

Strolling down the beauty aisles

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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When it comes to looking good, staying on top of your game, and making sure your pursuit of beauty is on point, you know the African-American community has that covered. Nielsen's latest insights highlight hair and skin beauty purchases and behavior, by the numbers among African-Americans and other ethnic groups in the U.S. and Canada in a recent NielsenWire Post titled *Looking Good: Appealing to Ethnic Consumers in the Beauty Aisle*.

Ladies, I'm talking to all of us here. Whether we wear our lovely tresses straight, in locks, curled or rock a natural, cute afro-puff – God-given or store-bought – we all want to make sure we look presentable and feel good about ourselves, and will spend our last dime to do so. And, no, even though we usually think of women when we talk about hair care and beauty, women don't corner the market on giving attention to good looks. You've likely heard the word, metrosexual, coined about 10 years ago to describe men who pay attention to the way they look. It's ok to 'fess up, guys. And, I think most women appreciate a man who takes care of himself in this department, right ladies?

As African-American consumers, we are 43 million strong, representing just under 14 percent of the population, and we spend over 900 percent more on ethnic hair and beauty products than any other ethnic group in the U.S. More and more companies are beginning to pay attention. Have you noticed the increase of non-ethnic brands that now offer a "natural" hair care line?

We also pay close attention to our skin, according the post. African-American consumers purchase skin bleaching products at a rate of a whopping 434 percent more than the general population. And before you jump to conclusions, this isn't necessarily about reinventing ourselves. This is primarily about erasing blemishes, lightening age spots or even out skin tones. We purchase more hand lotion, body lotion and all-purpose skin creams than the general population: 54 percent and 40 percent respectively. We are 58 percent less likely to purchase suntan preparations or sunscreens and sunblock products. Here's an instance where there are opportunities for marketers in some of these categories because there is opportunity for market growth, particularly in the suntan preparations category.

I have girlfriends who slather themselves with baby oil before baking in the sun – unprotected. Most of us now know (but still may ignore) that Blacks are not immune to sun damage – and that all skin can burn – this could be an opportunity for a wide-reaching education campaign for the companies that manufacture sunscreens and sunblocks. *(Even if you're not afraid of sunburn or skin cancer, what about premature wrinkling or skin that could turn to a consistency*

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that feels like leather from years of over-exposure? I'm just saying).

As a matter of fact, now I can get a tan right in my bathroom –without even being exposed to sunlight. I use gradual tanning lotions which have SPF already included. This way, I can protect my skin and have the luxurious bronzing color highlights that I want.

So, you see, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. It is imperative that you choose companies who have your best interests, needs front and center. You've got to make sure you have nothing but the best with you on your pursuit of beauty. Please take this into consideration the next time you stroll down those beauty aisles. This time, you'll just be better equipped with additional knowledge in tow.

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