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An in-depth analysis of why the South Korean market targets their men for the cosmetic industry more than their women

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ABSTRACT

The purpose is to study why the South Korean market targets the men for cosmetic industry more than their women. This study was made by referring to various journal articles, blogs, and interviews. In which the people interviewed (mostly men) tell how it is very important for them to maintain a flawless facade to impress people around them, be it their partner or their bosses. Not only the men but women are also equally affected by the idea of having flawless skin, even they wait to get plastic surgeries done to westernize their looks, mainly their eyes. Data is collected through literature study and blogs. The result says that South Korean men are the biggest buyer of cosmetic products as it brings confidence within them. Even though the men here are the highest consumers of cosmetics, the women are no different even they are so beauty conscious. Plastic surgery has become very common and simple in South Korea.

Keywords: Korean Men and Women, Cosmetic Product, Consumers, South Korea.

1. INTRODUCTION

The cosmetic industry throughout the world was always considered a girls only Territory but with time things have been changing; now we see even men using makeup. Makeup is no more a taboo amongst men, for that matter, they have been recently using it more than even the women in one country, South Korea. In traditional Korean society, makeup was broadly defined as care not only for external self but also internal self. So, this lead men and women to become overly conscious about how they looked thereby are creating a unique culture in cosmetics and accessories. Their diverse cosmetics tradition has a lot to contribute from the past, that they have a museum called “The Coreana Cosmetics Museum” solely dedicated for makeup related items, with more than 5300 cosmetics-related items on display. The Korean Times states that Korean makeup history started in the three kingdoms (57 B.C. - 668) and reached great heights during the Goryeo kingdom (918-1392). During these time people were interested in self- grooming and beautification. And in the end of 19 century, new makeup styles and cosmetics product became in western culture, making Korea’s cosmetics famous all over the world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Patrick Hatch (2017) talks about why cosmetics are so important to the men of South Korea. Heo Jeong-nam a South Korean native explains how important it is to him to have a flawless skin and keep it away from damage. He thinks that he can approach a girl only if he is confident and makeup seems to give him that confidence. The article also says that the sales of men’s skin care grew 86% in the last five years. Since it is necessary for the South Korean men to serve the military at least for 2 years, men are worried about their skin the most during that period. This gave rise to the need for a brand to make its own SPF 50 military camouflage which is gentler on the skin. South Korea is said to have the highest capita rate of cosmetics surgery in the world and is a lucrative market for cosmetics companies.

Melissa Douglas (2016) in her blog talks about her experience of teaching the students of South Korea and their behavior towards makeup. She is a person brought up in the west finds it astonishing how outer beauty is so important to them over the beauty of inner self. Often times when she tried talking to the students about the same she was looked at as if she was out of her mind. Also, plastic surgery to fix parts of their faces seems to be the trend right now in South Korea. It is so much a part of their trend that Korea is called the plastic surgery capital of the world and going out to get a plastic surgery is so common and as simple as it is to go out to grab a coffee from Starbucks. Surprisingly plastic surgeries seem to be the driving force among school going women as they are the presents for graduating. Beauty as important a status symbol as wealth. Moreover, all of this is just to hide their true ethnicity and to have westernized looks. The blog writer concludes sadly stating that inner beauty is the only thing that does not translate.

In her article Kathy Novak (2015) talks about how the men in South Korea are upgrading from just buying aftershaves and lotions. Unlike the men of the world, Korean men have been buying a lot of cosmetics to improve their skin and maintain its flawlessness and smooth texture because in South Korea appearance is everything. It is so important that they have a proverb that says "If you buy something, you must choose the one which has a good appearance." Generally, people when hiring look which university have graduated from and qualifications etc. whereas there is one thing that can set you apart from the others in South Korea that is appearance. An analyst at Euromonitor said that the local companies of South Korea are competing fiercely for male customers. Amorepacific a popular for the special military line for men said that men develop an interest in cosmetics during their military service period due to frequent outdoor activities that require sun protection and skin care.

In her article, Carol Eugene Park (2017) talks about how the Western beauty culture has influenced the native Koreans apart from the traditional Korean beauty culture. While the Korean pop idols have been setting beauty trends and standards, the Western beauty trends are not that far from influencing the Koreans. The South Koreans envy and idolize Western facial features. It is not just about being beautiful in South Korea anymore but also about possessing western facial features. Facial features that Koreans don't naturally possess are given artificially through plastic surgeries. South Korea is said to have the highest number of plastic surgery procedures per capita, as stated by the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. The most common procedure is "blepharoplasty" a double eyelid surgery which is usually done for a defined crease on the eyelids. Even though born and brought up in other countries, many people with Korean roots are expected to follow their traditional Korean beauty standards.

In her article Liza Born (2014) talks about what is the take of the women, on male cosmetics in South Korea. The male dominated country of South Korea has become the makeup capital of the world. Even though there are only 19 million men in South Korea, 21% of the global skin care sales come from the male cosmetics of South Korea. In the recent times appeared has become so important in South Korea because over the last decade the competition for jobs, romance and advancement have become the new way living. In 2002 almost every man in South Korea wanted to be like Ahn Jung-Hwan, and every woman wanted to be with him. Why? Because he very good looking and had flawless skin which made him an instant sensation. Women feel that they have more in common with men who use makeup.

3. CONCLUSION

Korea has an Ancient history of cosmetics use, but today the cosmetics industry has become the most important industry in South Korea. More than the women the men of South Korea have become the target of the cosmetic industry. With the growing importance of good looks and flawless skin, the Koreans are turning towards plastic surgery as their only way towards beautification. Now that they are open to plastic surgeries, it is no more just about being pretty but also greatly about having western facial features. Men of South Korea have moved from just aftershaves and lotions to anti-aging products, Botox injections, and laser treatments. Also, the men of South Korea are seen diving into the cosmetic industry face first to get ahead in life. Only time will tell if male cosmetics catch on in other countries as well, but now trend remains commonplace in South Korea.

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