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DERMOCOSMETIC PACKAGING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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The aim of the study was to identify and assess of importance of the information placed on unit packaging of dermocosmetics, which are perceived and analysed by consumers during the purchase process. A direct personal interview survey covered a group of female consumers making regular purchases of dermocosmetic products. The survey has revealed that dermocosmetic packaging is an essential medium of information on the packed product for respondents. For female respondents, key information placed on the dermocosmetics' packaging includes: purpose of the product, description of its cosmetic action, expiry date/PAO, use instructions, declared active ingredients, and "free-from" declarations. Less important is the following information: on conducted tests of dermocosmetics, brand, manufacturer, product name, product weight, detailed product composition (ingredients), recommendation of independent institutes and promotional information. The least important are: pro-quality and ecological information, country of origin, information on packaging material, as well as the manufacturer's website and info line. Correct adjustment of markings placed by the manufacturers is necessary if they want to effectively use the dermocosmetics' packaging as a medium of information in marketing communication.

Keywords: marketing communication, dermocosmetics, packaging, buying decisions, consumers

1. INTRODUCTION

Product packaging, including cosmetics, is presented in different contexts in marketing (Jerzyk, 2014):

- as an instrument of marketing mix,
- in relation to a product, price, distribution and promotion,

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- functions and values of packaging in relation to the needs and requirements of consumers,
- in the strategy of a product,
- in a promotion strategy (advertising, basis for promotion, an element of the brand image),
- packaging's design as a source of emotions and experience of consumers,
- as a platform of information and education for consumers.

An interesting issue in terms of unit packaging is the dynamically developing market of dermocosmetics with a diversified product offer. Dermocosmetics are cosmetics aimed at the care of specific skin problems, and have been distributed mainly in pharmacies since the 1990s. Dermocosmetics have slowly begun to also fill the shelves of the largest drugstore chains since 2016. However, consumers still mainly associate them with pharmacies and as having specialized properties, perhaps because pharmacies are places where prescription and non-prescription drugs (OTC drugs) are available, along with dietary supplements and dermocosmetics.

2. COSMETIC PACKAGING IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION

One of the most important packaging marketing functions is the communication function, which involves transferring specific information on a given product and its manufacturer to prospective buyers in order to encourage them to buy it. The concept of communication should be understood as both informing, educating as well as promoting a product. The communication function of packaging is usually identified with the aesthetics, visual attractiveness and appropriate information on packaging. This information should primarily shape the needs of consumers, attract their attention and increase their desire to buy a product (Baraniecka, 2002).

The packaging of a cosmetic product acts as a mediator, or as a carrier, of a brand's image and messages to consumers, creating a symbolic relation between the brand and the consumer (Anjana, 2018). In online stores and stores with a self-service form of sale, the unit packaging of a cosmetic is the main source of information about the properties of the product and acts as a "silent seller" in the relationship between a cosmetic product and a buyer (Ankiel, Walenciak, 2016; Magnier, Crié, 2015; Binninger, 2015).

The packaging design must show at once the intended use, method of application and intended results. A container of talcum powder should not look like as if it contains scouring powder, nor should face cream jars resemble shoe polish containers. All necessary information must be clearly visible or implied through the design. This communication may either be direct or subtle. Direct communication describes the product, its benefits and how to use it. Indirect communication uses colour, shape, design forms and texture to convey intrinsic attributes like purity,

value, fun, elegance, femininity or masculinity. Here colour is seen to be the primary aspect involved in subtle consumer communication. This is the reason cosmetic products are usually in pastel colours, black or gold to communicate classic elegance. Still another communication role of packaging is providing information to the consumer through the label or immediate package. Information on contents, instructions on use and information required by law should assist rather than confuse the customer (Agariya et al., 2012).

The informative character of cosmetic packaging encompasses two groups of features. The first group comprises semantic traits such as presence and legibility of information important to consumers, legibility of basic information (such as product name, designated use, at a distance of at least 1 metre), presence of warnings against hazardous use of the product. The second group includes extra-semantic features such as the ability of the packaging to suggest the intended use of the product by means of its visual layout, usage of proper and contrasting colours increasing the readability of information and usage of warning colours for hazardous or corrosive products (Szymczak, Ankiel-Homa, 2007).

A cosmetic product made available on the market shall be safe for human health when used under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, taking account, in particular, of the following: presentation, labelling, instructions for use and any other indication or information provided by the responsible person. According to this regulation, cosmetic products shall be made available on the market only where the container and packaging of cosmetic products bear the information in indelible, easily legible and visible lettering for consumers. Obligatory information which must appear on the packaging of cosmetic products is: the name or registered name and the address of the responsible person; the nominal content at the time of packaging; the date until which the cosmetic product, stored under appropriate conditions, will continue to fulfil its initial function; particular precautions to be observed in use; the batch number of manufacture or the reference for identifying the cosmetic product, the function of the cosmetic product, unless it is clear from its presentation, and a list of ingredients (Regulation (EC) 1223/2009/WE). The producer can also place optional marking in order to increase the informational value of the cosmetic packaging, as well as competitiveness on the market, such as the “e” sign, symbol of “an open book” or eco markings. All obligatory and optional markings placed on unit packaging of cosmetics influence their informative value. Obligatory markings must be placed on packaging due to legal requirements. On the other hand, optional markings emphasize the qualities of the product, create a desirable image of a brand and build competitive advantage.

The communication function of cosmetics packaging has been studied by some authors. According to Topoyan and Bulut (2008) packaging design becomes much more significant when designed for aesthetics and to deliver specific information to consumers. Grundey (2010) confirmed that all functions of the packaging, such as protection, utility and communication, are important and have to be

analysed when creating a new product because if they are not judged correctly the price of the product can be too high or the product can be unattractive to consumers and thus they will not be willing to purchase it. A.F. Khan and M.F. Khan (2013) confirmed that almost 40% of respondents are influenced by the information and/or instructions reported in the packaging regarding the application or use of the product. By contrast, 27% is influenced by the ingredients list reported in the back of the packaging, meaning that the written messages that a cosmetic product conveys, are important factors that increase the purchase intention. This confirms that receiving information is getting more and more important for consumers, and the fact that information is necessary to distinguish a product from another due to the saturation of this industry. Ankiel and Sojkin (2018) claim that an appropriate selection of information encoded on the packaging should provide the consumer with comprehensive, reliable, and comprehensible information about the packaged cosmetic, its composition, properties, method of use, and special precautions. Analysing the information contained on the packaging of cosmetics, it can be concluded that the entities introducing the cosmetic to commodity trading tend to “over-mark” the packaging. It is therefore reasonable to determine whether and which information is analysed by consumers in the purchasing process and what information constitutes the communication value of the unit packaging from the point of view of individual consumers.

As mentioned above, cosmetics packaging has been studied by some authors, but there is a lack of research on the packaging of dermocosmetics sold in pharmacies. Due to the fact that dermocosmetics are products intended for skincare problems, the author decided to check, whether in this case packaging and its elements also play an important role in consumer purchasing decisions. Moreover the author wanted to identify the key determinants of the information value of packaging and provide valuable information for designers in the area of the correct selection of signs and individual packaging codes.

Dermocosmetics, sold in pharmacies, are products most often bought by consumers with skin problems. Therefore, dermocosmetics’ packaging is in particular a carrier of product information. The aim of this study was to identify and assess the importance of the information placed on unit packaging of dermocosmetics for the face, which are perceived and analysed by consumers during the purchase process.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material was the unit packaging of dermocosmetics intended for face care. The choice of this specific category was dictated by the fact that this is the largest category of dermocosmetic products available in the dermocosmetic market. The respondents were asked to assess the importance of the information placed on unit packaging of dermocosmetics for the face taken into account in the buying process.

Table 1. The survey sample structure

	Specification	Sample size	Percentage [%]
Sex	women	553	100.0
Age	15–19	39	7.0
	20–29	164	29.7
	30–39	125	22.6
	40–49	79	14.3
	50–59	89	16.1
	60+	57	10.3
Education	primary	12	2.2
	vocational secondary	40	7.2
	secondary	198	35.8
	higher	303	54.8
Monthly net income for 1 family member (PLN)	up to 1000	10	1.8
	1001–1500	31	5.6
	1501–2000	94	17.0
	2001–2500	150	27.1
	2500 +	268	48.5
Subjective assessment of own financial situation	very bad	4	0.7
	below average	43	7.8
	average	309	55.9
	above average	162	29.3
	very good	35	6.3
Place of residence	rural area	76	13.7
	town up to 20.000 inhabitants	67	12.1
	town of 21.000–50.000 inhabitants	80	14.5
	city of 51.000–100.000 inhabitants	121	21.9
	city of more than 101.000 inhabitants	209	37.8

Own compilation based on the surveys conducted ($N = 553$).

With a view to solve the research query and meet the set objective, direct personal interview surveys were conducted at the turn of July, August and September 2017 in the Wielkopolska province on a group of 553 female consumers aged more than 15. A non-probability sampling method was employed to select the respondents, as a result of which only women declaring regular purchases of dermocosmetic products were surveyed. The research results indicate a high share of women in making buying decisions (Kieźel, Smyczek, 2012), both regarding cosmetics (Jurowczyk, 2013) and dermocosmetics (TNS OBOP, 2012), therefore the study sample consisted of women declaring regular purchases of dermocosmetics in pharmacies.

The sample selection process also took into account such demographic features as age, education, monthly net income for 1 family member, subjective assessment of own financial situation and place of residence. Those criteria were considered significant as they differentiate the buying styles of individual consumers. The structure of respondents included in the survey is presented in Table 1. This structure, according to the age criterion corresponded to the distribution of the population of inhabitants of Wielkopolska (Polish Central Statistical Office 2015).

Women aged 20–29 accounted for 29.7% of all respondents while women aged 15–19 constituted only 7.0% of the surveyed group. Most respondents had attained a higher (54.8%) or secondary educational level (35.8%) and resided in cities of more than 101.000 inhabitants (37.8%) or 51.000–100.000 inhabitants (21.9%). Most respondents declared a monthly net income for 1 family member above the 2001 PLN (75.6%) and assessed their own financial situation as average and above average (85.2%).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the conducted study the importance of information placed on the unit packaging of dermocosmetics was assessed and the most important information, which is perceived and analysed by consumers during the purchase process, was identified.

Based on the survey results, shown in Table 2, it can be inferred that the label information on the product packaging is a very important packaging element taken into consideration while purchasing a dermocosmetic product. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to identify statistically significant relationships between sociodemographic factors and the significance of the label information included on the dermocosmetic packaging for choosing dermocosmetics when shopping in pharmacies.

Table 2. The information on packaging as a determinant of buying the dermocosmetic product in the pharmacy

Specification		Value	Spearman rank order correlation results
Sex	Women	3.98 ± 0.99	–
Age	15–19	3.79 ± 1.28	$R = -0.013$; $t(N - 2) = -0.294$; $p = 0.769$
	20–29	4.02 ± 0.96	
	30–39	3.96 ± 0.95	
	40–49	4.10 ± 0.83	
	50–59	3.98 ± 1.07	
	60+	3.84 ± 1.01	
Education	primary	3.58 ± 1.00	$R = 0.054$; $t(N - 2) = 1.265$; $p = 0.207$
	vocational secondary	3.98 ± 1.05	
	secondary	3.92 ± 1.02	
	higher	4.03 ± 0.96	
Monthly net income for 1 family member (PLN)	up to 1000	3.40 ± 1.65	$R = 0.072$; $t(N - 2) = 1.687$; $p = 0.092$
	1001–1500	3.16 ± 1.37	
	1501–2000	4.00 ± 1.06	
	2001–2500	4.02 ± 0.99	
	2500 +	2.90 ± 1.45	
Assessment of own financial situation	very bad	1.75 ± 0.96	$R = 0.115$; $t(N - 2) = 2.726$; $p = 0.007$
	below average	3.63 ± 1.22	
	average	3.95 ± 1.00	
	above average	4.18 ± 0.81	
	very good	3.00 ± 2.31	
Place of residence	rural area	3.92 ± 1.04	$R = -0.002$; $t(N - 2) = -0.040$; $p = 0.968$
	town up to 20.000 inhabitants	3.91 ± 1.22	
	town of 21.000–50.000 inhabitants	4.06 ± 0.83	
	city of 51.000–100.000 inhabitants	4.00 ± 0.96	
	city of more than 101.000 inhabitants	2.75 ± 1.27	
Explanations: p – significance level for the test value; R – Spearman's R value; t – value of t statistics checking the significance of Spearman's R factor.			

Own compilation based on the surveys conducted ($N = 553$).

The age of the female respondents, their education, place of residence or monthly income per family member did not have a significant influence on the differences in their declared importance of the label information on the dermocosmetic packaging in the product purchase process. The financial situation of the surveyed consumers had a significant influence on their different assessments of the importance of the label information on the dermocosmetic packaging. The label information on the packaging was significantly less important for consumers in a very bad financial situation, in particular compared to the group with an above average situation.

During the process of selecting the most important groups of information with which female respondents familiarise themselves while buying dermocosmetics, the following types of information placed on the packaging were presented for assessment:

- product name,
- manufacturer,
- brand (trademark),
- purpose – intended use (type of skin, skin problem, age),
- detailed product composition according to International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (ingredients in English/Latin),
- declared active ingredients of the product,
- “free-from” declarations (declaration of lack of some ingredients, e.g. fragrances, preservatives, colours, alcohol, etc.),
- description of dermocosmetic action (caring properties),
- use instruction/warnings,
- expiry date/PAO (Period After Opening),
- information on conducted tests of dermocosmetics (e.g. dermatological tests, application tests, clinical trials),
- recommendations (for example of research institutes, dermatologists, etc.),
- country of origin,
- ecological information,
- promotional information (e.g. packaging with price 40% off),
- pro-quality information (e.g. ISO certificates),
- information on packaging material,
- product weight, and
- manufacturer’s website/info line.

The results of the study are shown in Fig. 1.

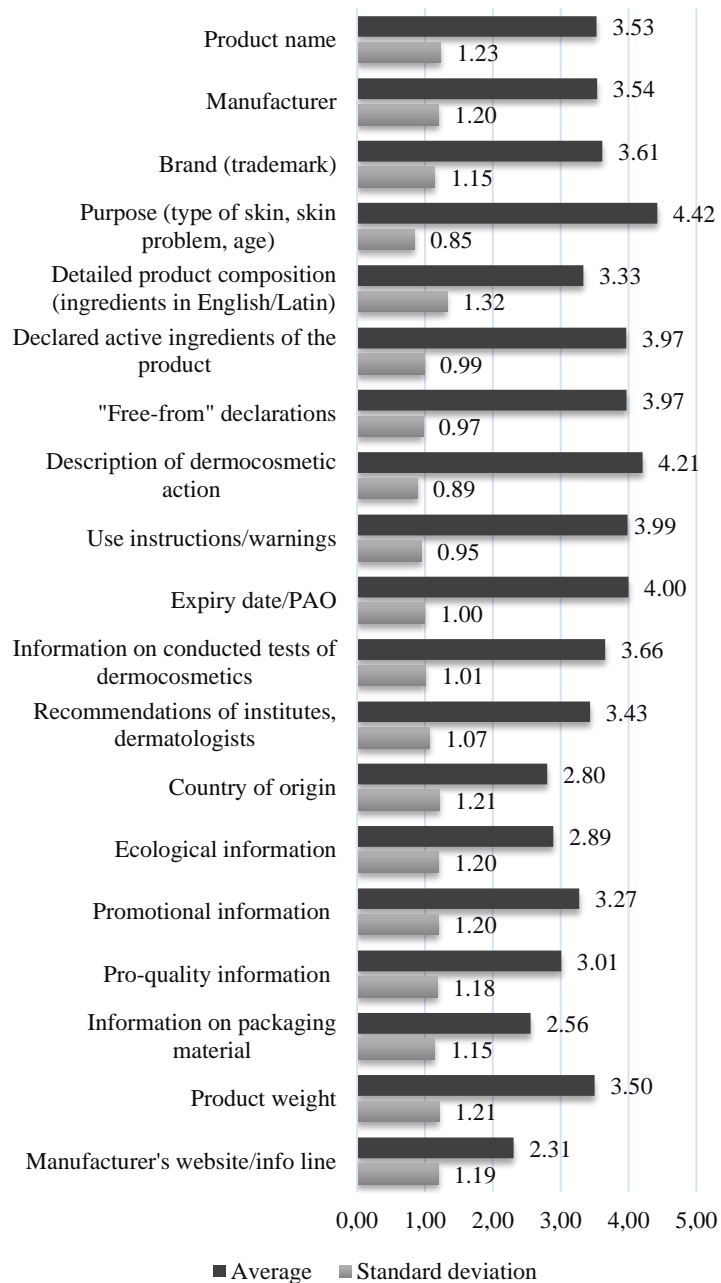


Fig. 1. Importance of information contained on dermocosmetic packaging taken into account in the buying process of dermocosmetic products
Own compilation based on the surveys conducted ($N = 553$)

In the purchase process of dermocosmetics, for female respondents, key information placed on the dermocosmetics' packaging includes: purpose (intended use) of the product, description of its cosmetic action, expiry date/PAO, use instructions, declared active ingredients and "free-from" declarations. Less important is the following information: on conducted tests of dermocosmetics, brand, manufacturer, product name, product weight, detailed product composition (ingredients), recommendation of independent institutes and promotional information. The least important are: pro-quality and ecological information, country of origin, information on packaging material, as well as the manufacturer's website and info line. The preliminary research, carried out by the author on the group of 150 female respondents in 2015 (Malinowska, 2016), also revealed that dermocosmetic packaging is an essential medium of information on the packed product for respondents. They declared that key information for them, placed on the dermocosmetics packaging was: the purpose of the product, description of cosmetic action, declared active ingredients, expiry date and "free-from" declarations. When it comes to cosmetics, Ankiel and Sojkin (2018) showed that key information for consumers includes: product name, manufacturer name, brand name, promotional information and description of product properties.

Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to identify statistically significant relationships between sociodemographic factors and the importance of individual information included on the dermocosmetic packaging for the respondents. There was a statistically significant relationship between the age of the respondents and their assessment of the significance of information included on the packaging of the dermocosmetic, such as its purpose, the detailed composition, the description of its action, use instruction and the expiry date. Older consumers more frequently analysed the information on the purpose of the dermocosmetic and the description of its action. They were, however, less interested in the detailed composition of the product. The consumers over 40 years of age paid more attention to information on the use instruction when buying the dermocosmetic. Moreover, the significance of the information on the expiry date of the product also grew together with the age of the respondents.

The education level of the respondents had a statistically significant influence on how important the following information was to them: the purpose, the detailed composition of the product, the declared active ingredients and the website or info line. Consumers with basic education attached less weight to the information on the purpose of the product, whereas for those with higher education, the composition and declared active ingredients of the product were more important. Besides, the lower the level of education of the surveyed consumers was, the less significant the information regarding the producer's website and info line was for them.

The place of residence of the respondents had a statistically significant influence on the importance of the following information for them: the name of the product, its manufacturer, its brand, its purpose, the description of its action and its expiry date. The respondents living in the biggest cities (with more than 101 thou-

sand inhabitants) attached less weight to the name of the product and the information on its purpose and action, but they paid more attention to the expiry date of the dermocosmetic. For the consumers living in smaller towns and cities (below 101 thousand inhabitants), the information regarding the manufacturer of the dermocosmetic was more significant, whereas for the inhabitants of villages and towns with the population of up to 20 thousand people, the information regarding the brand was more important. The assessments of the significance of the information on the packaging were similar to one another in the individual groups of respondents differing in their monthly net income and financial situation.

Both surveys from 2015 and 2017, confirmed that dermocosmetics' packaging is in particular an important carrier of product information for female respondents. Women with skin problems want clear information on the purpose and properties of dermocosmetics. It seems to be important information, as the use of products not intended for a specific skin problem can do more harm than help. The same applies to the expiry date and the use instructions of the product. Moreover, female respondents have knowledge about ingredients that can help or harm in the skin problem. Therefore, they look for this information on the packaging in the purchase process of dermocosmetics. Although, the eco trends in the market are observed, the consumers of dermocosmetics do not pay attention to ecological and packaging material information. The previous research (Malinowska, 2016) revealed that the nomenclature used in English and Latin, symbols of the packaging material, detailed product composition (ingredients) and specialist medical language are especially incomprehensible for the respondents. This explains the fact that respondents do not read this information.

5. CONCLUSION

The dermocosmetic packaging is a part of the product and the brand. The packaging represents its characteristics and communicates the product information. For consumers, the dermocosmetic product and its packaging are one and the same when they see it on the pharmacy shelves. During the purchase decision, the packaging assists the consumer by creating the overall product perception which helps the evaluation and making the right choice.

The conducted survey allowed the author to obtain data on the importance of particular information contained on dermocosmetics' packaging. Summarising the analysis of the conducted study, there is a need for finding and designing new forms of markings, together with graphic solutions adjusted to consumers' expectations (e.g. emoticons). Packaging of dermocosmetics can be an effective tool of market communications only if quickly-changing needs and expectations of consumers regarding its informational function are met. The visual layout of dermo-

cosmetic packaging should be transparent for consumers. The main information, such as purpose (intended use) of the product, description of its cosmetic action, expiry date/PAO, use instructions, declared active ingredients and “free-from” declarations, should be readable and eye-catching. Correct adjustment of markings placed by the manufacturers is necessary if they want to effectively use the dermocosmetics’ packaging as a medium of information in marketing communications.

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OPAKOWANIE DERMOKOSMETYKU JAKO INSTRUMENT KOMUNIKACJI MARKETINGOWEJ

Streszczenie

Celem pracy była identyfikacja i ocena znaczenia informacji zamieszczonych na jednostkowych opakowaniach dermokosmetyków, które są postrzegane i analizowane przez konsumentów w procesie zakupu. Przeprowadzono bezpośrednie indywidualne wywiady kwestionariuszowe wśród konsumentek deklarujących regularne zakupy dermokosmetyków w aptekach. Badanie wykazało, że dla respondentek opakowanie jest istotnym nośnikiem informacji o zawartym w nim dermokosmetyku. Kluczowymi informacjami analizowanymi przez konsumentki są: przeznaczenie produktu, opis jego działania, termin jego trwałości, instrukcja użytkowania, deklarowane składniki aktywne oraz deklaracje o braku niektórych składników. Mniejsze znaczenie dla konsumentek mają informacje o przeprowadzonych badaniach dermokosmetyków, marce, producencie, nazwie produktu, jego wadze, szczególnym składzie chemicznym produktu (INCI – Ingredients), rekomendacjach niezależnych instytutów oraz informacje promocyjne. Najmniej ważne dla konsumentek są informacje pro jakościowe i ekologiczne, jak również te dotyczące kraju pochodzenia, materiału opakowania czy strony internetowej i infolinii producenta. W celu skutecznego wykorzystania opakowania jako medium informacji w komunikacji marketingowej dermokosmetyków konieczna jest właściwa korekta oznaczeń i informacji umieszczanych przez producentów.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja marketingowa, dermokosmetyki, opakowania, decyzje nabywcze, konsumenci

