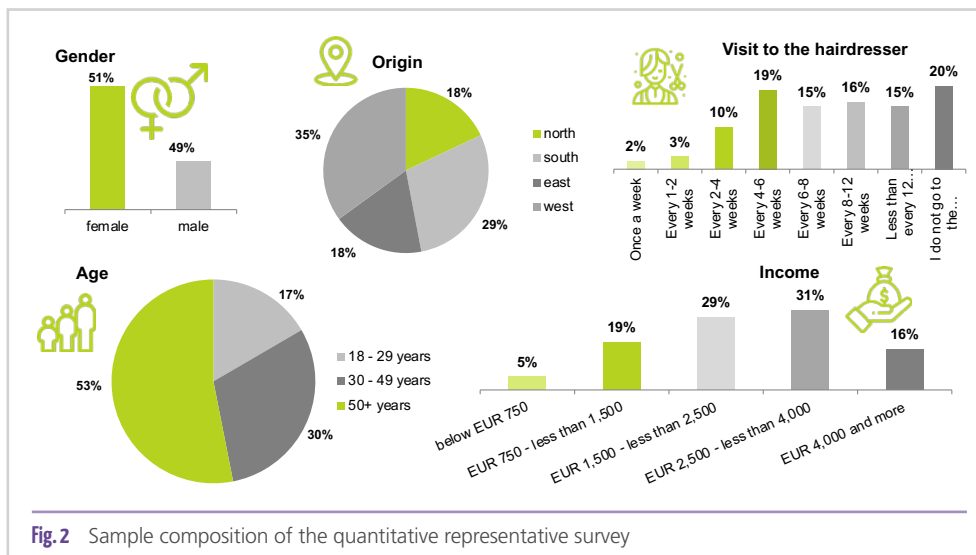
of Cologne by Professor Wilhelm Salber [1,3]. The low number of participants interviewed is sufficient, since the insight value of a study is not only measurable through the number of participants surveyed. The question rather determines the number of people who have to be symbolically placed on the couch or the method used in an in-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, 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 2). The goal was to find out to what extent they agree to the motivations for hair care determined in the in-depth psychology basis and, moreover, which hair care products they use frequently. Finally, the question was which products stand to what extent for satisfying needs.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Motives for the use of hair care products

The in-depth psychology part of the survey was able to provide evidence for the physical and psychological relevance of a groomed hairstyle and to decrypt the use of hair care products. Altogether it was demonstrated that hairstyles and hair care are more than only a superficial treatment of hair with


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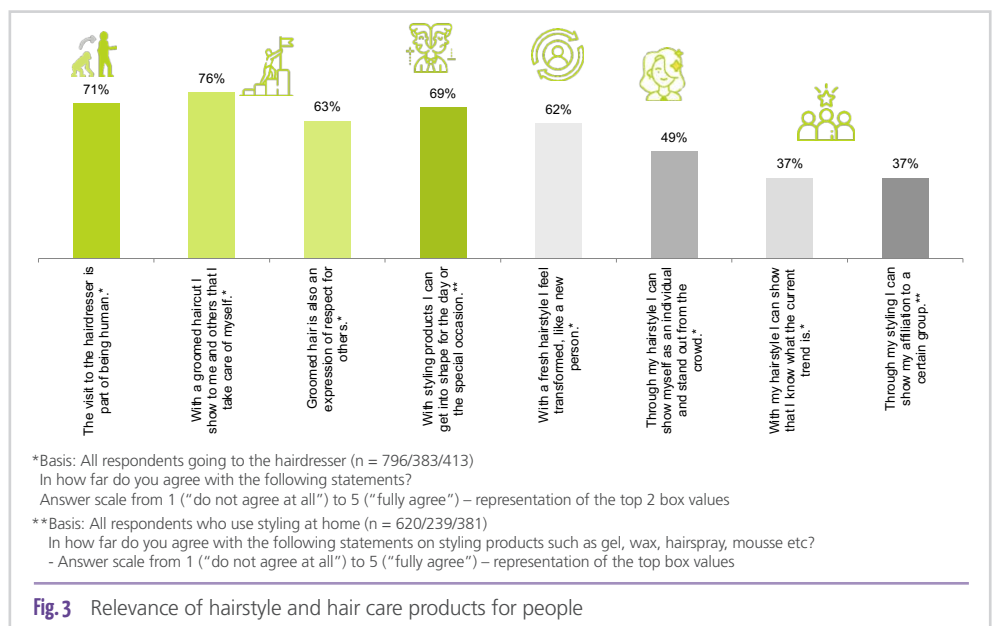

products. Hairstyles and hair care stand for something human on different levels (Figure 4).

In essence, the following motivations can be differentiated:

- Cultural relevance:** Hairstyles are primarily understood as an expression of sophistication. The need to care for hair and to shape it into a hairstyle is seen by the respondents as the central difference to the animalistic and the wild. Groomed hairstyles are an essential feature of being human and are altogether also linked to dignity. *“Monkeys louse and preen themselves, but cutting and styling hair is something typically human.”* 71% of the respondents consider a hairstyle as an essential element of being human (Figure 3).
- Status relevance:** Hairstyles and hair care have a social identification function. They express whether one has made it to the top or the status one has in society. The more groomed, the more successful. A good and well-groomed hairstyle shows, moreover, others that one has one’s life under control when things may not be going optimally at the moment. This, in turn, is honoured by the counterpart. Hairstyles help people to identify themselves as full members of society. *“If there were no longer any products for hair care, one would always look unkempt and I associate unkempt with dirty, unclean, neglected. As in the case of homeless persons.”* 76% of the respondents state that with a groomed haircut one can show oneself and others that one takes care of oneself and that one has one’s life under control. 63% consider well-groomed hair as an expression of respect for others (Figure 3).
- Group relevance:** A hairstyle speaks its own language. It is a form of expression which reveals a sense of belonging to an age or style group and its value system. Although certain groups are clearly identifiable for outsiders, such as those who appear with marked female/male or trendy hairstyles, there are “secret codes” which are only decrypted by internal group members. Group codes are particularly important for young people: 61% of the young men and 49% of the young women believe that they can demonstrate trend awareness with their hairstyle. *“During the first lockdown there was this hype around Tiger King. I then had a mullet cut with my buddies. Of course, only those who know Tiger King understood that.”* *“Well, the reason why my hair is as bright as it is, is only known by my friends. They know the*

*whole story behind it.”* 37% of the respondents mention that through their styling they can show that they belong to a certain group (Figure 3).

- Personality relevance:** As much as a hairstyle and hair care can be an expression of trend, zeitgeist and community, personality and individualisation are, conversely, just as important. Through the way they cut, colour or style their hair, people can highlight different nuances of their personality or even conceal defaults. *“My hairstyle is individual – through it I can express who I am and also that I am special.”* *“Also in different connections: there is my “work-me” and my “neat-me”. These are two nuances of my personality and depending on who I want to be, I then style myself.”* 63% of the women and 50% of the men who go to the hairdresser consider that this is personality-building. Around 50% of the respondents believe that with their hairstyle and the corresponding products they can show that they are individual and stand out from the crowd (Figure 3).
- Structuring aid:** With hair care, washing and styling many people begin their day. This provides structure but also stability and joy in their everyday life. Hairstyles and the corresponding care and styling products help to tune in to what is coming and get into the right frame of mind. 69% of the users mention that hair care and styling products help them to get into shape for the day or special occasions (Figure 3). *“If I style my hair in the morning and feel good and self-confident, it is much easier for me to delegate tasks to other people on the job and demand things.”*
- Renewal wish:** After a visit to the hairdresser, many people feel like a new person. Rejuvenation, renewal and preservation are the explicit goals in this connection. In everyday life this feeling of renewal and rejuvenation can be brought about through the daily use of hair care products. Now and then – for instance with the coloration – the desire for re-





newal goes beyond daily showering and hair washing and styling. *“With my highlights, I feel basically a little younger and also wild again.”*

62% of the surveyed hairdresser customers mention that with a fresh haircut they feel transformed, like a new person.

In addition, there is the concern about one’s own attractiveness: 46% – in particular women – fear that without coloration and highlights they are less attractive. But also 29% of the men share this concern (Figure 3).

The different motives condition and support each other. Getting into shape every day consolidates one’s social status as well as one’s belonging to a group and individualisation (Figure 4).

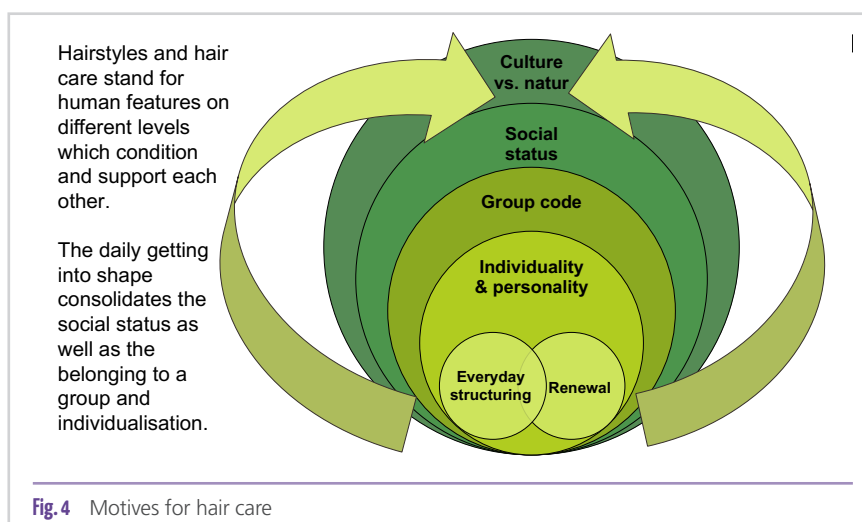
### 3.2 Importance of the individual product categories

In a second step, the significance of the different product categories was differentiated. Despite major commonalities on the motive level, each product has, in addition, a special relevance on top for the respondents.

**Shampoo** has a special cultural and social relevance and is indispensable for the cultivated form of hair care. 81% of the users, therefore, consider shampoo as an essential part of being human and hair washing as a demarcation from the wild, animalistic and unkempt. For almost all respondents it is a very central indispensable product. 88% of the women and 78% of the men who use shampoo feel unkempt and uncomfortable with greasy or flaky hair. Washed hair testifies to the knowledge of what is appropriate in society – and that one is willing and able to stick to the rules. A dirty, unclean appearance is decrypted as disrespectful towards others or a sign of destitution.

By cleansing the hair in the morning and/or in the evening, we free ourselves from the “dirt” of the day, such as stress, or of the night, such as dream residues. Lathering is a short moment of recovery, which neutralises emotionally and prepares for what lies ahead. Fragrance is, more particularly, a major contributor to feeling fresh. Living up to the beauty ideal of youth is strongly associated with feeling fresh and clean.

**Hair colouring and highlights** are for one third of the respondents who regularly go to the hairdresser amongst the most important treatments during their visit. 39% of all respondents colour and highlight their hair themselves at home. Hair coloration and highlights give them the feeling that they can stop the passage of time or sometimes also turn back the clock. 65% of the respondents who colour or highlight their hair want to conceal grey hair to mask the signs of time. The



wish for renewal or the desire for youthful appearance are central motives. Trend awareness and the desire for transformation are, moreover, shown by balayage, ombre, rainbow hair, extreme blonding or silver colours. In particular 60% of the men have the feeling that they show their trend awareness through different colorations and highlights. 67% of the respondents add that individuality can be underlined particularly well with colour by standing out, emphasising facets and highlighting one’s own personality.

**Styling** is relevant on many levels. For 41% of the respondents it is an important component of the visit to the hairdresser. And also at home, styling products are regularly used by 33% of the respondents. For women they are even more relevant than for men, both at the hairdresser and at home. The use of styling products is for 55% of the respondents a general expression of sophistication and hence part of being human. Styling products are in particular essential for young people to show their belonging to certain groups or value systems. Be it gel, wax, sea salt spray, curly hair or soft beach waves – these styles are a language of their own and signal group codes. 37% have the feeling that they can signal own values through the styling. 54% of the styling users want, however, to also exhibit their individuality with their products. With a hairstyling you, moreover, get into the mood and you can adapt to the forthcoming day emotionally as well. Once the hairstyle is in place, 65% of the respondents go relaxed and at ease through their own everyday life. 18% of the 30 – 49 year old men who use styling products fear that without these products they can actually lose this structure in everyday life. Moreover, the right styling provides self-confidence and joy: 55% feel, moreover, young and attractive with their styling – styling gives joy of living.

**Conditioners and rinses** are particularly relevant for women both at the hairdresser and also at home. At the hairdresser, 55% of the female respondents consider the care treatment to be important – among the men this still applies to 25%. At home, these products are regularly used by 73% of the women whilst no more than 30% of men use it.

The conditioner supports everyday structuring, especially with its softening, smoothing and detangling properties. It brings the dishevelled and knotted hair into a hairdressable condition which allows for the expression of different moods and a “getting into shape”. For 60% of the respondents a conditioner not only helps loosening the hair but also loosening up and making oneself relax. The caring and vitalising elements of the products support the renewals of the own self. The

old, dull, damaged hair is nourished and looks like new, soft and glossy: 50% of the users feel like transformed after the application, like a new person. 58% feel fresh and vivid after the treatment.

**Masks, intense treatments** and **oils** are likewise relevant both at the hairdresser and at home because as a life giver they lay the long-term foundation for further hair treatments. After all, broken, “dead” hair cannot be “brought into shape”, loosened or made supple. 63% of the users of these care products have the feeling that the products breathe new life into their hair. The products provide a feeling of freshness, vibrancy as well as fullness and impart, above all, power, strength and potency to the hair. Without this care, 20% of the users even have the feeling that they are less energetic.

#### 4. Conclusion

The findings of the study allow for the conclusion that hair-style and hair care are much more than purely superficial cosmetic treatments. In physical and psychological terms the products are relevant for being human from the respondents’ point of view. The application of the products makes a decisive contribution towards the creation of a feeling of dignity, and deep human needs are satisfied. If one deprives humans of the possibility of using these hair care products, many feel like torn out of life, not able to cope with everyday life and hardly socially presentable. Closed hairdresser salons may perhaps be considered as acceptable in connection with the successful fight against the pandemic. “Back to nature” is, however, no option for anybody. It would amount to some

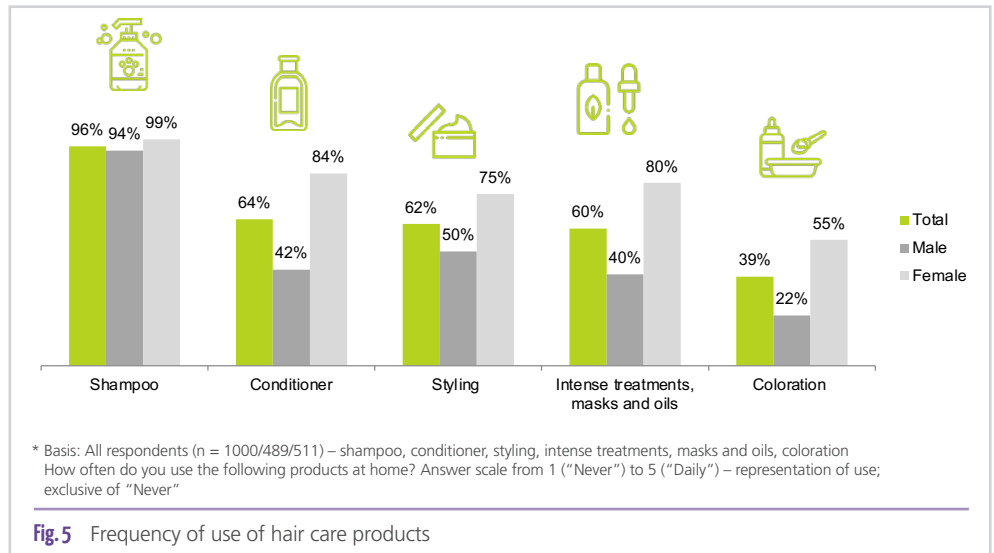


Fig. 5 Frequency of use of hair care products

kind of “divestiture” – the comparison with homelessness is made by the respondents themselves.

Apart from the fundamental importance, individualisation and personality development are needs which are felt to be relevant for life, which would be strongly undermined if hair care products disappeared.

The daily, weekly and monthly use of a broad range of hair care products is, therefore, considered to be indispensable by the people in Germany.

**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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