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Ethnic Skin Care

As consumers demand more ethnic-specific products, the market continues to expand.

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The ethnic market is big and getting bigger. African-Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans are the three largest multicultural groups and among the fastest growing ethnic populations in the country. In fact, by 2050, they are expected to account for roughly half of all consumers in the U.S.

Combined, the big three populations reached more than 84.2 million in 2004 and will grow 13.5% to more than 95.6 million by 2010. This projected growth forecasts that the main ethnic sectors will expand at almost 2.5 times the national rate. Together these groups have an annual purchasing power of \$1.9 trillion. Packaged Facts estimated U.S. retail sales of ethnic-specific hair care, cosmetics and skin care products at just over \$1.5 billion, in 2003—a gain of just 1.1% over 2002. While all three categories fell in mass retail channels (such as supermarkets, chain drugstores and mass merchandisers), sales outside of the mass category jumped 9.5%.

Ethnic consumers have known this for years, but marketers are now realizing that a one-size-fits-all mindset doesn't work in ethnic skin care. Ethnic skin differs from non-ethnic skin in many ways. According to Fran E. Cook-Bolden, MD, director, Ethnic Skin Specialty Group, New York, NY, the main differences are determined by how the skin responds to various stimuli from the environment.

"In ethnic skin, pigment cells are larger, are dispersed differently and contain different kinds and amounts of pigment," she noted. "They can have an erratic response to stimulation and can result in blotchy, uneven skin and dark marks. The fibroblasts, which are also the healing cells, are often over-reactive and have a more aggressive response to healing, resulting in hypertrophic scars and keloids."

Roda Ward Carter, founder of Universal Colors Cosmetics, Orlando, FL, said that the importance of offering a skin care line targeted toward ethnic consumers is extremely important because the difference in skin of darker ethnicities requires specific types of cleansers, moisturizers and treatment products. "Melanin can cause hyper- and hypo-pigmentation and uneven skin tone if mistreated with aggression, harsh chemicals or as a result of acne scarring," she said. "Skin with lower levels of melanin are more susceptible to damaging effects of UVA and UVB rays. Therefore, while the general market requires more sunscreen and anti-aging products, the ethnic consumer needs products that promote even skin tone and gentle, proper cleansing."

Ethnic groups such as African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics spend a large part of their income on beauty products, noted Lisa Price, founder of Carol's Daughter, a Brooklyn, NY-based skin care company.

"A product that has been customized and speaks to the needs of the consumer to fit one's skin type is highly attractive," she explained. "The market will continue to grow based not only on the growing ethnic population in the U.S., but also because beauty manufacturers continue to speak to the needs of the ethnic consumer."

More Moisture

Packaged Facts notes that hand and body lotions comprise the largest category for skin care products, accounting for 38.8% of the skin care market in 2004. In fact, compared to the general population, African-Americans are 18% more likely and Asians are 14% more likely to use moisturizer.

Palmer's, a venerable brand of skin care products formulated with 100% pure natural cocoa butter enhanced with additional vitamins and nutrients to protect, moisturize and soften skin, has been a long-time player in the segment.



Carol's Daughter offers an expansive line of more than 350 hand-made products for the face, hair, body and home.

"Palmer's cocoa butter formula definitely has its heritage in the ethnic skin care category and with the ethnic consumer," stated Debra Nichols, director of marketing, E.T. Browne, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. "Cocoa butter is a natural skin moisturizer favored by users of hand and body moisturizers. It not only moisturizes, but protects and smoothes the skin too."

Recently, Palmer's introduced a new body gloss lotion with a cocoa butter formula and vitamin E. This body lotion moisturizes while imparting a subtle shimmer to illuminate the skin.

"The promise of a subtle shimmer that enhances one's natural skin tone is definitely a motivating factor," added Ms. Nichols. "Women want to feel sexy without harsh gold finishes or looking like they are covered in glitter. The shimmer combined with the moisturizing power of cocoa butter and vitamin E is very compelling."

Carol's Daughter recently launched its new Mango Collection, offering mango body butter, cherry mango cocoa butter body soufflé, mango pineapple bath salts and mango lip balm. The Mango Collection is enhanced with vanilla, coconut, pineapple, lime and tangerine, and is blended with cocoa and shea butters for moisturizing.

"Customers are looking for products that speak to their needs," said Ms. Price. "Moisturizers that contain ingredients such as cocoa butter or vitamin E are great for evening out tone. African-American skin can also get dry very easily, so it's important to find products that hydrate without clogging pores."

Shed Some Skin

Moisturizing formulas go beyond hand and body lotions. According to company executives, Palmer's cocoa butter formula vitamin E lip gloss combines pure vitamin E and 100% pure cocoa butter.

"Vitamin E and cocoa butter provide incredible healing and protection. It is also aesthetically pleasing because it can be worn alone and it looks like lip gloss, so you have both the aesthetic and practical elements working in tandem," Ms. Nichols said.

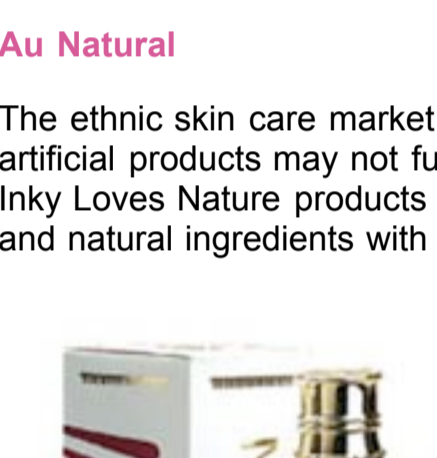
Universal Colors Cosmetics is a dermatologist recommended line for ethnic women and men. Its skin care line includes cleansers, tonics and astringents made with natural ingredients such as almond extract, coconut and wheat germ oils and citrus fruit essence.

"The products are formulated around natural ingredients and do not include harsh detergents or sulfates," said Ms. Ward Carter. "We have a 3-Step Cleansing System with moisturizer as the fourth product, rather than the traditional two steps to cleanse and tone then the third to moisturize, in order to provide the daily deep cleansing and exfoliating needed for highly pigmented skin without abrasion."

Carol's Daughter also launched six new products featuring its signature scents, Tui (a combination of guava, mango, musk, watermelon, strawberry and passion fruit) and Groove (a mixture of African peach, sandalwood, honey, vanilla, musk, pineapple and chocolate). The Tui-scented products include an herbal shampoo, leave-in conditioner and bar soap, while the Groove-scented products are shea butter skin smoothie, bath salts and bar soap.

Au Natural

The ethnic skin care market offers a bevy of natural ingredients. Formulators recognize that artificial products may not fully nourish skin and may even cause more problems in the long run. Inky Loves Nature products use elements from fruit and plant extracts, cold-pressed vegetable oils and natural ingredients with the ethnic consumer in mind.



Makari's skin lightening cream and beauty lightening milk gradually lightens skin.

"Customers are looking for a genuine and healthy representation of themselves and their culture with truth, honesty and validation," expressed Leesah B, owner of the Jersey City, NJ-based company. "The philosophy of Inky Loves Nature is the affirmation and preservation of black culture and self love. Each product is vegan and promotes organic and wild-crafted fair trade ingredients indigenous to Africa. We also donate 1% of our annual net revenues to African environmental organizations worldwide. So when you buy an Inky product you're not just buying a generic shea butter that you can get anywhere."

Ms. B insists that each product—Warrior Queen cleanser, Magical Melanin moisturizer, Sub Love body scrub, Nappalicious Nutritious scalp rub—is named in a way that speaks to the experiences of women of color, reflecting heritage, cultural esteem and cultural respect.

Makari, maker of cosmetics and skin care for ethnic men and women, offers a skin lightening cream made from caviar that gradually lightens skin naturally and safely. It reportedly smooths out expression lines and crow's feet and renews epidermal cells and fights pigmented marks, scars, liver spots and stretch marks. Products include caviar face lightening cream, night lightening cream, beauty lightening milk, skin lightening pills and deep cleansing lotion.

Abe Indig, president of Brooklyn, NY-based Makari, noted that customers in the ethnic market are looking for products that address their specific problems. "As more ethnic-intended products emerge, multi-cultural consumers are turning away from the general market."

That 'Other' Consumer

The introduction of the "metrosexual" and the acceptance of his lifestyle through increased exposure in magazines or TV shows has allowed men to focus more on health and beauty care with less hesitation. As traditional gender roles blur, purchases of health and beauty products by the men themselves, or by women for the men in their lives, have increased. The same trend is occurring in the ethnic market.

Brian D. Smith, owner, Treasured Locks, LLC, West Chester, OH, said, "Men tend to want products packaged specifically for them; they want to pamper themselves without feeling feminine. Most men won't even buy a product packaged for, or marketed to, women no matter how effective it might be for men."

"Customers are looking for products specifically targeted to their special needs that recognize individuality and reflect their lifestyle," added Erik Kowal, vice president, marketing. "The new generation of black men is constantly craving unique products that meet their needs and are different than what the older generation uses."

Packaged Facts estimates that the men's ethnic health and beauty market will be valued at more than \$1.7 billion at retail by 2008. While skin care is the smallest of the health and beauty categories, it still has increased from 5.3% of the market in 2001 to 6.2% in 2003.

Halsik Limited, a Wilmette, IL-based beauty company specializing in the formulation of ethnic skin care products for black and Hispanic men and women, recently launched Formula 103 Hair Removal sport cream.

"For men's skin care, ingrown hair continues to be a problem," said Mr. Kowal. "Formula 103 sport cream contains anti-bump properties that help eliminate razor bumps."

Formula 103 Hair Removal sport cream is an herbal-based depilatory cream with built-in moisturizers that soothe and coat the skin. The depilatory cream is formulated with aloe vera, vitamin E, herbal extracts, cocoa butter, mineral oil, chamomile, corn flower and almond protein.

Treasured Locks has three product lines: Treasured Locks for hair care, HumiNature for skin care and Ajuvén for men's care.

"People want products tailored to their needs," stated Mr. Smith. "Many ethnic customers feel they have been ignored. Mass marketed ethnic products are typically cheap and ineffective with little selection."

The Ajuvén men's line of products—facial scrub, astringent, moisturizer, shave crème and gel, body butter, shampoo and conditioner—are made from all-natural ingredients.

According to Ms. Smith, the retail environment isn't helping consumers make smart purchases. "Most people working in stores where ethnic products are available do not know much about the products," declared Mr. Smith. "By focusing primarily on ethnic needs, being African-Americans ourselves, providing a wealth of information via our website, e-mail consulting with clients and by making ourselves available worldwide via the internet, we are meeting many clients' needs right where they are, in their own homes."

Consumers don't want to fuss with different products for each skin problem. The most popular products are those that serve more than one function, such as moisturize, hydrate and even out skin tone.

Ms. Nichols emphasized that consumers are looking for products that can solve more than one problem. "A product that improves the aesthetic while providing genuine healing and hydrating properties really packs that double punch that consumers are looking for right now," she said.

Searching High and Low

"The trend is for products that multi-task," toned Ms. Price. "Products such as Mango Sea Salt Scrub or Mango Crush both exfoliate and moisturize with a mixture of sea salts and oils."

According to Jamie McKean, national sales and marketing manager, Clear Essence, Ontario, CA, there is a bigger emphasis on ingredients.

"What once was a Fade Crème is now a Fade Crème with Alpha Hydroxy and vitamin E. There also seems to be an emergence of more spa/wellness products such as facial masks and supplements. Along the same lines, manufacturers are realizing the benefits of natural products. They restore nutrients and vitamins and reverse damage caused by chemicals found in other products."

Clear Essence Skin Care Systems offers a Botanical, Anti-Aging, Classical and Men's Line that address the skin care needs for those with darker complexions and uneven skin tones. Clear Essence is a multi-functional skin care line.

"We offer advanced-technology products with a proven record in hyper-pigmentation, dark spots, dryness/ashiness and acne/blemishes. People are growing more and more conscious of damage caused by the sun and urban living. This line of products not only helps the appearance of the skin now but prevents future outbreaks or dark spots," stated Ms. McKean.

"As more women of color continue to accept the unique and natural textures of their hair, they are learning more about their skin and all the incredibly toxic products out there," said Ms. B. "Inky products fit into the mindset of customers quite nicely, as they are actively seeking products specific to their needs."

"Many products seem to be logically good for anyone's skin but actually are detrimental to highly pigmented skin," noted Ms. Ward Carter. She indicated that certain scrubs cause adverse effects on highly pigmented skin. If overused, they can cause microscopic scratches that make the skin look uneven and irritated. She added that some deep cleansers have ingredients that are too harsh for highly pigmented skin, causing the melanin to go into overdrive or re-traumatizing, resulting in hyper- or hypo-pigmentation. "Products without harsh or abrasive chemicals that deeply cleanse yet feel soothing and healing and enhance the natural beauty of darker skin tones tend to be more effective and appeal to this consumer," she explained.

Hitting the Target

In 2003, the Hispanic Bureau found that Hispanics outnumbered African Americans. While Hispanics accounted for 13.4% of the U.S. population in 2002, companies devoted only 3.2% of their advertising budget to this group.

Ms. McKean mentioned that a study by the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies noted that Hispanic print and television media combined now account for more than 5% of national corporate ad budgets. She also mentioned that the International Licensing Industry Merchandiser's Association found that ethnic groups want to relate to the product without being isolated from the mainstream. "With this in mind," she said, "there has been a conscious effort to include multicultural spokespeople in recent media launches such as Revlon and CoverGirl."

The University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth has estimated African-American spending power at \$688 billion in 2003. By 2008, Selig expects it to grow to \$921 billion. While this increase seems significant, Target Market News, Chicago, IL, had found that only \$1.5 billion of advertising in 2003 was spent to reach the African-American market, while their spending accounted for \$634 billion in sales.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Asian population grew the fastest of all racial groups in the country, according to The Asian-American Market: Midway Between Census 2000 and 2010 by Saul Gitlin. As of June 2004, Asian spending power was estimated at \$229 billion by Kang & Lee Advertising, New York, NY. Like Hispanics and African-Americans, they too, are under-targeted by advertisers.

But not every observer is sold on the idea of ethnic-specific skin care. Timothy Dowd, senior analyst and writer for Packaged Facts, explained that the latest trend he's seen is a change in the fundamental approach to selling ethnic-specific skin care versus selling general-use skin care to ethnics. "Even more small entrepreneurs are positioning products based on specific skin conditions and concerns, rather than on racial or ethnic skin care needs," he said. "Even age brackets and gender are transcended."

Mr. Dowd said that manufacturers shouldn't limit a product to one particular ethnic group when it can be positioned on a common skin problem and sold to many millions more. "Why make any sector of consumers feel isolated? It's time to stop bemoaning the lack of variety of ethnic-specific products, and concentrate on selling products based on quality function to ethnics," he said.

But Dr. Cook-Bolden disagreed.

"Treatments should be tailored to individual skin types and approached with caution as to avoid further irritation or worsening of the condition."

Growing, Growing, Gone

According to Packaged Facts, ethnic-specific skin care products will rise to \$137 million in 2008, a \$19 million (16.1%) increase from 2003 to 2008.

Ms. Ward Carter stated that educational levels and discretionary income are increasing, thus boosting buying power. "Things that may have been a luxury in the past are quickly becoming necessities. I see more ethnic people interested in ways to beautify themselves with everything from expensive skin care and makeup to plastic surgery." She added that each year, industry publications have special articles on the topic and how to better serve the market.

"This niche is becoming bigger and can afford to buy more products," she said. "More mainstream brands are hiring ethnic actresses and models as their spokesmodels."

She indicated that some educational institutions offer master classes focusing on the ethnic market. "If mainstream brands don't understand the bigger picture and give back to the ethnic consumer, they will only be able to tap the surface of the potential increase in revenues the ethnic consumer could provide."

"Today's ethnic consumer is looking to manufacturers to develop products that meet specific skin care needs while at the same time fitting into the current skin care landscape. Ethnic consumers don't want to feel marginalized or outside of the trend simply because they have ethnic skin," said Ms. Nichols. "Manufacturers' reaction to consumers' wants and needs seem to be growing the skin care market and creating a problem-solving sub-category."

Mr. Smith added that ethnic people are no longer accepting the notion that they have to use mass-produced products that do not fit their needs. "As people become more accustomed to choices in other areas of their lives," he noted, "they are demanding those same choices in their personal care products."

Searching for Solutions

Ms. McKean said that customers are looking for problem-specific products. "Ethnic skin is different than Caucasian skin, and the problems they have are unique to them. Ethnic customers are looking for a product that speaks to them, will perform and most importantly solve their problem and prevent it from recurring," she said.

Packaged Facts expects ethnic skin care products, worth \$1.9 billion in 2003, to emerge stronger as more new products are targeted exclusively to specific ethnicities. The market for skin care is estimated to reach \$5 billion in 2009 from \$4.6 billion in 2004.

Mr. Kowal emphasized that smaller companies with better products targeted at the younger generation will benefit immensely from new cultural trends and the desire to be different and stand out.

"This market will continue to grow when you tell these women that you recognize that their skin is a little different and you've got something for them," declared Ms. Price. "It will continue to grow as you tell them that they don't have to settle for what's out there for everyone else and that they no longer have to make do."

On the other hand, Mr. Dowd says that although there will always be an ethnic-specific skin care market, it's no longer much of a growth market.

"That's why the ad dollars don't seem to be there," he noted. "They've been shifted to multicultural marketing, making it impossible to break them out. If marketers want to reach the ethnic consumer, the best combination is an elegantly packaged skin care item positioned on a function."



Palmer's new Body Gloss Lotion moisturizes and illuminates skin with a subtle shimmer.



Inky Loves Nature products are vegan and promote organic and wild-crafted fair trade ingredients indigenous to Africa.



Halsik meets the needs of ethnic men with razorless hair removal cream.