# a path from a **beauty product** to a **comfort zone**



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## The importance of „comfort product" in contemporary lifestyle

The expression "comfort zone" describes a person's condition when operating within an anxiety-neutral state, and in which physical and psychological needs are minimalized. It is a behavioral state in which a person feels that everything is under control.

Beauty capital – meaning personal attractiveness - is a source of extra earnings for both good-looking individuals and their employers. For many people it is key to their economic, social and personal success. The state of being pretty (or even just well-groomed) confers enormous social advantages. Beauty matters most though, for reproductive success. It is through our daily care and the rituals therein, that we constantly invest in self-confidence and positive feelings.

There seems to be no phase for consumer products that consistently provides cozy feelings. The term "comfort food" exists and is widely known, thus, the term "comfort product" should be added to our daily language, as it would help to describe current social and psychological changes, especially within the consumer market.

Neuromarketing has experienced enormous growth in the past several years. It has become the primary testing tool to dive deep into our minds in order to understand the essence of human emotions and desires. We are surrounded by ads; they reach out to everyone. Luxury branding is no longer reserved for the richest, but instead calls out to the middle class. The desire to own expensive goods felt by those who cannot afford them is stronger than ever. In this era of an extreme neo-consumerist lifestyle, happiness is based on the ownership of material goods and therefore frequently brings feelings of anxiety.

The promise that imperfections can be eliminated is made by cosmetics producers and accepted by the masses. The thought that beauty cannot exist without luxury cosmetics, beauty products and expensive treatments or operations is deeply rooted in the mindset of many. The lack of a physical state of comfort that does not depend on high-spending in the pursuit of a luxury sanctioned lifestyle has become a global problem.

## New luxury marketing

The brand visions created by cosmetic and perfume companies are ingeniously strategic. Numerous campaigns promote the beneficial impact of countless products on our bodies and on our psychological wellbeing. While advertising is mainly a creative process, neuromarketing can add value through its understanding of the ads' effects on human beings, as developed through the observation and interpretation of human emotions. All forms of a brand's outreach is carefully thought out, and plenty of psychologists, researchers, trend forecasters and consumer reports specialists, among other experts, are working on them.

The global beauty industry is a leader in the global luxury market. Global Industry Analysts, Inc., released a comprehensive report on the fragrance and perfume industry, predicting that this market would be worth a whopping $45.6 billion by 2018. Beauty firms spend just 2-3% of their sales on research and development—compared with 15% spent by the pharmaceutical industry. However, they spend 20-25% on advertising and promotion. The sector's market leader, L'Oréal, spent $2.2 billion in 2014 for ads, an amount that was 2% more than in 2013.


Micro you

The words used in advertising copy are not random. The most common words employed in cosmetic advertising are verbs that describe how products work for users and how customers are changed by the products. Frequent use of adjectives that refer to a products' beneficial characteristics, portraying the perfect human appearance are repeated throughout a single ad. While formal language tends to be used, it is made personal to the reader-consumer with heavy use of the word "you." Human nature is highly self-centered, and marketing claims are operating with it in the same vein. In addition, many scientific terms, such as, "bio," "micro," "cells," "molecular," "dermo," etc., are also strategically inserted into an ad's personal tone. The idea of medically-safe manufacturers is another way to build the consumer's trust. Thus, we have a quick overview of how advertising jargon is constructed.




In addition, packaging design and brand names become more important than the product itself. While production costs tend to be a closely guarded secret in the industry, it is estimated that for a $100 bottle of perfume, the oil used to make the scent itself is valued at right around $2.  It reflects perfectly the current consumption chaos and revaluated priorities of this conglomerate industry – here we see without a doubt that the superficial aspects of products are far more significant than its actual contents. There is a demand for unique and rarified commodities, and it is a fact that people are willing to pay more for items that seem more difficult to obtain or are of a limited quantity. Does the limited edition of a cosmetic designed in collaboration with a fashion designer, celebrity or movie star have a more beneficial impact? Do perfumes in bottles made of Italian Murano glass, like Bulgari's Pour Femme, in fact smell sweeter?

Obviously, digital promotion is hugely important for the cosmetics market and e-commerce today. The interaction between customers and brands on social platforms is a way to build new niche buyers. There is no arguing that for some brands, traditional marketing will always be a part of their advertising schema. However, the digital shift is real. Vlog reviews, user-generated content on instagram feeds and Facebook fanpages are basics for many brands that want to interest younger generations. L'Oréal's "Because I'm worth it" tag-line has long been a huge success and allowed the company to remain in first place in the beauty industry. There are also exceptions and online blunders. Luxury brands, in general, do not want to be seen on Amazon, fearing it will harm their overall image. This is not surprising, seeing as in 2014, Amazon China had to close one of its online stores after state media reported that thousands of fake cosmetics were being sold.

While it may seem that daily self-care has become an almost spiritual activity only recently, there has always been something mysterious and fetishistic about the care of the body. Gestures made by models in beauty ads have become iconic - applying fluids and creams to their skin in a sensual way, perfuming bent necks with half-closed eyes, fit bodies covered in foam taking purifying showers –who cannot easily recall such imagery? The unrealistic perfection shown in such ads has changed beauty standards collectively. A study by Dove made in 2004 found that cosmetic advertising was actually lowering the consumer's self-esteem.

## Branding and personal choice of lifestyle

Every product carries its own statement: are you non-conformist, and do you use Comme des Garçons "ODEUR 71" with the scent of toasted bread? Or do you define yourself as a modern woman with high expectations, and therefore your everyday treatment is based on Shiseido White Lucent Cream and La Prairie Foam Cleanser? Maybe your safe choice would be CK perfumes in the airport duty-free zone – at an affordable price for a well-known label? Are you a fan of the energy promoted by Adidas Ice Deo and Sports Blast Axe Shower Gel, used daily by everyone in your gym? There are multiple options for every single type of consumer. By choosing a typical beauty brand, we choose our lifestyle and feed consumption needs. Comfort and self-esteem depends on our comfort choices, and neuromarketing strategies allows advertisers insider information to pan to those needs so specifically that one's choice begins to seem obvious or necessary.


please, now feel
Comfortable

## Neuroscience emotional tools

Neuromarketing specialists can often perceive problems that to the minds of others would be imperceptible. Focused on the issue of the consumer's self-esteem, they have come up with an amazing solution: thought-promoted products. In other words, they are now focused on selling things that have never been a real necessity or need. It is a simple idea, but it entails advanced research.

Neuromarketing is combining neuroscience and marketing studies. Analyses of human's emotions and demeanor (through facial coding, eye tracking, tone of voice and even more medical examinations like: EEG readings or Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging).

To gain more attention and consumers, neuromarketing specialists also use psychological cognition methodologies. Consciousness is divided, as Freud's theory systematizes, into the „reality principle" (Ego), moral imperatives (Superego) and unconscious „pleasure principle." Neuromarketing experts are constantly questioning how to effect humans' „primary thinking process," which, in advertising terms, is called „selective perception."

Cosmetics brands are applying neuromarketing to promotional media in multiple ways - from visual ads to verbal claims. Most of them are based on studies about the human brain. The brain recognizes bilateral symmetry and bodily proportions. We humans have a unique and well-developed area of the brain devoted just to facial recognition, called the fusiform face area. We also use our facial recognition capabilities to determine levels of attractiveness. The eyes are a feature of the face closely related to beauty. The brain uses a special region, the superior temporal sulcus, for the job of following eye movements of others and determining the direction of their view. Eye recognition is wired directly into the most fundamental emotional processing unit of the brain – the amygdala. In this way our brains have programmed themselves to allow us to be attuned to the memorization of a person's face and silhouette. How many beauty product advertisements are there that do not heavily feature the human body?

Another strategy is also based on studies of the human brain, which uses various facial cues to judge age even when we cannot call it into consciousness or express it specifically. The reason youth is important to our culture is in fact rooted in evolutionary biology. For women, youth is a strong indi-



# Neuromarketing

neuroscience + marketing

cator of estrogen levels. The appeal of youth is not just a trendy preference, but was likely a course of selection of our ancestors thousands of years ago that has now become part of our genetic code.

Cosmetics are used to counter the loss of estrogen effects with aging. The prevalence of makeup use among women rises from 74% in 18-24 year olds, when estrogen is at its highest, to 81% in the 35-44 age group, when it has already begun to decline. Moreover, as skin darkens with age, the color contrast between the hair, eyes and facial complexion is reduced. Cosmetics advertising aims to counter this sign of aging by enhancing color contrasts of women's faces and bodies in every ad.

The desire for beauty is hard-wired in our genes, and our genes then direct the construction of our brains. Daniel Yarosh, the Estée Lauder svp/basic science researcher, said, "Neuromarketing is the convergence of evolutionary biology, neuroscience, psychology, genetics, economics and marketing... Neuromarketing is a biological science." Estée Lauder itself has leveraged this activity to uncover several „deep rooted" biological needs that are intrinsically related to beauty. This is also strongly linked to the aforementioned claims and the way language is specifically used within them.

Such studies seek to understand whether images that portray the relaxing attributes of cosmetics can transform the anxiety around the self-care market into feelings of pleasurable for potential consumers."

## Notes:

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