Consumer attitudes toward medical skin care and their impact on the customer journey within an international context

The Case of Dermasence

Bachelor Thesis
European Business Programme

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Date of Submission:	16.03.2020

Abstract

P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG wants to generate insights based on consumer attitudes along the customer journey (CJ) in selected international markets. An extensive literature review on the study of attitudes was conducted prior primary research. The definition, formation and function of attitudes is presented in the second chapter of the thesis including the impact on the customer journey approach. Interviews of potential customers in the field of acne and oily skin were conducted in Colombia, Spain and France in order to support P&M Cosmetics getting an overall overview of the characterisation of their potential customers in the selected markets and how their behaviour affects the customer journey. The results show a major impact of consumer attitudes on the pre-purchase stage and outline a global consumer segment within the industry of medical skin care and national differences regarding consumer attitudes.

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List of Abbreviations

A_o	Attitude Object
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
COO	Country of Origin
CX	Customer Experience
CJ	Customer Journey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
OTC	Over-The-Counter
PLC	Product Life Cycle
PR	Public Relations
QR-code	Quick Response-Code
RQ	Research Question
SME(s)	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise(s)
WOM	Word of Mouth

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1 Introduction

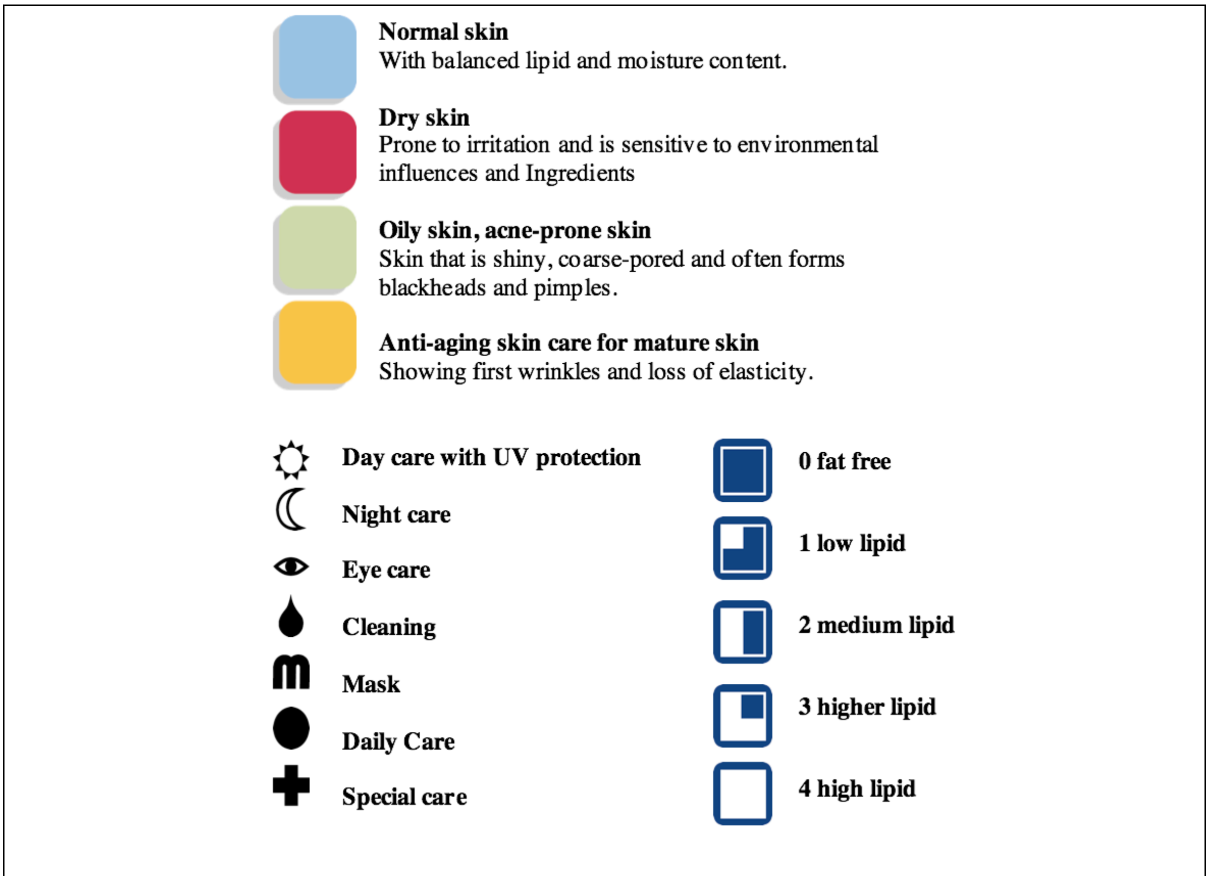
The Introduction part of the Bachelor thesis summarises the main purpose and relevance of the study on consumer attitudes. The purpose of this study is to understand the critical aspects of consumer behaviour within the industry of medical skin care concerning the internationalisation of the brand Dermasence, part of the P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG, a small-medium sized company (SME) founded in Münster, Germany. A company profile will introduce the 28-year-old medical skin care brand and their value proposition.

1.1 Relevance of the Topic

Nowadays, companies are connected globally; they are able to sell in all countries at the same time and address many different cultures and individuals with the same products (Venkatesan, 2017, p.289). Globalisation is one key driver for this interconnected world in addition to the competitive pressure of digitalisation of business models and processes. Customer expectations are constantly changing and rising due to the digital transformation (Strategy & Transformation Consulting GmbH, 2020). Consumers can adapt to the changes faster due to the digitalisation than companies whereupon firms have to act agile to keep up (Rusnjak & Schallmo, 2018, p.4). As consumers (rather than products) are in the centre of attention, companies have to learn more about their customers and their behaviour (Goldhausen, 2018, p.42; Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.23). Attitudes are one element of consumer behaviour, consisting of cognition, affect and behaviour or the intention to behave (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.24). All individuals constantly evaluate their surrounding and thereby attitudes are formed (Solomon, 2018, p.289). Companies depend on these attitudes as they are guiding consumers through the daily life (Rusnjak & Schallmo, 2018, p.5).

P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG operates in the consumer products industry which is driven by consumers' preferences (Global Edge, 2020). The firm is driven by strong values of quality, innovation and skin compatibility and the mission of healthy skin. Dermasence is part of the P&M Cosmetics and is working on product development in close cooperation with experts, dermatologists and pharmacies. High tolerance of the ingredients is extremely important to Dermasence; they have a compatibility for almost all kinds of allergies. The pH-value is accordingly adjusted which results in skin-friendly products with mild preservatives that they do not even have to declare a fragrance according to the cosmetics regulation. They offer fifty-three different products in the skin care sector covering skin diseases such as atopic eczema, erythema, rosacea and acne as well as products for aging skin, sun protection, scalp and hair and feet (P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG / Dermasence, 2018b). They developed their own coding system for different levels of lipid concentration (ranging from lipid-free to high lipid content), different care system (e.g.: day care or night care) and a colour code for every skin condition (Figure 1). Blue symbolises normal skin, red is dry skin, green is oily skin prone to acne and yellow anti-aging care for mature skin. This coding system supports dermatologists, pharmacists and customers in finding the right product for the specific skin type. Their main distribution channel are pharmacies but their products are also available online through Amazon and their own website.

Figure 1: Colour Coding and Care System of Dermasence



Source: P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG / Dermasence, 2018b

The global economy is heading towards an experience economy (Strategy & Transformation Consulting GmbH, 2020). Firms have to constantly enhance the customer experience (CX) focusing on social factors as short buying processes, personalised recommendations, detailed product descriptions and good reviews (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.69). Nowadays, companies are challenged by the increasing number of touchpoints within the CJ which are getting more and more complex (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.69). Nevertheless, firms have to gain insights on the behaviour of their customers in order to improve the performance of along the CJ as the Global Consumer Insights Survey showed the better and more fluent the CJ, the more consumers are purchasing and the more money they spend (PwC, 2019).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG is a medical skin care company, founded by five dermatologists in 1991 and is located in Münster, Germany. The SME employs around one hundred and seventy people, more than forty sales representatives and additional fourteen freelance beauticians and two permanent beauticians to support their team. The headquarter is at the founding site in Münster, they are located near the harbour. In 2017/2018, they gained revenue of twenty-two million euros and are already present in international markets such as Austria and the Netherlands through direct distribution and in the Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia they sell their products through partners via indirect distribution. They want to expand to further countries and are currently researching potential markets to enter.
In order to understand the effect of consumer attitudes on the CJ, the buying behaviour of potential customers in the segment of medical skin care has to be analysed and compared to their pre-set attitudes. Therefore, a user centred qualitative approach has been conducted by interviewing consumers in selected international markets within the segment of acne and oily skin condition. The results have been quantified throug MAXQDA[1] and the relation of consumer attitudes and their behaviour will be discussed and the controversy of consumers within the segment of medical skin treatment analysed.

This thesis deals with the dissonance of attitude and behaviour. People have attitudes towards many things but they do not always behave accordingly (Solomon, 2018, p.176). Consumer behaviour is viewed as how many sales are made and attitudes are consumers preferences but having a positive attitude is one thing and buying a product is another. Attitudes influence purchase intentions and these might impact behaviour. This complex relationship is studied in the following thesis within the research question (RQ): How do consumer attitudes toward medical skin care affect the CJ within an international context?
To narrow it down, there are three sub questions, the first one deals with the definition of attitudes the second one deals with the impact of consumer attitudes of medical skin care on the CJ and the last one analyses this aspect within an international context.

[1] MAXQDA is a software developed by VERBI that enables computer-assisted and qualitative data analysis (MAXQDA, 2019).

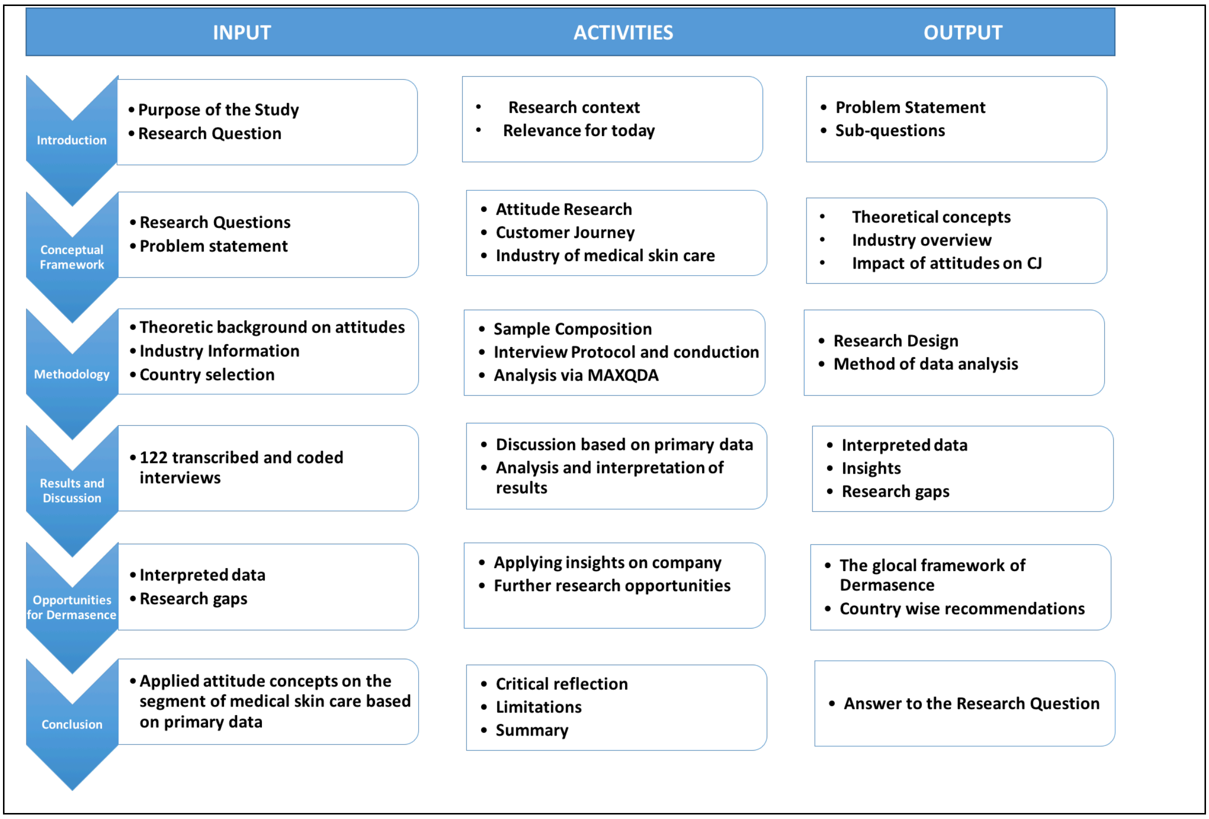
RQ1: What are consumer attitudes?

RQ2: How do consumer attitudes towards medical skin care affect the CJ?

RQ3: What are global similarities and national differences of consumer attitudes towards medical skin care?

Figure 2 demonstrates the research process of the following study and how this bachelor thesis is structures. The first RQ will be addressed in the second chapter. The conceptual framework deals with the study of attitudes, the definition, formation, function and attitude strength (Figure 2). The second RQ will be explained through providing the concept of customer journey as a marketing tool and introducing the industry segment of medical skincare. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the primary research diving the effect of attitudes into the single stages of the CJ. The international context will be analysed on the basis of 122 interviews in three international markets. The national differences are demonstrated in the results and advantages are outlined within the opportunities for Dermasence. The answers of all three RQs are summarised in the conclusion considering all concepts of the secondary research and the primary data.

Figure 2: Research Process



Source: Own graphic

1.3 Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis with the purpose of the study and today's relevance. The subject of the study will be provided to give an overview of the following sections.

Chapter 2 aims to focus on previous research done on attitudes, their formation process and attitude strength. A brief explanation on the CJ is provided to support a full conceptual framework aims to give insights on consumer attitudes and the formation process. The last part introduces the industry segment of medical skin care and provides an outlook for each of the selected countries.

Chapter 3 the research methodology will be explained in order to understand the analysis of the conducted interviews. The sample composition as well as the structure of the questionnaire will be outlined. Furthermore, the primary research process will be quickly summarised and the tools for the data analysis will be stated.

Chapter 4 involves the results of the study and a discussion. The outcomes of the 122 Interviews of the three countries will be compared and analysed on the basis of the literature review. The dissonance of attitude and behaviour is analysed based on the primary research.

Chapter 5 identifies opportunities and suggestions for Dermasence. This part will include recommendations according to the glocalisation framework and outline country wise suggestions. The potential for further research by applying this research approach to different countries will be presented as well as the advantage of a further in-depth investigation of the selected countries.

Chapter 6 summarises the main aspects and findings of the thesis and critically reflects the overall goal. Limitations of the study will be outlined and further research opportunities regarding the internationalisation of P&M Cosmetics' brand Dermasence will be suggested.

2 Conceptual Framework

The second section deals with the conceptual framework concerning the definition of an attitude and attitude formation. According to Solomon (2018, p.286) an attitude consists of three main components: affect, cognition and behaviour. Another question is the order of these three components to find out whether the attitude is based on feelings, knowledge or the action itself. The differences in the sequential order will be analysed based on the hierarchies of effects. The concept of a customer journey will be introduced and the impact of attitudes on each stage will be roughly explained. The last part of the conceptual framework deals with the industry of medical skin treatment.

2.1 Attitudes

2.1.1 Definition

In order to fully understand the effects of consumer attitudes on the CJ, it is necessary to define the complex concept of an attitude. There are many different definitions of what an attitude is, differing mainly in the temporal aspect if attitudes are lasting or not. The most common definition was developed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.1) as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour".

Attitudes are generally defined by attitude researchers as lasting judgements (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.2; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, p.889) because they tend to endure (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p. 23; Solomon, 2018, p.285). Albarracin, Johnson, Kumkale, & Zanna (2005, p.6) argue that attitudes do not necessarily have to be stable, they can change temporarily due to specific events or situations. A stable attitude is retrieved from long-term memory under a classification whether or not it is a positive or negative evaluation. This retrieval depends on the frequency, the function and strength of the attitude and the consumer's goal (Alsmadi, 2008, p.439). However, attitudes are not just restricted to memory, they are judgements and may be influenced by context effects caused by temporarily available information (Albarracin et al., 2005, p.4). The information can be deliberately processed or is stored as a spontaneous association (Alsmadi, 2008, p.439). An attitude is always an evaluation (Fishbein, 1963, p.234) of a concept, a person, an object or an issue. Any of these things towards which individuals may have an attitude, is labeld as an attitude object (A_o) (Solomon, 2018, p.283). Preferences for or against an A_o can describe the relation between the individual and the A_o (Jhangiani, Tarry, & Stangor, 2014, p.168). During the last decade, attitude researchers went further away from the focus on cognitive information processing more directing towards a contextualised approach which explains the attitude formation process and changes within the social environment (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.322). The most recent definition focuses purely on the evaluative aspect of an attitude which can be either positively or negatively categorised (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.300). A significant discovery in attitude research fo the last decade has been the division of attitudes into three categories: the attitude can be directly connected to an individual human being, attitudes can be in context with social relationships or the third point are external factors (economic, political, legal, environmental etc.) (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.299)

2.1.2 Attitude Formation

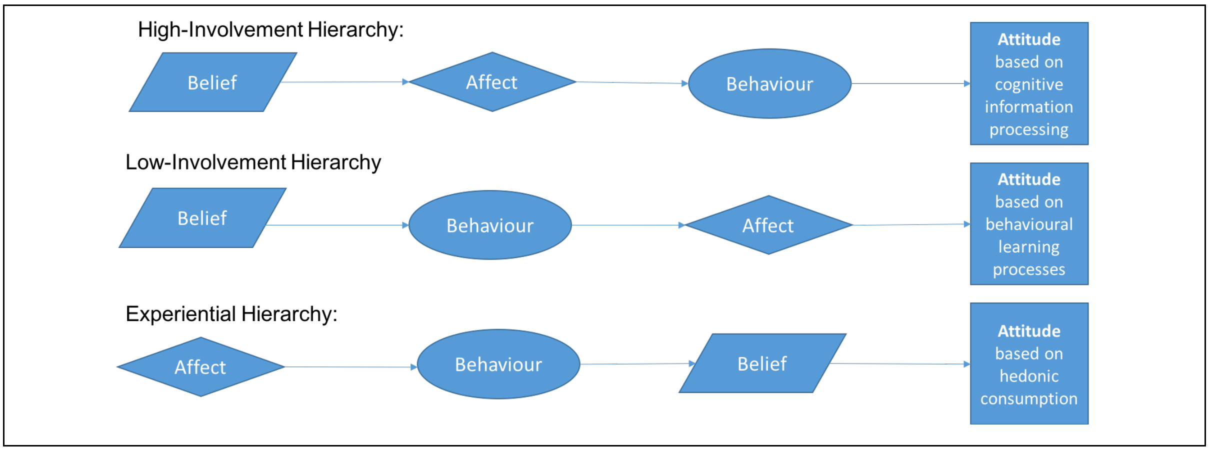
Attitudes consist of three basic components: affect, behaviour and cognition. Affect concerns how the consumer is feeling towards an A_o and the emotional reaction, behaviour are the actions and cognition describes the accumulated knowledge which form a belief (Solomon, 2018, p.286). This concept is also known as the ABC-Model (Solomon, 2018, p.286).

Cognition involves attributes as awareness, attention, comprehension and learning (Ray, 1973, p.4) as well as beliefs. (Perner, 2018). According to Fishbein (1963, p.234) „all beliefs contain an evaluative aspect“, whereas Perner (2018) argues, beliefs can be neutral or even depend on the situation whether they are positive or negative. A belief is based on what the individual person believes to be true. Beliefs are shaped by subjective knowledge so they can be verified or falsified in contrast to attitudes (Albarracin et al., 2005, p.4). The cognitive component consists of the acquired knowledge which is a combination of direct experiences and perceptions about the A_o and external information by second sources (Berg, Manstead, Pligt, & Wigboldus, 2006, p.375).

People are usually unconscious of their attitudes (Allen, Machleit, Kleine, & Notani, 2005, p.498) but each action an individual takes may affect the attitude based on that behavioural experience (Strack & Deutsch, 2004, p.221). However, attitudes may differ depending on the order of these three basic components (Berg et al., 2006, p.374). The hierarchies of communication effects explain the different formation processes of attitudes (Ray, 1973, p.3). Krugman (1966, p.583) was the first to differentiate communication processes based on the level of involvement. He stated that the human brain links automatically the content of a stimulus as for example an advertisement with subjective experiences the individuals made in life. According to Krugman (1966, p.584) involvement is defined as the amount of connections of personal experienced situations and a "persuasive stimulus" within one minute. This definition implies that low involvement occurs when an individual is processing an impulse with hardly any link to its own experiences in the past.

Since the brain connects the context of personally experienced situations to the convincing advertisement automatically, there is always some level of involvement but the more relationships are linked within a minute, the more aware is the individual of the advertisement (Krugman, 1966, p.596).

Figure 3: Three Hierarchies of Effect



Source: Own graphic, adapted from: (Solomon, 2018, p.287)

The high-involvement hierarchy, also known as Standard Learning Hierarchy, describes the knowledge-based attitude formation process (Solomon, 2018, p.286). Consumers build their attitude towards an A_o based on cognitive processes and will develop feelings towards it. According to a positive or negative affect, they will behave and buy the product or service.

The high-involvement hierarchy can be compared with a problem-solving process (Solomon, 2018, p.286). Consumers have needs (problems) they want to satisfy (solve) and when an influencing stimulus approaches them during the conscious or unconscious research phase, they can actively process the given information within the context of their needs (Solomon, 2018, p.286). The consumers are highly involved in this process though forming their attitudes based on what they learned. Thoughts on the information gained through the research phase can lead the path to a strongly held attitude (Godek, Priester, Nayakankuppam, & Fleming, 2004, p.574). High involvement usually occurs with expensive products in the early stages of their product life cycle (PLC) (Ray, 1973, p.2).

The low involvement hierarchy is based on behavioural learning because the consumer directly acts after the limited cognitive information process. The buying decision depends on previous knowledge but does not involve an information research phase (Solomon, 2018, 287). The affect towards the product is evaluated afterwards in contrast to the high involved process whereas the act of buying is the last step. Most buying decision involve the low involvement hierarchy which significantly decreases the communication of product information through advertisements for these buying processes because consumers will only use their accumulated knowledge (beliefs) without processing the new information on the products (Solomon, 2018, p.287). A lack of motivation to search for information in order to gain knowledge on the product leads to an associative decision (Godek et al., 2004, p.575). Consumers are more likely to chose a brand or a product whereby they associate a positive attribute (Godek et al., 2004, p.575). Due to the missing knowledge and lack of importance, these products will only be chosen when they occasionally come to mind without searching or when consumers are directly confronted and remember the positive aspect and decide. These buying decisions depend stronger on external factors as environment and direct sourrounding of the consumer (Van Dalen, Vreese, & AlbÆk, 2017, p.112).

Whenever the buying decision is triggered by feelings only, the attitude is based on the intrinsic and extrinsic values of the product. Experimental hierachy is characterised by hedonic motivations as packaging, design, advertising or simply well-known brand names (Solomon, 2018, p.287). The products are mainly in the early maturity of the PLC. Since the consumer is emotionally involved, personal selling plays a major role to impress the consumer even though the products seem similar (Ray, 1973, p.2).

To summarize, attitudes consist out of the interrelationship of knowing (cognition) feeling (affect) and doing (behaviour). Each of these parameters have a reciprocal affect on attitudes aswell (Albarracin et al., 2005, p.7).

2.1.3 Multiattribute Model of Attitudes

Fishbein (1963, p.233) defined an attitude as an „evaluative dimension of a concept“ and a belief as the „probability dimension of a concept“. Referring to these definitions, an attitude can be either positive or negative towards an A_o whereas a belief concerns the probability that an A_o is linked to a specific characteristic (Albarracin et al., 2005, p.4).

Beliefs can be held in the existence of an A_o or about an A_o (Fishbein, 1963, p.236). Fishbein (1963, p.235) states that attitudes can be predicted through knowing all the beliefs an individual holds towards an A_o. Therefore, he developed a multiattribute attitude model to summarise all beliefs and weight their importance. A belief in this case is the result of all cognitive processes about an A_o which leads to the general perception of it (Albarracin

& Shavitt, 2018, p.304). Fishbein's equation (1963, p.233) involves different attributes which are characteristics of the A_o. These attributes have a different priority for the consumer and have to be weightened accordingly. Attitudes can be predicted with this formula by assuming that beliefs play a key role in the evaluation of A_o (Solomon, 2018, 296).

Equation 1: Multiattribute Model of Attitudes

$$A_\mathrm{b} = \sum\nolimits_{i=1}^{n} W_i X_{ib}$$

Source: Fishbein, 1963, p.233

A_b = Attitude towards the A_o
W_i= Personal belief of probability that the A_o has a specific attribute or characteristic
X_{ib} = Personal evaluation of the A_o
n = Number of beliefs

According to Fishbein (1963, p.234), each belief has to contain a valence whereas Perner (2018) states that beliefs can differ in the evaluation depending on the situation or be neutral. According to the formula, the stronger the belief, the more impact it has on that belief on the attitude. Referring to the ABC-Model, Fishbein (1963, p.234) included cognition and affect but not behaviour in his formula to predict an attitude. The beliefs in his formula represent the cognitive element and the personal evaluation of the A_o describe the affect towards it. Behaviour is not directly involved in the attitude formation according to Fishbein (1963, p. 238) but after applying the formula to predict the attitude, the behaviour can be assumed. Critics of Fishbein's Model point out that a prediction of an individual's behaviour according to his formula relies heavily on the principle of consistency (Bettman, Capon, & Lutz, 1975). All human beings have the need to maintain consistent in all thoughts, attitudes, behaviours and feelings (Solomon, 2018, p.290). When a new experience is contrary to an individual's beliefs, the person is likely to change something in order to maintain harmony. According to the dissonance theory, negative feelings resulting from dissonance are reduced by internal drivers to regain consistency.
In reality, behaviour and attitudes of individuals are not always consistent (Solomon, 2018, p.176) which disproves the behaviour prognoses on behalf of an individual's attitude.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1977, p.891) developed a newer version of the multiattribute attitude model: The theory of reasoned action. Social pressure is included as a normative influence and the model differentiates between different levels of attitude strength This newer model emphasises the complexity of attitudes through adding subjective norms and increases the predictability (Solomon, 2018, p.298). Norms can guide behaviour through influencing an individual's attitude (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.306).
Furthermore, descriptive beliefs have the biggest impact on an individual's attitude because they are defining the existence of the A_o and therefore directly concern the object. Other types of beliefs only indirectly concern the object as for example beliefs about the connection of the object to its environment (Fishbein, 1963, p.234).

Affect refers to the feelings consumers hold towards a brand or a product. These feelings can be independent, e.g. a person is an environmentalist but has a positive affect towards airplanes because of the destinations, or based on beliefs e.g. a vegetarian feels sickening thinking about meat (Perner, 2018). The experience of affects can be expressed through emotions or mood (Shiv, 2007). People want to believe that their choices are made rationally but many decisions are based on affect (Perner, 2018). According to Shiv (2007, p.175), our behaviour is driven by our feelings, positive affect leans individuals to proactive behaviour whereas negative affect is counterproductive towards behaviour. However, appealing consumers' emotions to scare them enough that they behave but not to evoke too much fear; may increase persuasion (Perner, 2018). Affect plays a major role in the attitude formation process and is also a reason for attitude change (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.24). Attitude change can result out of three major reasons: being insecure with oneself, social pressure and conditional attitude change thorugh reward and punishment (Wood, 2000, p.539). These motives are all closely related to the consumer's emotions and the self-esteem. Wood (2000, p.562) underlines that attitudes are emebedded in social interactions and would not work without them. Therefore, the theory of reasoned action is necessary as attitudes are dependent on social sourroundings and the level of resistence and change is closely related to any complex social contexts.

Behaviour describes all actions consumers take or what they intend or are willing to do (Albarracin et al., 2005, p.10). There close reltionship between behaviour and intention according to Ajzen & Fishbein (1977, p.888). As previous research has shown, attitudes have similarly an impact on behaviour as well as reciprocal. Therefore, an attitude is a factor of behaviour and intentions of individual's are influenced by their attitudes towards performing the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, p.903). One approach regarding the reciprocal relation between beahviour and attitude contains the principle of consistency (Basil & Herr, 2006, p.397) but the dissonance of consumer attitudes and their behaviour has to be considered as a limitation. All in all, multiattribute attitude models can predict attitudes with limitations and restrictions but the person's attitude can not necessarily predict the behaviour due to the inconsistency between attitude and behaviour (Solomon, 2018, p.301). The relation between an individual's attitude and its behaviour is affected by social norms (Cooper, Kelly, & Weaver, 2001, p.260)

2.1.4 The Function of Attitudes

The attitude formation process is based on the function the attitude serves for the consumer (Solomon, 2018, p.285). Katz (1960, p.170) was the first to look into the functional approach of attitudes and developed four basic functions: adjustment, ego defence, value expression, and knowledge. He explained these functions as the reasons for holding attitudes and attitude change (Katz, 1960, p.163.) The four functions of attitudes can be separated into two groups: the internal needs of an individual (ego-defensive and knowledge) and the external surrounding (adjustment and value expression) (McLeod, 2018). Different attitudes are evoked by different motivational trigger depending on the function. During the formation process of an attitude, feelings can be triggered by specific situations and the attitude will serve the function according to the feelings of the person (Katz, 1960, p.164). Additionally, attitudes may change when they have to serve a different function within a new context (Katz, 1960, p.173).

The function to adjust or adapt oneself is linked to the basic need of individuals to belong somewhere and being accepted by society (McLeod, 2018). This psychological function is also called instrumental or utilitarian function and appeals to the constant striving for reward and avoiding negative circumstances (Solomon, 2018, p.285). There are two different types of social influence, informational and normative. Informational social influence refers to the observation and obtaining information on the behaviour of others in order to determine your own attitude (Cooper et al., 2001, p.261). The desire to comply with social norms and being part of society is called normative social influence and is affecting the formation process of an attitude (Cooper et al., 2001, p.262)

The ego-defensive function refers to defense mechanisms. Attitudes are developed to protect oneself of unpleasant realities or justify actions that evoke guilt (McLeod, 2018). This defense mechanism can be triggered by threats or respression of feelings and by removal of the threat, attitudes can change (Katz, 1960, p.163).

Individuals seek to form a social identity.Therefore, the value that indicate the social identity the individual wants to be perceived by others is reinforced (Solomon, 2018, p.291) .Value expression serves as a communicative function, using fitting attitudes to reinforce basic values. The communicaton factor can be verbal as well as non-verbal (e.g. wearing caps or hats, or slogans) (McLeod, 2018).

The knowledge aspect of the functional approach to the study of attitudes refers to the desired consistency and order of individuals. A_o are understood depending on the individual's subjective knowledge and perspective (McLeod, 2018). The need of control can be satisfied by knowledge whereby experiences can be organised and stability and clarity are provided (Solomon, 2018, p.285). The knowledge function enables the prediction of behaviour through knowing another person's attitude (Katz, 1960, p.170).

2.1.5 Attitude Strength

Attitudes can be more or less important depending on the relevance of the attitude to a person. Attitude strenght describes the level of committment concerning an evaluation (Jhangiani et al., 2014, p.172). Attitudes which are based on reward and punishment involve a weak level of commitment because they are only a reaction to a stimulus. These attitudes include a high probability to change as soon as the reward and punishment system does not apply anymore or the behaviour of the person is not monitored anymore (Solomon, 2018, p.285). If the attitude functions as adaptation (Chapter 2.4), it may be necessary to have a strong opinion of the attitude in order to belong to a group and develop a social identity. In this case, the attitude gains in importance and the person's behaviour is more likely to be influenced by the strong attitude (McLeod, 2018). The longer the attitude is hold, the stronger and more resistant to change it gets (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.25). Deep attitudes with the highest level of comitment are based on a strong value system and are difficult to change (Solomon, 2018, p.289). A strongly held attitude emerges from the motivation to research on information about the A_o which encourages an intensive cognitive process. Referring to the hierarchies of effect, an attitude which is based on cognitive information processing through the standard learning hierarchy is more likely to grow to a convincing and important attitude (Godek et al., 2004, p.581).

Attitude strength can be measured by the pace of changing the attitude towards an A_o (Godek et al., 2004, p.575). Weak attitudes can be abandoned quickly and consumers can be convinced more easily (Solomon, 2018, p.289).

When an individual favours a specific brand, this brand is more likely to be considered but if the individual not just likes the brand but links it additional to a strongly positive attitude, this brand is more likely to be part of the consideration set than another favourable brand that is linked to a weaker positively held attitude (2004, p.578). Attitude strength is related to the permanence of attitudes which is wildly discussed in literature (Chapter 2.1). The degree to which an attitude is stable and cannot be influenced or affect by external factors, the attitude is stronger and more involved (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.24).

Since a product is more likely to be chosen when already in the consideration set, attitude strength is influencing the buying decision. To summarise, the probability to consider a product depends on the strength of the attitude towards the A_o because attitude strength can moderate the impact on consideration of the positive or negative evaluation (Godek et al., 2004, p.578).

Celebrity endorsement is one one-way communication method commonly used by companies to reinforce their brand awareness and persuade potential customers to buy their brand or product (Mittal, 2017, p.17). Nowadays, 22% of brand awareness is gained through celebrity endorsement (Shahbandeh, 2019; Appendix A). According to the balance theory, celebrity endorsement is only effective whenever the character fits to the culture and philosophy of the company (Basil & Herr, 2006, p.391). Celebrities or influencer can be a driver or motive for consumers as the marketing campaign is using an appeal approach to stimulate impulsive buying decision and appeal to the consumers emotions (Solomon, 2018, p.308). The company wants to communicate that their customers can be and feel the same as the celebrity when they choose their product but the right fit is essential when using this approach. If the character fits to the company and the individual favours the celebrity, a positive held attitude towards a brand is strengthened and purchase intentions are influenced positively (Mittal, 2017, p.18).

2.2 Customer Journey Approach

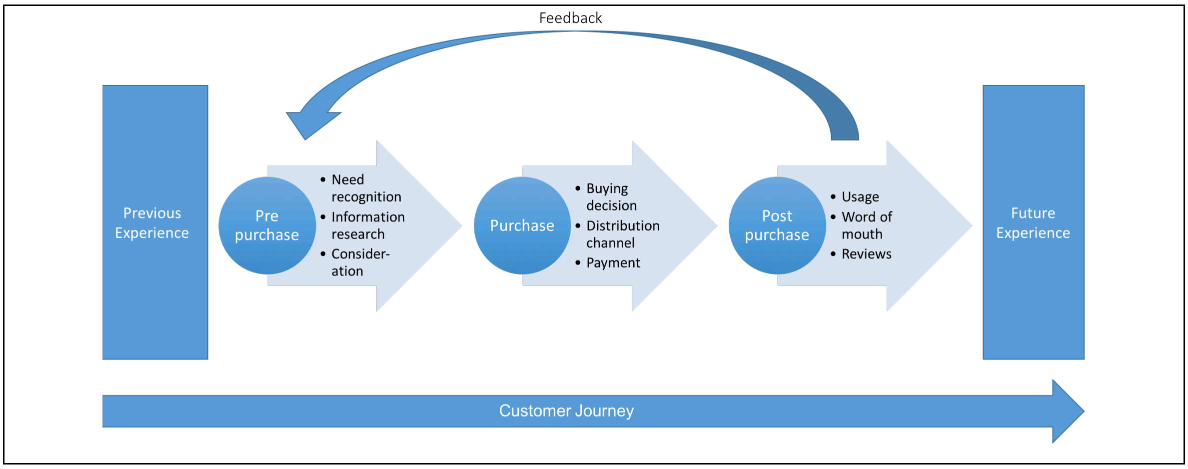
2.2.1 Customer Journey as a Marketing Tool

Customer journey can be viewed out of a company's perspective whereas the first phase is concerned with the fit of the customer to their target market and evaluated how to approach the customer (Fisher Gardial, Clemons, Woodruff, Schumann, & Burns, 1994). In this thesis the CJ will be considered out of the customer's perspective.

The concept of a CJ is gaining an importance nowadays (Venkatesan, 2017, p.289) as the economy is consumer centred and focusing on user experience (PwC, 2019). The basic approach divides the path of the customer from noticing a need to the satisfaction and use into three stages: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. The pre-purchase stage includes awareness of the need and consideration of different solutions. When considering brands, the first consideration set involves only the brands the consumer is aware of and has already an opinion about. In the research process the potential customer includes new brands into his consideration and forms new attitudes about these products and brands (Court, Elzinga, Mulder, & Vetvik, 2009, p.99). The purchase stage includes the actual buying process. Crucial questions that need to be considered during this stage are the location and reason of the customer buying the product and the distribution channel he is using (Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015, p.105). When deciding on a specific product of a specific brand, there are still many questions to answer. The consumer has to decide where the product should be bought (online or offline) which payment method (cash or card) or when the action should take place. All these questions are correlated to each other, some consumers might prefer to have the product directly and will therefore use an offline shop and go or drive there and pay with cash. Others might not have cash at the moment and pay by card or they do not want to leave the house and order the product online and wait for it to arrive through home delivery (Keller & Ott, 2019, p. 256).

The post-purchase is the last step and it is important to consider that the approach of a CJ does not end with the satisfaction of the need by buying a solution and using it, the disposal and advocacy are an relevant part which lead to the feedback loop to start the next journey (Figure 3). Through positive feedback by word of mouth or online reviews, the next customer is triggered to consider the brand or the product which demonstrates the circular loop of the customer journey concept (Plottek & Herold, 2018, p.144). The feedback loop includes loyal customers; the loyalty of a customer can be predicted by measuring customer engagement (Keller & Ott, 2019, p.55).

Figure 4: The Customer Journey



Source: Own graphic, Information by Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.77

2.2.2 Impact of Attitudes on CJ

The customer journey is a method to study the customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.69). The experience of the customer are the accumulated perceptions of all touchpoints (Keller & Ott, 2019, p.141).

Hierarchies of effect are directed to the awareness stage or pre-purchase of CJ as they describe how attitudes are formed. This process can occur in the pre-purchase stage, if the attitude towards a brand or product is not already pre-set (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.34). The pre-purchase stage is driven by beliefs about products and brands, some prejudice and new information that has to be processed and transformed. This stage is crucial to the attitude formation process and attitude change for brands that are already in the awareness set.

The buying decision occurs in the purchase stage (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.73) and is affected by internal and external factors. The internal factors concern the direct situational aspects that have to be considered (Strack & Deutsch, 2004, p.226) but the buying decision is also influenced by the external environment (Van Dalen et al., 2017, p.112). If the political situation is not stable, the crime rate is extremly high or the weather is simply bad, the customer might use a different channel of distribution in order to stay at home or even chose not to buy the product. This phenomenon, discovered by Van Dalen et al. (2017, p.122), underlines the complexity of the decision making process.

The actual choice differs from the "willingness to pay" as choice is usually connected with luxury goods but consumers are more willing to spend money on commodity goods (O'Donell & Evers, 2018, p.1315). This phenomenon proves the contradiction of behaviour and attitude in the purchase stage, as consumers might prefer one product over the other but are not willin got pay for this product.

Marketers constantly try to persuade potential buyers of their product through different means of communication. One way communication as advertisng, PR (public relations) and sales promotion are normally used to get to the mass market and two way communication as direct marketing is targeting niche segments for products that need an explanation (Centeno & Hart, 2012, p.255).

The attitude in the post-purchase stage relies mainly on affect, whether or not the customer liked the product while using it and if it is stored as a positive or negative experience. According to this direct experience brand loyalty might emerge (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.76). Brand loyalty is reduced by dissatisfaction and negative experiences in the contact and communication with the brand (Rotte, Chandrashekaran, & Tax, 2006, p.284). The longer the relationship between the customer and the company, the higher expectations each customer has and the more likely they are to be dissatisfied. (Rotte et al., 2006, p.290). After being dissatisfied, customers get insecure and uncertain about the trustworthiness of the brand and therefore loyalty decreases (Rotte et al., 2006, p.289). Attitude influence the post-purchase stage not just through brand loyalty but also spreading their positive or negative attitude towards the brand and product based on the experience. Word of mouth (WOM) is a commonly used term to describe the communication from one consumer to another consumer about the usage and elements of a product (Consiglio, Angelis, & Costabile, 2018, p.512). Consumer's behaviour is influenced by WOM significantly and in order to control or support the spread of favourable information of product characteristics, it is essential to know when and why WOM occurs. Consiglio et al. (2018, p.511) proved the positive relationship of social density on WOM. Therefore, companies could directly target their direct marketing personally adapted to the level of social density according to the location of the customer or potential customer (Consiglio et al., 2018, p.522). Timing is crucial in order to be the first instead of other competitors to persuade the customer. WOM remains a major driver for product choice (Solomon, 2018, p.421) but Shen & Sengupta (2018, p.595) proved in their research that oral WOM has a greater impact on purchase intention than written WOM.

2.3 Industry of Medical Skin Care

Dermasence is situated in the skin treatment segment of the pharmaceutical market for OTC (over-the-counter) products; products that can be purchased without a medical transcription (Brinckmann, 2019, p.2). These OTC products have caring intentions and have to be explained in order to apply them in the right way. In 2018, the skin treatment segment reached 16% of the OTC Pharmaceuticals revenue with an amount of 18 billion US dollars and is expected to grow continuously (Brinckmann, 2019, p.2; Appendix A). The medical skin care sector is expected to increase the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 2% worldwide until 2023. The sales in Europe will increase with 1.7% CAGR in Europe and even 2.6% in South America which shows a huge potential. (Brinckmann, 2019, p.3). The follwoing section will outline main skin conditions focusing on acne, present global trends in the industry, and show a market outlook of the French, Spanish and Colombian market potential for Dermasence.

2.3.1 Skin Conditions

Medical skin care covers skin diseases as dermatitis, eczema, erythema, rosacea, ageing skin and acne (Brinckmann, 2019, p.3). The research focuses only on the acne and oily skin conditions segment in order to get more reliable information than targeting all skin conditions. 94% of the population are affected by acne (Tan & Bhate, 2015, p.3), whereupon it is one of the most common skin disorders globally (EffeMarket, 2018). This specific skin disease can affect the emotional and psychological state of the patient (EffeMarket, 2018) and lead to social issues, anxiety or even depression (Tan & Bhate, 2015, p.8). Acne is most commonly affecting teenagers and young adults (Tan & Bhate, 2015, p.3), whereupon the target segment of this study ranges from 14 until 42 years with an overall average of 21 years. The target segment is narrowed down to acne and oily skin conditions which still differ in severity. Attitude strength depends on the stability of the relation to the $A_{o,}$ in other words the importance the A_o has for the consumer (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.24). In this case, a consumer might be more willing to pay for a medical skin care product which helps to solve severe acne than just one pimple.

2.3.2 Global Trends

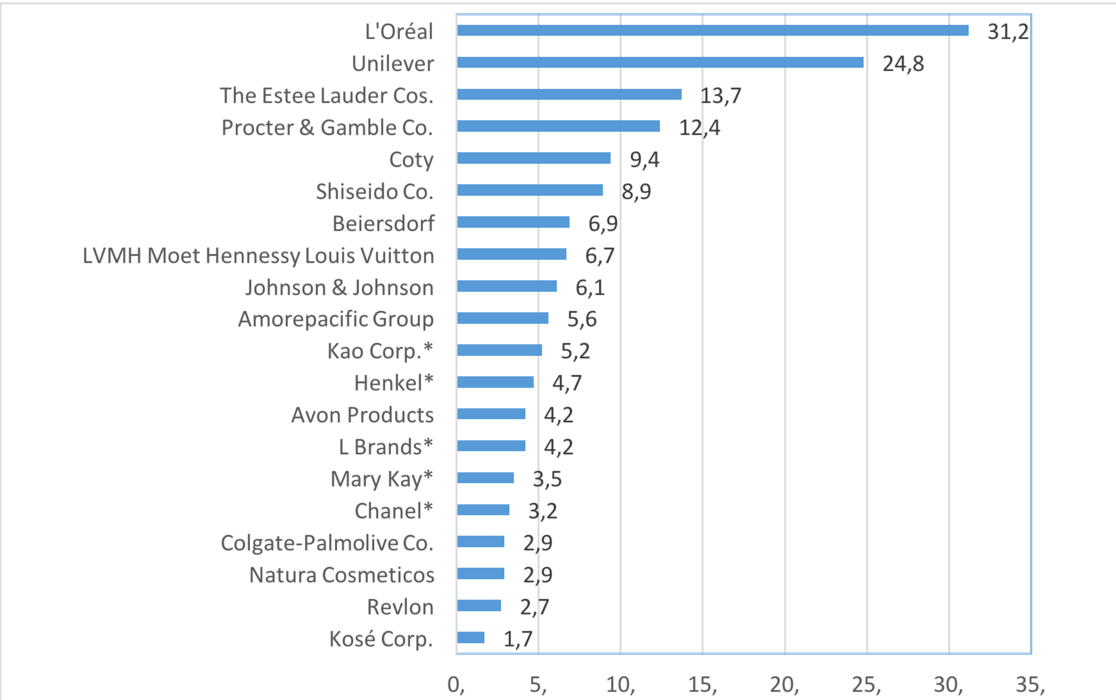
The market is driven by the importance of healthy skin and natural ingredients (Roberts & Villena, 2019) including healthy lifestyles and prevention of skin diseases (Barbalova, 2018). The demand for sun protection, facial cleanser and moisutisers is growing since prevention counts as a priority (Barbalova, 2018). The market can be divided into the mass segment which represents 72% of total sales and 28% account for the premium segment in which Dermasence is located (Barbalova, 2018). Dermasence' sales potential in the international market relies on their high quality products that are manufactured in Germany. A major challenge for Dermasence is the adaptation of their marketing mix due to the diverse attitudes, cultures and consumption differences of consumers across the world.

Non-western beauty trends will continue to gain influence (Shahbandeh, 2019). According to Barbalova (2018), South Korea will stay an inspiration globally with its beauty trends in the next years.

The majority of skin care products are sold through drugstores, supermarkets and pharmacies (online and retail pharmacies) (Brinckmann, 2019, p.4).Through the increasing digitalisation, middlemen can be eliminated in more and more industries as well as in the segment of medical skintreatment. The amount of pharmacies is reduced by 30% in Germany. Only 19.423 pharmacies are left which is the lowest level since 1980 (Brandt, 2019). The european standard are 23 pharmacies for 100.000 people at the moment (Brandt, 2019). This leads to an industry disruption caused by the internet which provides access to information; people do not depend on advice, they are enabled to find out more about the product by their own research (Girdwichai, Chanprapaph, & Vachiramon, 2018, p.46). This threatenes pharmacies in the market but provides also opportunities to give advice concerning trustworthy websites and channels that consumers do not get misleading information and trust everything on the internet they read which could be written by anyone. Dermatologists could provide their own web pages with information on skin disorders in order to provide information by certified doctors and pharmacists.

The consumer products industry is concentrated as the industry is shaped by many large companies. Firms increase their profitability by operating efficient, product innovation and using effective marketing (Global Edge, 2020). These global players include L'Oréal, Unilever, Estee Lauder Cos etc. All these big companies include medical skin care products next to their diverse offer of cosmetic products. La-Roche-Posay is the main medical skin treatment brand of L'Oréal as is Eucerin of Beiersdorf (Shahbandeh, 2019). The digital disruption impacts this industry as well through an increasing number of competitors due to the constant growing of new local and regional companies as well as new alternative business models and start-ups in the industry (Szalai, 2017).

Figure 5: Leading Brands in the Skin Care Market 2019

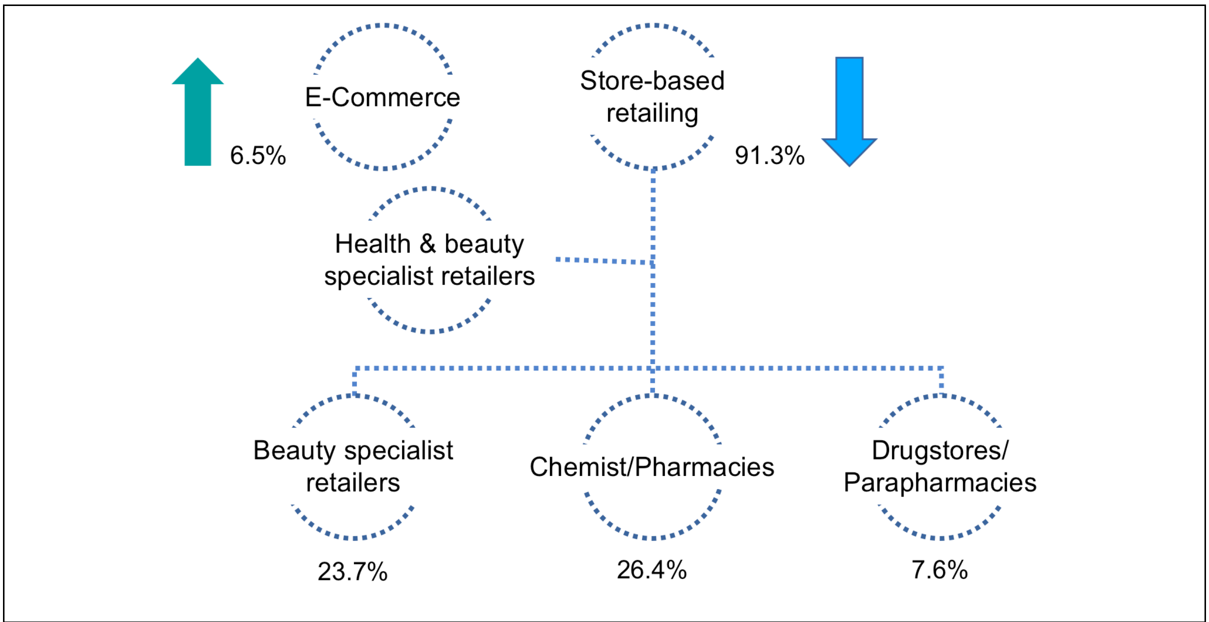


Source: Own graphic, Information by: Shahbandeh, 2019; retrieved from Statista

2.3.3 Market Outlook France

France encompasses a revenue of US$ 4,114,14m in the skin care market (Statista, 2019). The population in France increased steadily until reaching 65,273,511 (United Nations, 2020). 48% of the French population are male and 52% female. The primary study of this thesis targeted mostly the 15-24-year-old segment which represent 12% of the French population. The potential target market for Dermasence are the 15-54-year-old French that are in total 31,958,936 people. The country encompasses 119 km^2 and has a slightly lower gross domestic product (GDP) per capita than Germany with US$ 45,775 (International Monetary Fund, 2019). The French population is following the Japanese and Korean beauty trends and there are more and more natural, vegan and organic products being sold (Kestenbaum, 2018). They are locally oriented and prefer national brands as nine of the top ten leading skin care brands are all originally founded in France (Modor Intelligence, 2020b; Appendix B). Regarding the channel distribution, the e-commerce is rising in France with 6.5% and the 91.3% store-based retailing is currently decreasing. (Passport, 2020).

Figure 6: Channel Distribution France



Source: Passport, 2020

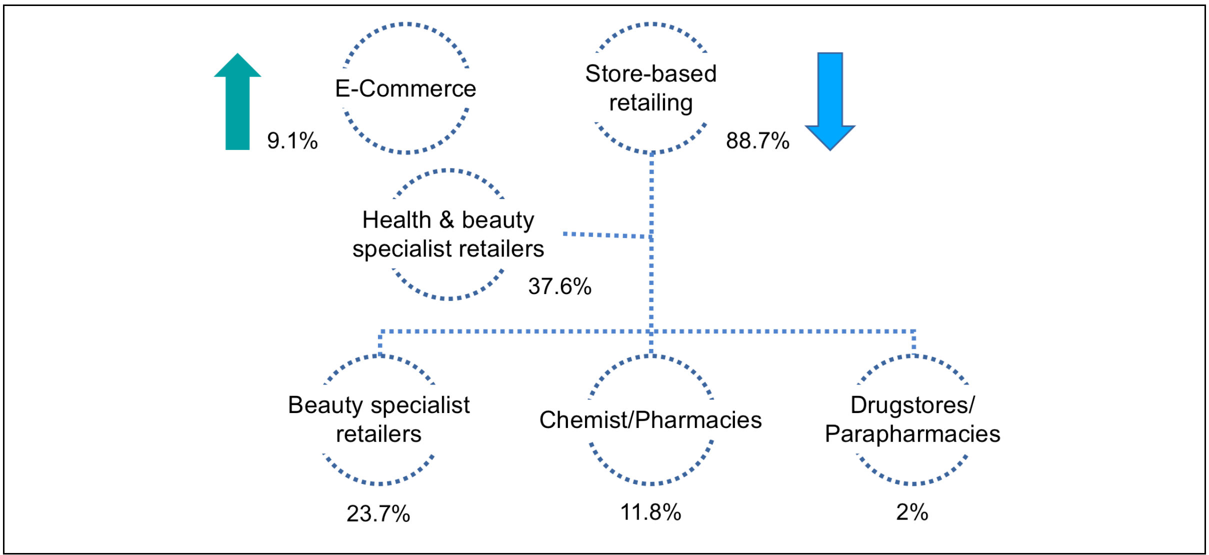
2.3.4 Market Outlook Spain

The second country is Spain with US$ 40,139 GDP per capita (International Monetary Fund, 2019). The population of 46,754,778 is split almost equally in 49% males and 51% females. The primary research focused on the target segment of 15-24 year old acne and oily skin patients which encompass 10% of the spanish population and the total potential market for Dermaence would include a total number of 4,494,032 consumers between 15 and 54 years.

In 2018, 28% of all sales in the cosmetics industry apply to the consumption of skin care products which are a total of US$1,955,97m revenue (Statista, 2019). The leading skin care brands in Spain are quite similar to the market leaders in France. Only one Spanish brand Deliplus own 10% market share but six following leading brands are French (Modor Intelligence, 2020b; Appendix B).

The e-commerce channel for skin care products is used the most of the three countries presented with 9.1% and is still growing (Passport, 2020).

Figure 7: Channel Distribution Spain



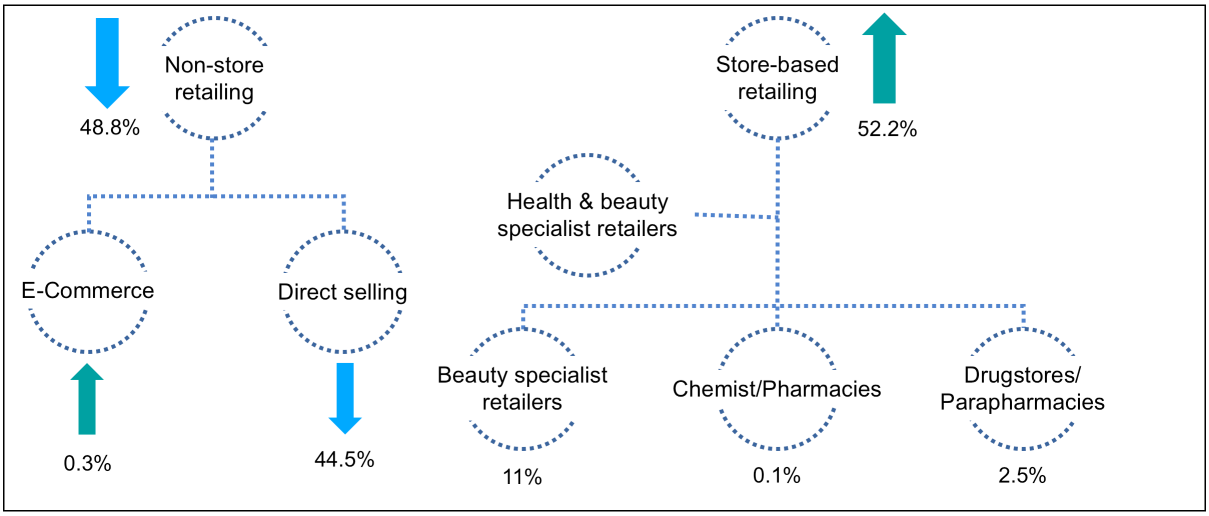
Source: Passport, 2020

2.3.5 Market Outlook Colombia

Colombia is a potential market due to the trend for organic and natural ingredients is rising and a great interest for European products exists (Unipymes, 2014). The target country is the third most populous country in Latin America with 50,882,891 people divided into 51% male and 49% female. The GDP per capita is with US$14,943 significantly lower than Spain and France. The major target group of this study is within 17% of the Colombians in the age of 15-24 but the potential target market for Dermasence encompasses 30,263,003 people. Nivea and La Roche-Posay are the two leading brands that are located under the top ten of all three countries. Additionally, some not european brands are dominating the Colombian skin care market (Modor Intelligence, 2020b; Appendix B).

Store–based retailing in Colombia is growing and the number of sales through pharmacies is less than 1% (Modor Intelligence, 2020a). The Colombian market is defined by direct selling approaches by major international companies with large market share. All local brands are pushed aside together with combined less than half of the market volume (Modor Intelligence, 2020a).

Figure 8: Channel Distribution Colombia



Source: Modor intelligence, 2020a

3 Research Methodology

The next section involves the methodological approaches used in order to design, conduct and analyse the research. In the first step, the interviews had to be prepared then, effective research questions were constructed and the last step was the implementation of the interviews.

3.1 Research Design and Process

The General Interview Guide Approach was used as an interview design in order to compare results but also to stay flexible during the interview. The questions were prepared but each interviewer could adapt these questions in order to get a more personal approach (Turner III, 2010, p.755). Open-ended questions were formulated to collect rich and qualitative data. Additionally, the questionnaire was translated into two languages, French and Spanish, to allow the participants to answer in their mother tongue. This approach allows follow-up questions to gain deep insights of the participants. The informal environment enabled a conversational atmosphere where the interviewer is able to ask questions based on the participants' answers to the pre-constructed questions. This allowed a very personal level that helped the participants to talk about their emotions concerning the topic of skin treatment.

The market research process is divided into different phases; the first step is the problem definition to know what information is needed to fulfil the objectives (Harrison, Cupman, Hague, & Truman, 2016, p.12). The next phase concerns the organisation of achieving the given objectives, the research design. This section covers the secondary and primary research whether it is qualitative or quantitative or both (Harrison et al., 2016, p.12). After the actual data collection, the data is analysed and needs to be reported or presented that actions on behalf of the market research can be taken (Harrison et al., 2016, p.13).

First stage is focusing on the task formulation which was in this case given by the objectives of the company. The research process included secondary research on the industry segment of medical skin treatment and the research tools needed. The primary research was prepared through literature review on the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative versus qualitative research, and the construction of qualitative questionnaires. Qualitative research is focusing on specific and detailed information (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013, p.3) which are needed to get close to the consumer and their attitudes in the segment of medical skin care. Additionally, the international markets were selected based on research and a qualitative approach was applied. After the conduction of 122 Interviews, a coding software and excel supported the data analysis phase. The last step involves the interpretation of the evaluated data and the presentation for the company to decide what they want to do with it.

3.2 Sample Composition

The composition is based on a convenience sample to support the qualitative approach with deep insights through a more comfortable atmosphere between the interviewees and the interviewer. A young target segment was chosen as the majority of persons suffering of acne are teenagers (Tan & Bhate, 2015, p.3).

Additionally to the skin condition, nationalities had to be specified for the target segment. Three different countries were selected: France, Spain and Colombia.
In France, 21 Interviews were conducted with participants out of five different cities (Paris, Grenoble, Lyon, Meylan and Marseille) in order to overcome regional biases (Harrison et al., 2016, p.164). The average age was 21 years, ranging from 19 until 27 years, and the median 20 years.
The second chosen country is Spain. The participants are spread in seventeen different Spanish cities and are 20 years old in average within the age range of 18 to 42 years.
53 Colombians were interviewed in the age range of 14 until 28 with an average age of 21 years. The participants are born in four different cities but over 80% come from Bogotá (Appendix D).

The majority of all participants (84%) are university students and financially depended on their parents.

3.3 Questionnaire Structure

The General Interview Guide Approach allows the interviewer to prepare a set of questions or an interview protocol to follow but the researcher retains the flexibility to change questions based on the response of the individual interviewee (Turner III, 2010, 755). The questionnaire (Appendix C) covers all parts of the customer journey and the five questions to gain insights on the buying decision of the customers: who, how, what, where and when (Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015, p.105). It is divided into the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase whereas the pre-purchase part is highlighted through questions on awareness, consideration and the visit of the dermatologist is included. The interview protocol helped to guide the interview into the right direction in contrast to a normal conversation (Belk et al., 2013, p.39).

The participants received information about the purpose and the content of the interview in order to be prepared for the topic (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016, p.452) and giving a right to privacy through asking for consent (Alsmadi, 2008, p.155). After the introduction, the questionnaire starts with demographical questions covering age, gender, origin and occupation. In order to get an insight on the personality of the participant, the next question demanded a description of the participant's lifestyle.

The second part of the interview focused on the current knowledge of medical skin treatment and the perspective on healthy skin. Asking about the personal importance of having healthy skin, aimed to gain insights on the consumer's attitudes towards the treatment and products. The protocol guided the interviewer to specifically ask the interviewee after his or her skin condition and his or her previous treatment and personal experience with it. If not mentioned by the participant, the comfort range while talking about the personal skin condition was asked to appeal to the participants emotions and measure the level of involvement.

The third part of the questionnaire contained the customer journey, split into pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase, the pre-purchase stage is split up again, into awareness and consideration, as it is the most affected stage by consumer attitudes. To understand the attitude-behaviour relationship, it is necessary to know the first action people take when noticing a skin disorder and how medical skin care products get their attention. The next questions contain the visit of the dermatologist and the emotional journey. Nowadays, the

internet impacts the information research for medical skin care a lot (Girdwichai et al., 2018, p. 46) whereupon one question concerns the individuals research process. To compare the national skin care trends, the consideration criteria and the budget are inquired. The purchase phase focuses on the channel distribution; the amount of online versus offline purchases and through which channel products are bought and why. It was asked where the products are bought and which channels are used (online/ offline) as the e-commerce is rising in all three countries (Passport, 2020). The majority of the target segment are positioned between 19-24 years whereupon one question aimed to find out about who is in charge of the actual purchase, the participant himself or the parents. Additional, one question specifically asks for brand names the participants prefer. The post-purchase stage involved brand loyalty among the customers and what it takes for them to change brands. This question aimed to provide knowledge on the national differences of attitude change which is necessary to switch from one brand to another (Wood, 2000, p.546).
The Interview protocol contains a product picture of Dermasence Phyto Clare, a sebum-reducing gel-cream for oily skin which is prone to acne. Getting their opinion regarding that product and reasons why they would buy or reject it might show the perception and attitude of the different nationalities towards the design of Dermasence.
Before starting the interviews, pre-tests were conducted in order to eliminate weaknesses and refine the research questions (Turner III, 2010, p.757). Some small adjustments were taken after the rest of the interviews was acquired.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

In order to evaluate and analyse the data of all the 122 interviews, they have been recorded and transcribed. A coding software called MAXQDA was used in order to organise the data. "MAXQDA is a software designed for qualitative research and mixed methods, for the analysis of texts and multimedia data in academic, scientific and commercial institutions" (MAXQDA, 2019). The aim is to gain insights of the data without influencing the interpretation of the content by the researchers. The software enables to process the data of the transcribed interviews and identify similarities through an own produced coding system. The codes and subcodes make it possible to evaluate the interviews qualitatively. The code tree was built based on the structure of the questionnaire and through the coding process additional codes were created next to the initial set in order to extract all the qualitative data provided. An additional code was created for all emotional aspects in order to build a customer journey map for each country (Appendix H) and lifestyle of the interviewees for the Buyer Persona (Appendix G). The statistical analysis of the demographical information was conducted through Excel. Biases were reduced by applying both secondary and primary research (Saunders et al., 2016, p.476).

4 Results and Discussion

The following part concentrates on the analysis and interpretation of the interviews. First of all, the attitude formation process of all interviewees will be analysed, based on the hierarchies of effect. Afterwards, the results are divided into the three stages of the customer journey: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. Furthermore, the perception of the Dermasence Product Phyto Clare will be discussed and in the end the general contradiction of attitude and behaviour.

4.1 Attitude Formation in Medical Skin Care

4.1.1 Attitude Formation of the Interviewees

The purpose of medical skin treatment is getting or keeping the skin healthy (P&M Cosmetics GmbH & Co. KG / Dermasence, 2018a). Consequently, potential customers for medical skin care products have to care for their skin and measure the level of importance of their own skin. For 91.8% of the interviewees having healthy skin is very important. Three major reasons for the importance were mentioned; the self-esteem (20%), the physical outer appearance and first impression (18%) and the actual state of health of your body (38%).

> *"I think the skin is reflecting our lifestyle, so a nice skin shows that you eat well and that you treat your body well and having a nice skin is also important for self-confidence! So, it's really important because it shows that you are taking care of a lot of things aside." (Interview 8, France).*

By analysing the interviews, it was clearly pointed out that most participants form their attitudes towards medical skin care on a high-involvement hierarchy. The interviewees seem to be involved by during information research before forming their consideration set and choosing a product. The attitude is cognition-based due to an existing "set of evaluative beliefs concerning an attitude object" (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.26).

Only 3% of all participants said they would not do any research and they prefer to go directly to a store or pharmacy and spontaneously decide what suits them (Interview: 5 (Colombia), 17 (Colombia), 1 (France), 14 (France), 19 (Spain)). This approach leads to an attitude based on behavioural learning (Chapter 2.2; Solomon, 2018, p.287). The low-involvement hierarchy occurs due to the lack of motivation, these interviewees are likely to accumulate their beliefs about the skin care products they know and decide based on these without processing any new information. The experiential hierarchy only came up twice, the participants claimed they only buy these products if they occasionally are in a store and see them not on purpose (Interview 13 France & 40 Colombia). This attitude towards skin care products is based on hedonic consumption and automatic processes (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.26) it should be mentioned that these interviewees described their skin issues as „not very serious“ (Interview 13, France).

As the targeted segment was in a young age range, the interviewees were asked who is actually in charge of buying the products: is it the mother or parents or is the person with the skin disorder purchasing the products by himself/ herself? 46% of all interviewees answers that their mother is buying the products for or with them and 54% said they would execute the purchase on their own. Concerning the attitude formation process, this complicates the situation as many young people are guided by the choices of their parents and are therefore not actually forming their own attitude but adapting someone else's attitude. Previous literature has proven that attitudes can be inherited through biological traits (Olson, Vernon, Harris, & Jang, 2001, p.859). The genetic relation does not mean these attitudes cannot be changed (Olson et al., 2001, p.846). Genetic characteristics can imply a high probability to form a specific attitude based on environmental factors closely connected to that characteristic.

4.1.2 Attitude towards the Dermasence Product

An interesting fact mentioned by the Colombian interviewees while seeing Dermasence Phyto Clare, was the aspect that the product was made in Germany. Some participants simply noticed the language and answered they would not buy a product they cannot understand but others argued they would buy the product "because of the brand, because I see that it is German and I think that's why it must be a quality product" (Interview 15, Colombia) or "I think that Made in Germany can be important because it is customary to see European countries as powers compared to Latin America" (Interview 39, Colombia). The country of origin (COO) has an effect on consumer's perception of the quality (Hong & Kang, 2006, p.232). If the country is associated with strong reliability of good quality and manufacturing skills, as Germany is, that has a positive impact on the consumer's evaluations and influences their purchase criteria (Hong & Kang, 2006, p.238). The COO can emphasise the product's features and stimulate the buying impulse of consumers (Hong & Kang, 2006, p.233).

Table 1: Perception of the Dermasence Phyto Clare

Interview 23, Colombia	*"It is a dermatological product, with the characteristics of a medical product, it seems to be full of chemicals, although it says it has natural components, looks very professional and has a dispenser so it looks easy to use."*
Interview 24, Spain	*"This product does not look bad, what happens is that I would not use it without the authorization of some pharmacist or doctor or dermatologist since I would not understand if as I should apply it, if it is good or for my skin type, if it can produce some allergic reaction to me, then I would ask before, since what I have already said to you that my mother is a pharmacist, always any product consulted it to her before applying it to me"*
Interview 40, Colombia	*"It gives me a lot of confidence. You can see that it is a non-daily product but rather focused on what is medically recommended, it does generate a lot of confidence and I would buy it."*
Interview 4, Colombia	*"It seems to me that it's a bit pharmaceutical because of the colours and the letters they use. It's a product that you see, and you say as: that needs a prescription."*
Interview 7, France	*"I like the packaging, it's quite pure. Then there is the name which looks scientific with a green leaf, so it looks eco-friendly and scientific. I can trust it, if I look up on Yuka."*

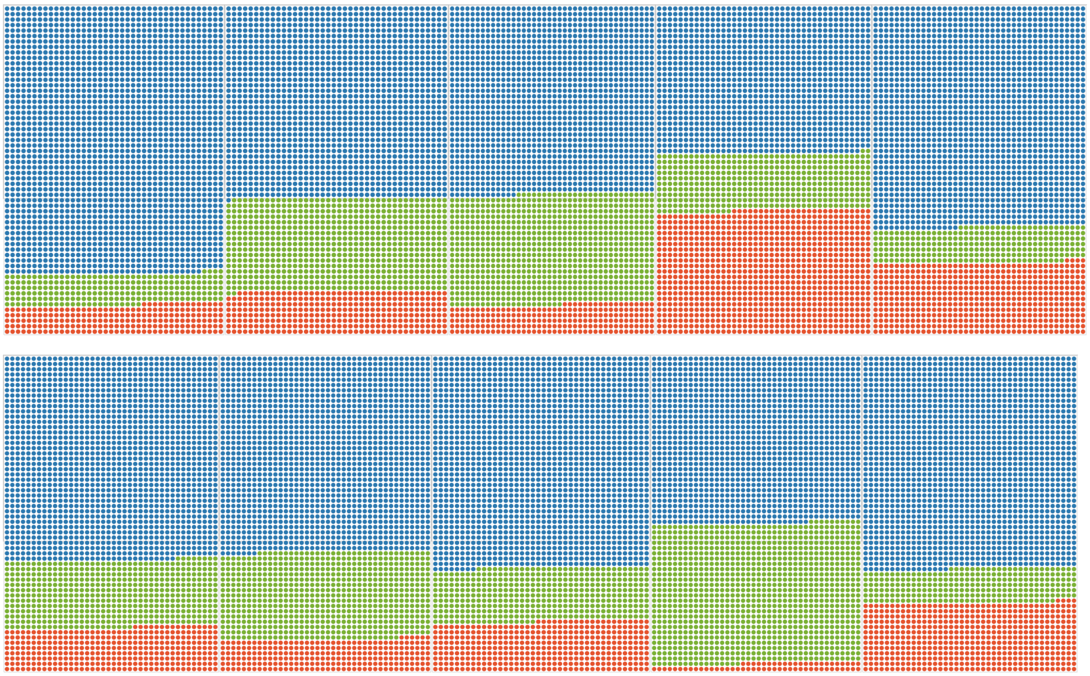
Source: Own table; Information by the Interviews

The citations in table 3 emphasis the professional impression of the Dermasence Phyto Clare. The majority of all nationalities agrees that the product looks medical and professional but some especially of the Colombians, think it might be a treatment that needs a prescription and would not apply it without a recommendation of a doctor. That shows that the consumers are scared and don’t trust their own research concerning skin care products. The last quote in the Table of France appeals again to the dependence on another judgement, the Yuka App, an application for mobile phones with which products can be scanned and the App shows you the ingredients and eco- friendly aspects and measures the quality of the food or cosmetic products concerning the latest scientific research on each of the ingredients (Yuka, 2020).

4.2 Pre-Purchase

The focus of the interviews relied on the pre-purchase stage. To visualise the focus, Figure 9 shows document portraits of ten different Interviews. The dots are all the codes divided into blue, answers regarding the pre-purchase stage, green for the actual purchase and red everything regarding advocacy in the post-purchase stage.

Figure 9: Division of the Interviews into the Three Stages of the CJ



Source: Document Portrait of MAXQDA, Interviews 1(France), 3(France), 6 (Colombia), 7 (Spain), 11 (Spain), 15 (Colombia),18 (Colombia), 23 (Colombia), 39 (Spain),43 (Spain)

The first question regarding the pre-purchase stage was directed at the first step consumers take when noticing a skin disorder or anything unusual with their skin. The majority (32%) of the participants feel well informed and comfortable with their knowledge on medical skin treatments and said they would try to solve the problem on their own first (Appendix E).

Table 2: Privately solving skin disorders

Interview 2, Colombia	*"Normally I already know how in which parts of my face I can get a pimple then I know that it can be because I'm not washing my face well or because I'm eating a bad and I usually know what to do"*
Interview 40, Colombia	*"The first thing I do is try with my own knowledge to solve the problem"*
Interview 11, Spain	*"…although it hurts a little but if it is a granite only then maybe I take it off even though I shouldn't and I put on a little bit of hydrogen peroxide, and if it doesn't take off because it's not white, I have a cream that dries out there I only put the granite and the next morning I have usually left and little else if it is anything else I do nothing."*

Source: Own table; Information by the Interviews

21% answered the first thing to do would be searching on the internet, it was even described as a "reflex" (Interview 14, France). This habit shows insecurity of this segment of consumers concerning their skin. They want to find out what it is or if it is something normal that other people have as well and how it can be treated.

Another 21% claimed they would go straight to the dermatologist and many of them said their main source of information and consideration criteria is the recommendation by a doctor. This group of people relies deeply on the dermatologist and does not really want to be highly involved in the decision-making process, they prefer to rely on others regarding medical skin care products. According to the interviews, dermatologists play a major role in purchase decision especially in Colombia. The majority stated they would directly go to the dermatologist but some have to go to the general practitioner first according to their health insurance. The opinion of the dermatologist is not questioned and the product which is recommended by a doctor is usually bought without hesitation (Interview 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 20, 25, 27, 38, 39, 48 Colombia). These consumers can be categorised globally, given that the major driver for dermatological treatment is to improve the physical appearance (EffeMarket, 2018). Another reason for treating skin disorders is career advancement which is linked to the primary motivation appearance. As previously underlined, attitudes are affected by the feeling of insecurity due to the pressure of social norms (Cooper et al., 2001, p.261) which were demonstrated by the interviewees through expressing their emotional dependence on the opinion of others (Interview 10,13,19 France, 2,6,11,15,34,39,45 Colombia, 12,18,23,33,49 Spain).

12% of all three nationalities answered they would always consult with their mother first which might be partly explained due to the young age of the interviewees. Referring to the attitude formation process for medical skin care products, the mother plays a significant role in building and sustaining an attitude towards a skin disorder and the treatment.

Searching for the reason of the skin disorder was another option mentioned by 7% and was mostly connected to nutrition. Some said they would stop eating what they last had or try to think if they ate something "bad" (Interview 8, France). Another 7% stated they would wait a few days and hope the skin issue will disappear.

The majority (38%) is using the internet as a main source of information when searching for skin treatment products (Appendix E) as previous research states that websites and social networks as well as social media are typical sources of information on skin treatment (Girdwichai et al., 2018, p.46). 27% of the interviewees answered that they prefer to rely on personal recommendations by their friends and family what they have already used. According to the results, women are more likely to talk to friends about their skin problems and ask for their advice whereas men prefer to ask close family members, „acquaintances or relatives" (Interview 53, Colombia) which supports the study of Girdwichai et al. (2018, p. 47). The dermatologist is another source of information for 19%. At this point, it was conspicuous that many Colombians trusted their dermatologist completely and said they would ask there for a recommendation and directly buy that product without any other research on their own. For 13% of all participants, a visit to the pharmacy was necessary to get the advice of a pharmacist and directly being able to buy that product. The consumers that are skipping the information research phase were already categorised as less involved based on their attitude formed through behavioural learning (3%).

The most important consideration criteria focused on recommendations by the dermatologist or friends, online reviews, the composition and ingredients of the product and the price. Distinguishing between the countries, the composition and especially natural ingredients and eco-friendly packaging are in the focus when considering the purchase of a skin care product for most of the French questioned. The Spanish and Colombians rely deeply on the recommendation of their doctor and care for their budget.

4.3 Purchase

The majority of participants showed a very sceptical attitude towards online purchase concerning cosmetic treatment products and only 6.8% frequently buy their products online. The reasons for online purchase were mainly due to a cheaper price or for specific products (Interview 9, 20, France; 19, Colombia).

Table 3: Use of E-Commerce along the Customer Journey

Interview 7, Spain	*"Shops. I normally buy it on actual shops instead of online because I want to try the product and talk to the person that is selling me. I thing is safer."*
Interview 6, Spain	*"I tried once in the internet, but I really like to feel the product, to try, so pharmacies and stores are better for me, right?"*
Interview 20, Spain	*"I never bought any skin care or beauty products online. I would rather test it out on my skin and then buy it."*
Interview 5, France	*"Pharmacies, because they give better advice, there is a lot of variety of skin care that are not existent in drugstores."*
Interview 2, Colombia	*"I don't like to buy them online because I feel like I need to see them and live all that experience to compare them on the shelves. Normally what I currently do is say we go to dm and there compare the products and see which is best for me. If I want something more specialized, then I would go to the Apotheke that the products are like more medical so to speak."*

Source: Own table; Information by the Interviews

The channel distribution of France and Spain focused mainly on pharmacies according to the data (Appendix F). They trust the pharmacists' opinion and prefer to buy in the actual store to get the emotional value of the action of the purchase and touch the product (Table 2). The French value skin care products in a way that health for your skin is really important and it is worth paying for an optimal solution (Interview 7, France). Therefore, the French have a high willingness to pay concerning medical skin treatment products. The attitude towards the action of the purchase is mainly positive caused by excitement to try

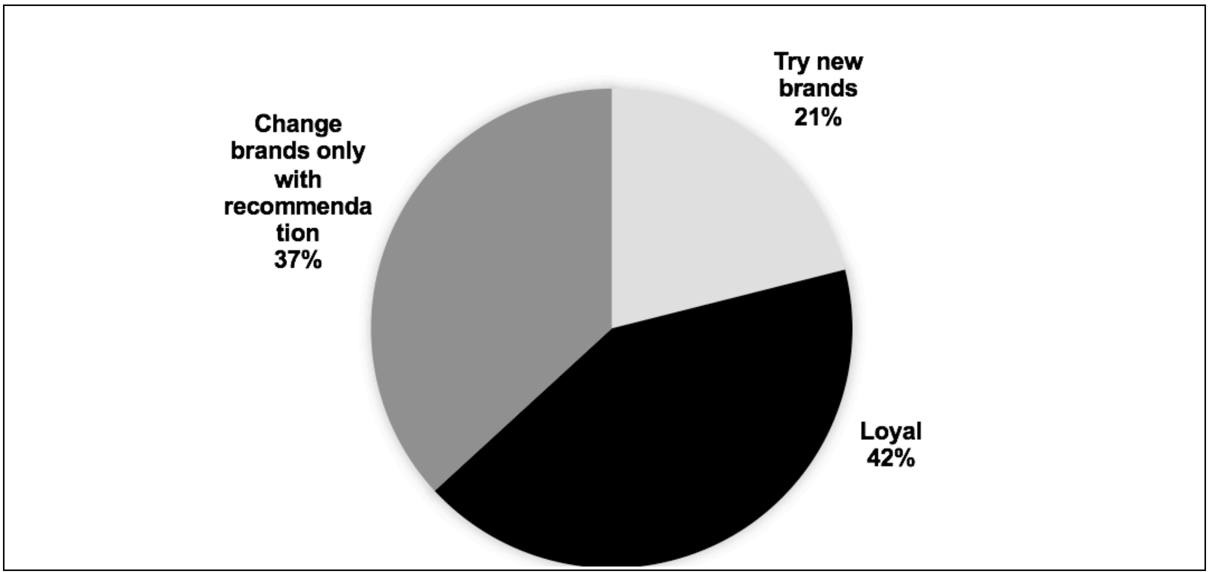
the new product and solve a need (Appendix H). The citations shown in Table 2 demonstrate the negative attitude towards online shopping regarding skin treatment products.
As previously stated, the store-based retailing in Colombia is still growing and a major channel are the speciality skin stores (Modor Intelligence, 2020). The Colombian participants named „Bella Piel“ as one main dermatological shop (Interview 1, 8, 14, 39, 41, Colombia). In Colombia the health system differs between private and public insurance where as people with private health systems can directly go to the dermatologist whereas others with a public insurance have to go to their family doctor first to get a transfer letter (Interview 43, Colombia). Users tend to go to dermatological shops or pharmacies that are recommended by their dermatologist (sometimes dermatologists have partnerships with specific shops) (Interview 12, 26, 34, 36, 51, Colombia). They express an insecure attitude due to the dependence on the opinion of some else, likely a dermatologist.

Another question regarding the purchase of skin treatment products concerns the specific brand the consumers prefer. The Spanish participants mentioned La Roche Posay, Nivea, Vichy and Avène as their most used brands. In France, the brands that were named the most were mainly french as Avène, La Roche Posay and Bioderma. La Roche Posay, and Avène were also mentioned among the Spanish participants as well as Vichy and Nivea. In Colombia Eucerin, Nivea and Neutrogena the Norwegian skin care brand are the most preferred brands of the interviewees.
Paying for the product was considered as a pain point in the customer journey (Appendix H) as skin care products account for some participants more to luxury products but for others these products serve an utilitarian purpose. This difference explains the willingness to pay for a product compared to what they will actually choose (O'Donell & Evers, 2018, p.1328).

4.4 Post-Purchase

The last stage of the customer journey concerns the usage and all interactions with the brand after the purchase as customer engagement (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.76). The touchpoints of this stage encompass the product itself, repurchase or decision to change the brand and word of mouth (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.76). The focus of the primary research during this stage relies on brand loyalty by asking under which circumstances the participants would change their skincare brand and why. The answers differed a lot between the three countries, therefore Figure 10 shows three different diagrams with the main answers. The French turned out to be very loyal to their brands (42%) and would only change them with a recommendation (37%) or try new brands until they find one that suits their skin (21%). According to Wood (2000, p.539) changing a brand is always related to a change in the attitude and attitude change can result out of three major reasons: being insecure with oneself, social pressure and conditional attitude change through reward and punishment. These results imply that the participants hold strong attitudes towards their medical skin care brands as they are not very likely to change them easily.

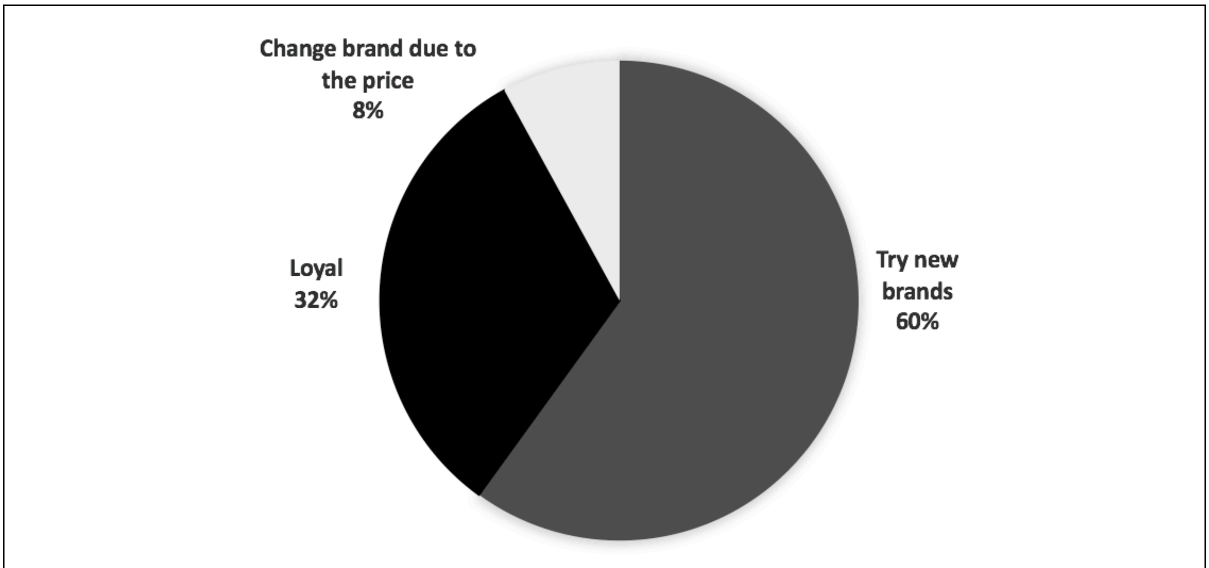
Figure 10: Brand Loyalty in France



Source: Own graphic

The majority of the Spanish (60%) on the opposite, are very open and curious to try many different new brands. 32% still answered they are loyal and like to stick to one brand that works for them and 8% said they would change the brand if they find a cheaper version of something that works the same.

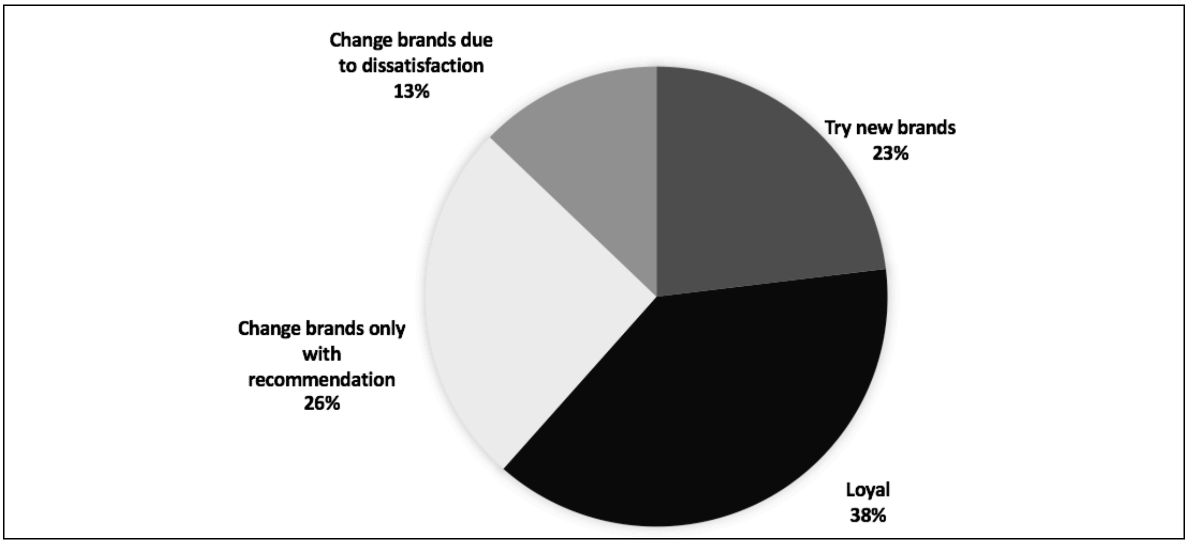
Figure 11: Brand Loyalty in Spain



Source: Own graphic

In Colombia the degree of loyalty was more similar to France but a little less (38%) and 26% would also change their brand only due to a recommendation favourable by a dermatologist. 23% would try new brands but not so much because they are curious as the Spanish but because they think the skin gets used to one product and after while they have to change it in order to get effective results. Then 13% answered they would change the brand if they are dissatisfied.

Figure 12: Brand Loyalty in Colombia



Source: Own graphic

In contrast to the pre- versus post-purchase comparison, there are considerably more similarities between post-purchase and satisfaction thoughts. However, the differences that were noted in the recall of emotion responses and the different types of comparison standards are worthy of attention.

When comparing the post-purchase stage to the pre-purchase stage concerning the attitudes, the results are in line with previous research regarding the level of satisfaction. The participants were more keen on being satisfied after having used the product than during the pre-purchase phase (Fisher Gardial et al., 1994, p.555). During the post-purchase stage the customers' attitude is either strengthened or weakened after the product use. The pre-purchase phase included many uncertainties regarding the consideration set and trust in the opinion of others but after the purchase and use of the product, the participants remain more loyal to their own opinion and attitude towards the product. However, the prepurchase stage remains the most important one according to the attitudes consumers form and have before building even a consideration set. These ones are more cognitive based in contrast to the post-purchase stage, where the link to satisfaction results of emotional evaluations (Fisher Gardial et al., 1994, p.557)

4.5 Contradiction between Attitude and Behaviour

Previous research on attitudes described the need for consistency between attitudes and behaviour but literature acknowledges that human beings behave not always congruent to their attitudes and their beliefs (Solomon, 2018, p.176).

In the discussed results, the formation of attitudes and their influence on the CJ was analysed but the actual behaviour of the participants can be very different or even contradictory towards their stated attitude. As the primary research is limited to interviews, the behaviour of the participants can only be predicted and assumed according to their statements but as their actions are not observed, they might act in a different way.

This part is focusing on the one aspect demonstrating this contradiction is consumers' willingness to care about the environment as well as their health through natural ingredients that will not harm their skin but still many participants purchase chemical products that are not eco-friendly. This phenomenon may be explained by the lacking willingness to pay (O'Donell & Evers, 2018, p.1315). As it can be seen in the customer journeys of the three nationalities all customers surpass an emotional journey during their buying decision (Appendix H). It usually starts with emotional insecurity due to a skin disorder. The next step is more rational as consumers are researching for the best solution but when they found their product, the journey gets emotional again as the customer really hopes that the product will bring him/her satisfaction. If it does, this happiness will be transferred into WOM and the product is associated with a positive attitude towards the brand (product). The product could not have no effect at all and the consumer evaluates it as not useful. According to consistency theory, the product will not be repurchased but many factors as environmental influences or how strong the negative association towards the product is account into that decision. The consumer might even react inconsistent and buy the same product again even though it did not solve the problem, just because many friends buy this brand and in order to belong to that group, an inconsistent behaviour emerges and the individual will feel the need to change the attitude and transfer it into a positive one for example instead of associating a useless product, this product created no allergic reaction and did not harm my skin. Behaviour and attitudes are closely related but in order to predict a person's actions, many external factors and emotional aspects have to be included (Allen et al., 2005, p.498).

5 Opportunities for Dermasence

The following section outlines the results of the study that can support Dermasence regarding their internationalisation. A company profile will introduce the brand and their value proposition. The industry of medical skin treatment will be presented and specific recommendations for Dermasence are provided. Then further research opportunities are explained in order to provide a future outlook.

5.1 Recommendations

5.1.1 Glocalisation Framework of Dermasence

In order to elaborate on recommendations for Dermasence, the glocalisation framework will be used. Glocalisation is the mixture of the word “globalisation” and “localisation”. It emphasizes the production and distribution of products for the global market that are adapted to local preferences and cultures (Hollensen, 2014, p.7). Globalisation has shaped the global market the last decade but standardised products and global mass communication does not satisfy consumers preferences anymore. The glocal framework allows companies to develop a global brand that is adapted to suit specific countries (Hollensen, 2014, p.15). According to the gloaclisation framework, when going international each company has to decide what and to what degree they want to standardise or adapt their marketing mix. Usually the product itself is standardised and the price, place (distribution channels), promotion is adapted (Hollensen, 2014, p.28).

The recommendation for Dermasence would be to stick to their product but adapt the price to each country and the local competitors in the country. The majority of all nationalities perceived the product design and packaging as very professional and medical, exactly what Dermaence wants to communicate which supprts their message. The design should be standardised but the slogan “Medizinische Hautpflege” should be adapted as many participants mentioned they do cannot read what the product is for. Besides the colour coding and care system, Dermasence could add different levels of severity for each skin condition or just as it in writing as many participants of these different cultures categorised the product according to the design as very medical and not for minor skin issues. Furthermore, the packaging of the products could include a QR-code (Quick Response-Code) which directly brings the consumers to the website of Dermasence and enable the consumers to analyse their skin and see whether or not these products might suit them.

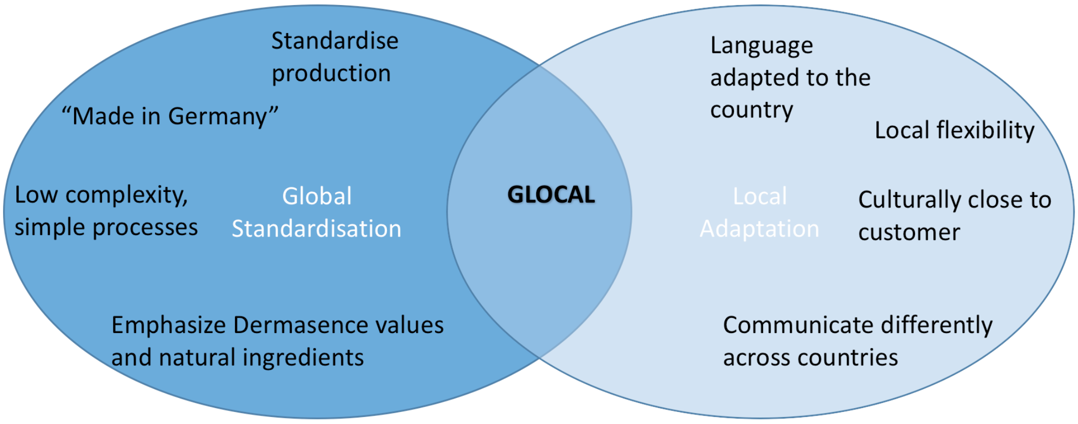
The distribution channels have to be chosen differently in the countries accordingly to the consumer’s preferences. Dermasence should not only focus to sell their products online,

the majority of all nationalities preferred to buy their skin treatment products in an offline shop in order to speak to someone or look and feel the product.
Most importantly, Dermasence needs to create awareness in each country and therefore the promotion has to suit local preferences and cultural norms. Information on skin disorders should be spread in all countries as the majority seems to be interested in the health of their skin but do not know a lot about it.

The main competitors of Dermasence are Eucerin, La Roche Posay and Avène which are all three mentioned as well-known brands in the selected countries. This phenomenon supports the existence of a consumer need in the target market of Dermasence but might also create difficulties as the market is already satisfied by competitors.

Regarding the industry disruption, Dermasence could inform their potential customers more on skin disorders before providing product information. In the literature review of this thesis the pre-purchase stage has been identified as the essential persuasion point for consumers (Chapter 2.7). Different channels such as You Tube, Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) their own webpages and at the dermatologist may be used to spread scientific educational information as previous researched discovered that 37% of brands gain attention through social media advertisement (Shahbandeh, 2019; Appendix A). They should emphasise their customers to research only on licensed online resources by health care professionals. Dermasence is already using celebrity endorsement as marketing element through Ingrid Klimke, a German Olympia dressage and eventing rider. She is born and raised in Münster similar to the founding location of Dermasence. She represents the target segment of Dermasence customers and fits to the company's natural philosophy. Word of mouth can be encouraged through sending out their communication when locating their customers through geographical technologies when they are in a dense area of people (Consiglio et al., 2018, p. 512) and can directly spread oral word of mouth instead of writing online reviews as written recommendation are worth less than oral one through direct communication (Shen & Sengupta, 2018, p.595). Brand loyalty can be reached through using pricing advantages for loyal customers as many participants mentioned the price as a major consideration criteria ad pain point as well as reason to change the brand. A community of educated consumers that are rewarded for staying with Dermasence can be created through a social platform directly on the company's website where the customer can chat and exchange experiences and recommendations.

Figure 13: The Glocal Framework of Dermasence



Source: Own graphic, adpated from Hollensen, 2014, p.22

5.1.2 France

In order to enter the French market, brand awareness is important and especially winning the trust of the French. As they are really loyal to their brands, it is very difficult for Dermasence to get them to change their brand because therefore Dermasence has to change their attitude (Chapter 2.3). Attitude change depends on the structure, whether they are based on a direct experience and will be associated with a specific situation or retrieved from long-term memory (Chapter 2.3). The results of the study emphasised the resistance to try new brands especially if they already have a solution and a suitable product that works on their skin. Tagreting young teenagers that might not have a preferred brand yet might be a good opportunity for Dermasence.The language has to be adapted and French influencers can be used to catch the attention of young French teenagers and young adults. Price remains a consideration criterion for many consumers and has to be adapted to fit to the industries competitors price range. Additionally, Dermasence should evaluate what consumers are willing to pay in each country. In France, premium pricing would make sense, as the participants emphasised the importance of skin care products and caring for the health of their skin that they are willing to spend money on a high quality product. The buyer persona Marie Duguet (Appendix G) is an intuitive person that behaves according to her feelings and builds close relationships with her skin care products and remains loyal to the brand. Natural ingredients and eco-friendly packaging play currently a major role in the French skin care market and Dermasence should take this as an opportunity to emphasise their high quality products with extraction of natural ingredients and inform their potential customers about their products and values.

5.1.3 Spain

The Spanish are open to try new brands out of curiosity. This is an advantage over the market entry in France but still awareness is a necessity. According to the interviews, the Spanish buyer persona “Ana García” cares about her skin and wants to “feel pretty without make up” (Interview 13, Colombia) but more for her inner self-esteem than to obey social pressure. Dermasence should provide information to young teenagers with acne and oily skin conditions through online channels that are certified or an own You Tube channel just providing qualitative dermatological information on skin conditions. The products can be distributed through middlemen, preferably pharmacies. The Spanish are price sensitive and would change their trusted brand when finding a cheaper solution (Interview 30, Spain). Therefore, competitive pricing is important to enter the Spanish market.

5.1.4 Colombia

The results showed the immense appreciation for German products as it is directly associated with good quality. Therefore, the “Made in Germany” slogan should be promoted, directly on the product to increase to purchase intentions. As can be seen in Figure 11, the Dermasence product should be standardised and the German production will be emphasised for all countries as it is only a positive aspect but might push Colombian consumers to purchase the product. The Colombian culture and lifestyle differs from the European one. The insecurity and dependence on the society is expressed in the buyer persona “Angélica Gonzáles” (Appendix G). She cares about her outward appearance and tries to fulfil all expectations. Dermasence has culturally to get close to the consumers through direct marketing via local influencers who talk about skin problems on Instagram or You Tube. Furthermore, P&M cosmetics should work in close cooperation with local dermatological shops and build up a network with dermatologists in the private health sector. Entering the Colombian skin care market, personal relationships in the B2B sector are important; Dermasence can approach the market the same way as in Germany and maintain good personal relationships with pharmacies.

5.2 Further Research Opportunities

Dermasence could research at the post-purchase experience and the emotions customers go through in this stage during the product use. Additionally, they could focus more on the word of mouth, especially the oral WOM. To get more severe, they can go deeper into sub segments acne and oily skin on their own maybe just focus on acne first of all. Another qualitative study could directly approach the journey of the dermatologist in South Ameri-

ca and confirm or disprove the Colombian trust in dermatologists in other countries in Latin America.
Furthermore, this study could be replicated across other segments of skin conditions as anti-aging or dry skin. The user-centred approach in general can be used in different countries. The findings presented in this thesis can be used to conduct a quantitative survey to generalise some insights and get a representative sample. Therefore, measurable data can be analysed and transformed in usable statistics.
When P&M Cosmetics decides to enter one of the following countries with their skin care brand Dermasence, they still have to consider their market expansion strategy. The company has to decide for concrete marketing strategies for each of their international countries or choose an overall approach. Future research should go deeper into the marketing mix, deciding on appropriate pricing decision according to the local competitors in the country. This thesis should encourage to build on these findings and use this approach for future research.

6 Conclusion

The conclusion of the bachelor thesis summarises the main outcomes of the study and answers the RQs. The thesis is critically reflected regarding the quality and possible biases influencing the study. Additionally, this section provides limitations to consider and suggest future research potential for Dermasence.

6.1 Findings

This bachelor thesis aimed to understand attitudes of consumers within the segment of medical skin care in order to support P&M Cosmetics with their intention to internationalise their brand Dermasence.
The role of attitude research in marketing is to determine changes in evaluations of preferences for products or services (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011, p.431). Every consumer holds many attitudes at the same time but they differ in their function and strength. Consumer attitudes are formed in the daily life and gain strength the longer they persist (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.25). Attitudes can either fulfill a utilitarian purpose to foster the external surrounding and adapting oneself within the social system or support the internal expression of the self and protecting the individual self-esteem (McLeod, 2018).
The industry segment of medical skin care is a niche segment within the cosmetics industry and is growing steadily (Shahbandeh, 2019). There is no available data on attitude research within this specific niche segment. Against this background, primary research was

conducted to get concrete answers of consumers facing skin issues and their attitudes towards skin treatment products. This thesis focused on a concrete company problem; P&M Cosmetics & CO KG wants to internationalise their brand Dermasence. Thereupon, three international markets were selected and one skin condition chosen to enable an in-depth investigation and get specific results that can be applied and used by Dermasence. Medical skin care products are mainly bought after carefully considering different options which enables a cognitive processing of information on different products. As the buying decision is not impulsive, sales promotions are not useful to influence consumer's evaluations, direct marketing approaches are more suitable (Centeno & Hart, 2012, p.251). Through direct communication, the consumer learns more about the product and strengthens the attitude until the purchase. Social and normative influences affect attitudes and drive behaviour intention (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.40). All these aspects occur in the pe-purchase stage which can be demonstrated as the most influenced part of the customer journey (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012, p.32). If consumers are willing to pay for a product, they will not necessarily actually purchase that product (O'Donell & Evers, 2018, 1315). Their attitudes towards paying for a skin care product is controversial; on the one hand, the price is connected to a pain point but on the other hand, consumers feel excited to try the new product and fulfil their need (Chapter 4.3). Consumer attitudes influence the post-purchase stage through WOM, competitive environment and individual benefits. The dependence on the opinion of other people is highly correlated to the attitude towards a product or a brand (Shen & Sengupta, 2018, p.598). Brand loyalty towards medical skin care brands is driven by personal recomendations, especially by dermatologists (Chapter 4.4). In order to answer the third RQ, the international context of consumer attitudes towards medical skin care is considered. The similarities of the three studied countries might open the possibility of a global consumer segment within the industry of medical skin care. It is necessary to consider these findings critically as the international context is based on three single countries and broader research has to be conducted. A global consumer segment with positive or negative attitude towards dermatologists was found based on the similarities between all three countries. This has to be confirmed by further research and quantitative data to generalise this result. The deep trust in the opinion by the dermatologist of the Colombian participants was noticeable. The French differ as they prefer to research on their own and are more influenced by social pressure and rely on online reviews or applications. According to the results, the Spanish trust their instincts a lot more and are less involved in skin care products but their attitudes strengthen due to a product that solves their skin disorders. The internet remains the major source of information for all countries which might be partly caused of the young age average of the interviewees but this could demonstrate a future trend.

All in all, consumer attitudes play a major role in the buying decision within the segment of medical skin care. The bachelor thesis revealed the advantages and disadvantages of entering France, Spain or Colombia based on consumer's attitudes. These countries have to be researched in-depth for a potential market entry and decision regarding the marketing mix. Furthermore, a qualitative research tool is provided that can be replicated to study further countries.

6.2 Critical Reflection

Throughout the research process of this study, the controversy of customers in general was recognised which makes it more difficult to generalise any results. Especially concerning the qualitative research which enabled deep insights but is more or less the opinion of individuals and how they perceive their environmental influences the study. Biases could not be completely eliminated due to the personal interviews.

Biases may distort results and should therefore be reduced to a minimum. They can occur at any point of the study and might originate from the interviewers as well as the interviewees. The researchers might misclassify data due to individual differences in interpretation or preconceived expectations regarding the study. Observers tend to form beliefs and might use the respondent's answer to confirm the belief. Another critical element is the self-reference criterion of which all interviewers were informed and aware of but it might still influence the results.

Social desirability biases influence the answers of the respondents due to the unconscious element of buying decisions and the contradiction of behaviour and attitudes.

The thesis provides the methodology applied and the research design used. Therefore, the study can be easily replicated by applying the same methodology but target different countries or different segments. One major drawback is the subjectivity of the analysis and the previously mentioned interpretation of the data, when replicating this study, the future researcher might choose a different coding system and interpret the findings in a different way. Triangulation is provided through the usage of various sources for the literature review and the secondary research necessary for the analysis. The privacy of the participants was not violated by using the data anonymously and asking for their consent. Additionally, the participants were all informed about the inherent nature of the interviews and the intention (Alsmadi, 2008, p.155).

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

As to every study there are some limitations that should be considered. First of all, the research is based on a convenience sample in order to get deep insights and real perspectives of the emotional journeys of the participants. Some interviewees knew their interviewer, were more comfortable and shared extensive insights. Due to the convenience sample, the target segment has an age average of 21 and is not representative for the whole country. Therefore, this approach creates an opportunity for Dermasence to pursue analysis in each of these countries and do a quantitative study that will enable the company to gain representative knowledge on consumer's preferences in all age ranges. The interviews were targeted at consumers with acne or oily skin conditions in order to get robust information. As previously mentioned as an opportunity for Dermasence (Chapter 5.4), the company can use this study to approach different segments of skin conditions.

The third limitation involves the interview environment. Due to an international market selection of three countries, the interviews could not all be conducted face-to-face. Some of them had to be conducted via phone or video calls which could have created some distractions. Additionally, the interviewer presented only one picture of Dermasence Phyto Clare and asked the participants on their opinion, they might have answered differently when seeing a different product of Dermasence in the picture. As this study is aiming to gain information on consumer attitudes and their emotions, it should be noted that by asking people about their feelings they might answer differently to what they are actually feeling caused by their lack of expressing their emotions. Human beings are conscious of only very few emotions, most of them are subconscious which invalidates asking people about them (Allen et al., 2005, p.498). Furthermore, the interview protocol did not directly ask about any attitude, these had to be analysed and interpreted based on the reactions and answers of the participants. Multiple sources were used during the secondary research and the country specific statistics because no uniform source was available.

The qualitative approach that was used in this thesis could also be used to discover new countries and extend research on consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the company can do a quantitative analysis of more countries to prove the similarities of a global consumer in the segment of medical skin care. The heritability of attitudes enables companies to group consumers regarding a genetic trait in a determined environment and address them in a similar way. Biological traits which result under the same environmental influences in a specific attitude towards medical skin care products have to be researched further regarding the industry.

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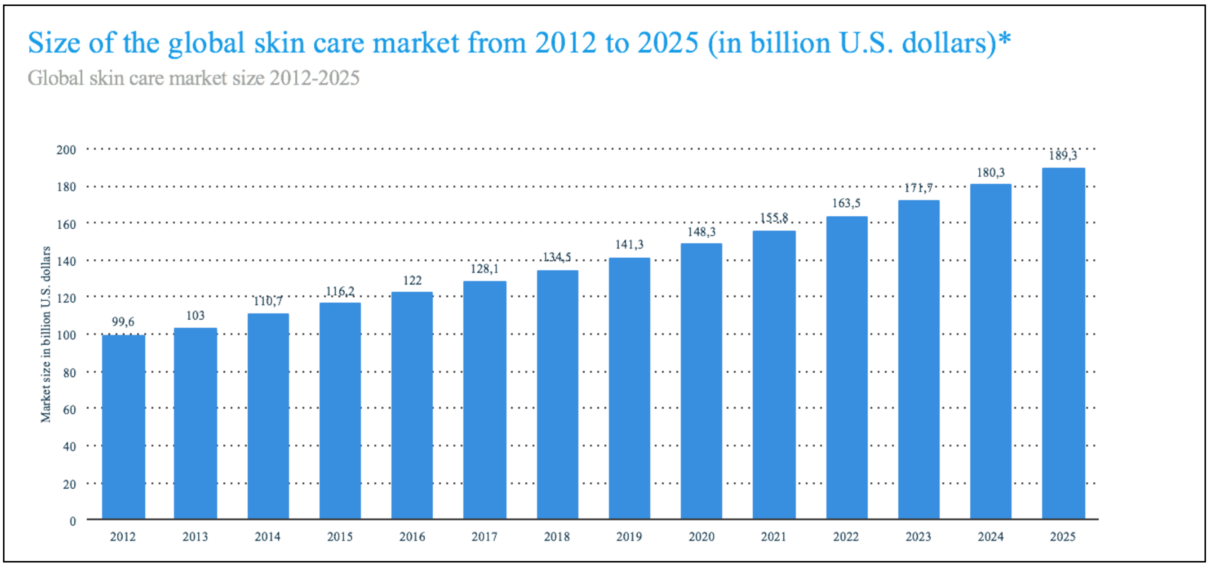
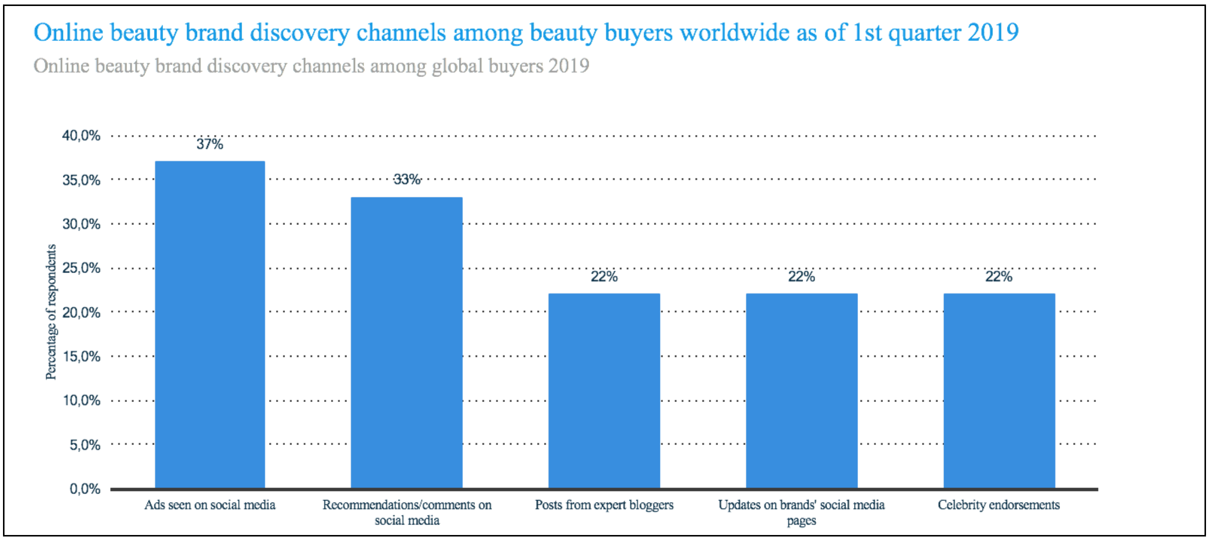
Appendix

Appendix A: Industry Information

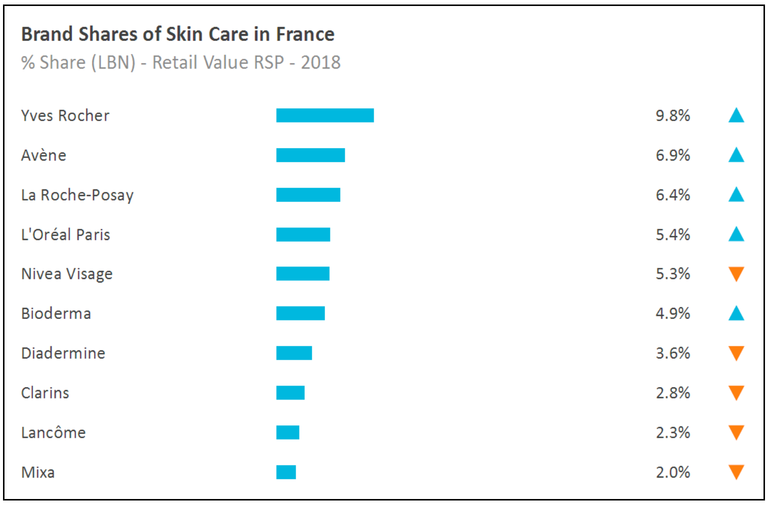


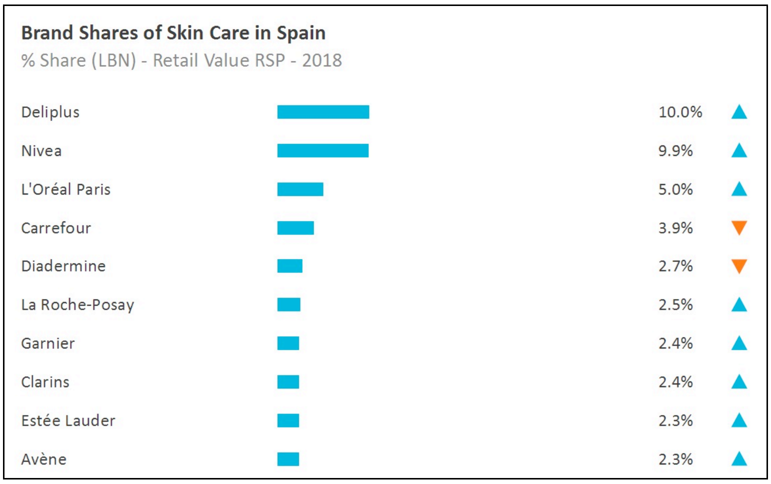
Source: Shahbandeh, 2019; retrieved from Statista

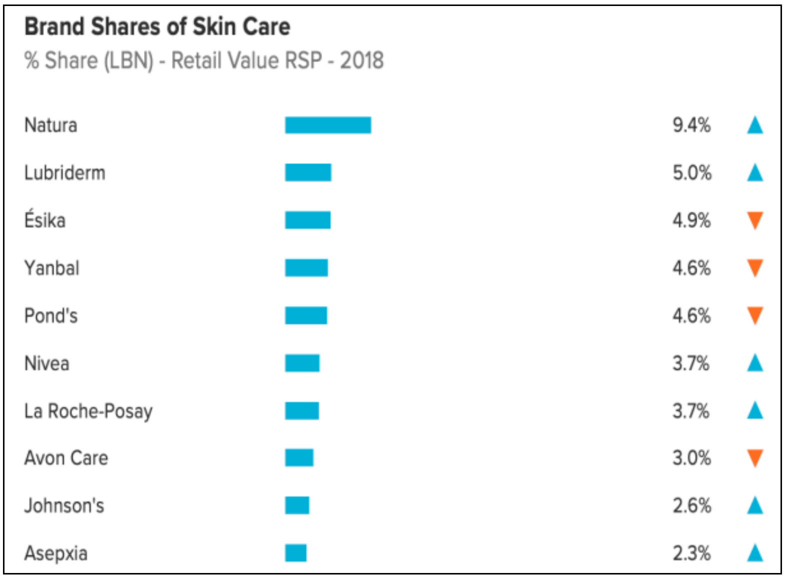


Source: Shahbandeh, 2019; retrieved from Statista

Appendix B: Brand Shares of Skin Care by Country







Source: Modor Intelligence, 2020b

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

"Unveiling target groups on medical skin care and their customer journey"

Introduction:

Hello and welcome to our interview, I appreciate your time!
My name is … and I study at the FH Münster.

We are students of the course on international marketing at the FH Münster, currently conducting a research project, through the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre. We are researching the "Target groups on medical skin care and their consumer journey within the medical skin care industry segment" on behalf of a German company that produces high quality medical skin care products for 27 years.

We are focusing particularly on understanding consumers within the segment of oily skin, or consumers with a skin condition prone to acne.

We look at this topic from 3 different dimensions:

1. Basic demographic characteristics
2. Attitudes and Values related to Medical Skin Care
3. Customer journey
    a. Awareness
    b. Consideration
    c. Purchase
    d. Advocacy
4. Conclusion

I would like to record the interview with audio equipment, are you okay with that?

*Audio on

1. Basic demographic characteristics

First of all, I would like to ask you to introduce yourself. I will guide you through this interview with some questions:

i. How old are you?
ii. In which city do you live?
iii. Male/ Female?
iv. What do you do for living?

2. Attitudes and Values related to Medical Skin Care

i. What does it mean for you Medical Skin Care?
    - Support definition in case they do not know:
      "Therapeutic-positioned brands that offer relief, healing or treatment of specific skin and scalp concerns" (Roberts & Villena, 2019)

ii. How important is it for you to have a healthy skin?
iii. Do you consider that you have a healthy skin? (yes / no) Why?
iv. For how long have you been using medical skin care products and for what reason?

v. How do you feel talking about your skin condition? With whom would you talk about it (friends, family, doctor, pharmacist?)

3. Customer Journey
    i. Can you describe what a normal day in your daily life looks like?

a. Awareness:
    i. What is the first thing you would do when you notice something with your skin/ a skin disorder?
    ii. How do you know about medical skin care (products)? (Television, Social Media, Pharmacies)

b. Consideration:
    i. Where do you search for information when you are considering paying for a solution to your skin problem? (e.g. research on the internet or consult with a friend, pharmacist?)

    ii. Which elements are important when you evaluate to buy a specific product for medical skin care? (e.g. price, recommendation, design)

c. Purchase:

    i. Where do you usually like to buy medical skin care products?
    ii. What do you think about the product in the following picture?
    iii. What could be possible reasons for you to buy this product and why would you reject it?

d. Advocacy:
    ii. Do you use a special brand? Which one? What do you like the most about it?
    iii. Do you usually buy the same brand or do you like to try different brands? Why?

4. Visit to the dermatologist:
    i. Have you visited a dermatologist in the last year?
    ii. How does the journey usually begin when you visit a dermatologist? Do you need to visit your Family doctor first? Do you go straight to the specialist?
    iii. Is your dermatologist in a private practice or at a hospital?
    iv. Is there any other specialist or professional that can also take care of skin disorders besides a dermatologist?
    v. Is the experience visiting a dermatologist pleasant or complex?

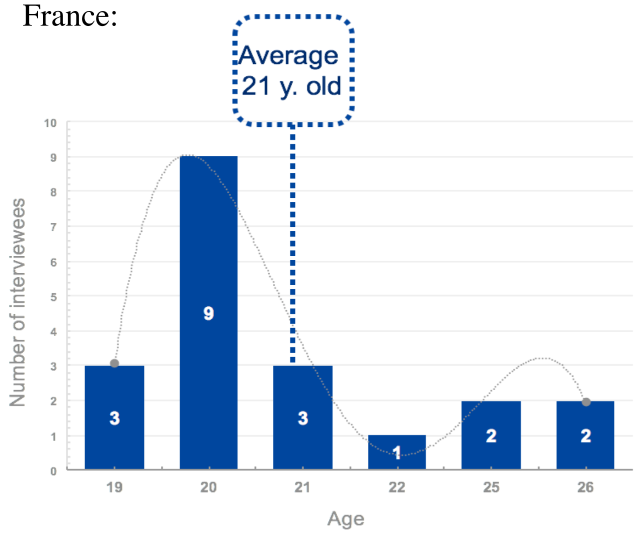
Conclusion:
Thank you for the interview, do you have any further questions to discuss?
In the end, I wanted to ask, if we could use the results of this interview to analyse them and pass it to our research partner in an anonymous format.

Thank you for your time and have a nice day!

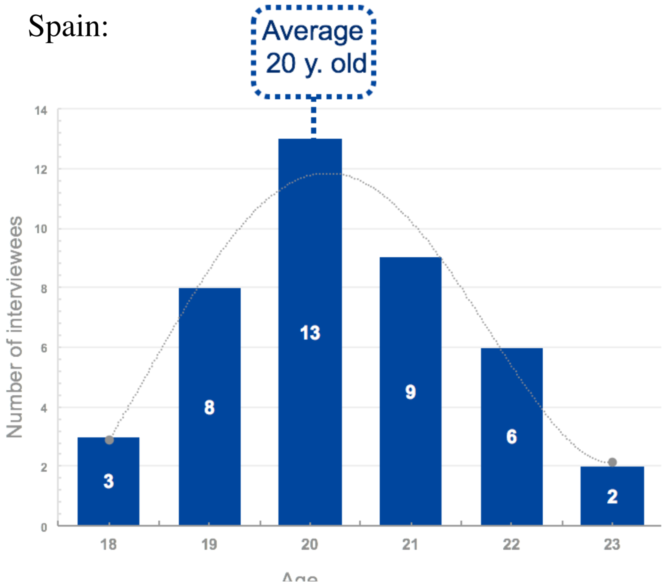

DERMASENCE
MEDIZINISCHE HAUTPFLEGE
PhytoClare
Talgreduzierende
Gelcreme
mit Färberwaid
und Zinc PCA
PFLANZLICHE
WIRKKRAFT
Mattierend
Anti-irritativ
Porenverfeinernd

Appendix D: Sample Composition

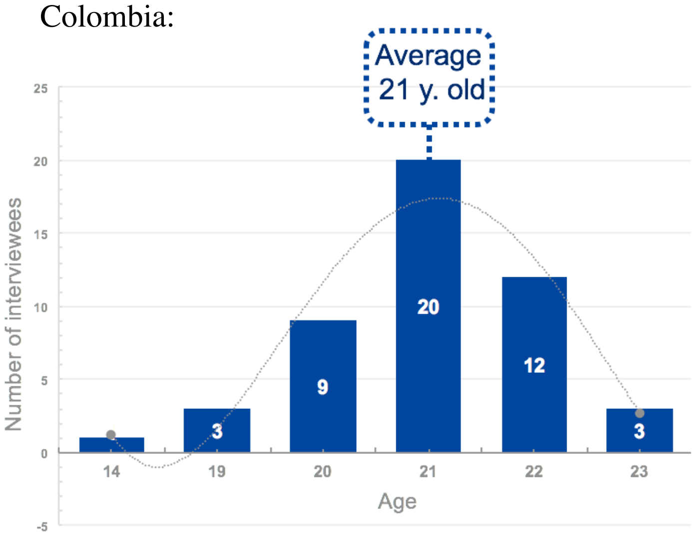
France:



Spain:

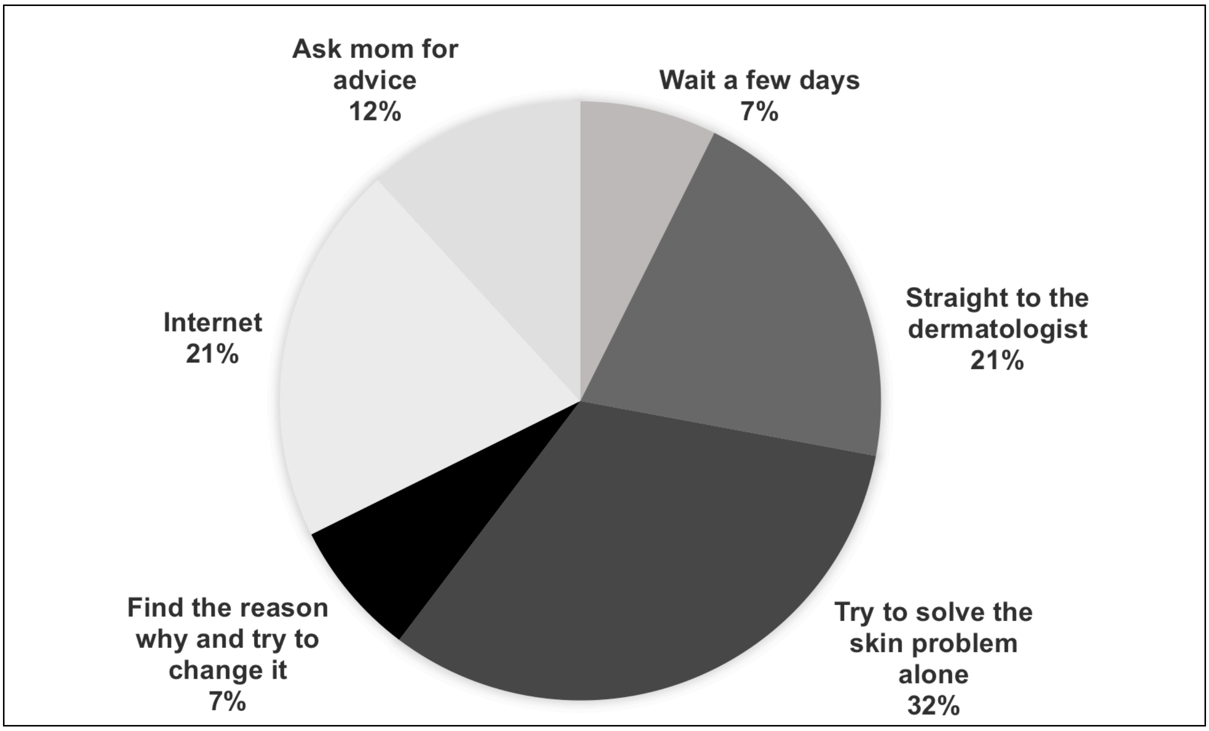


Colombia:

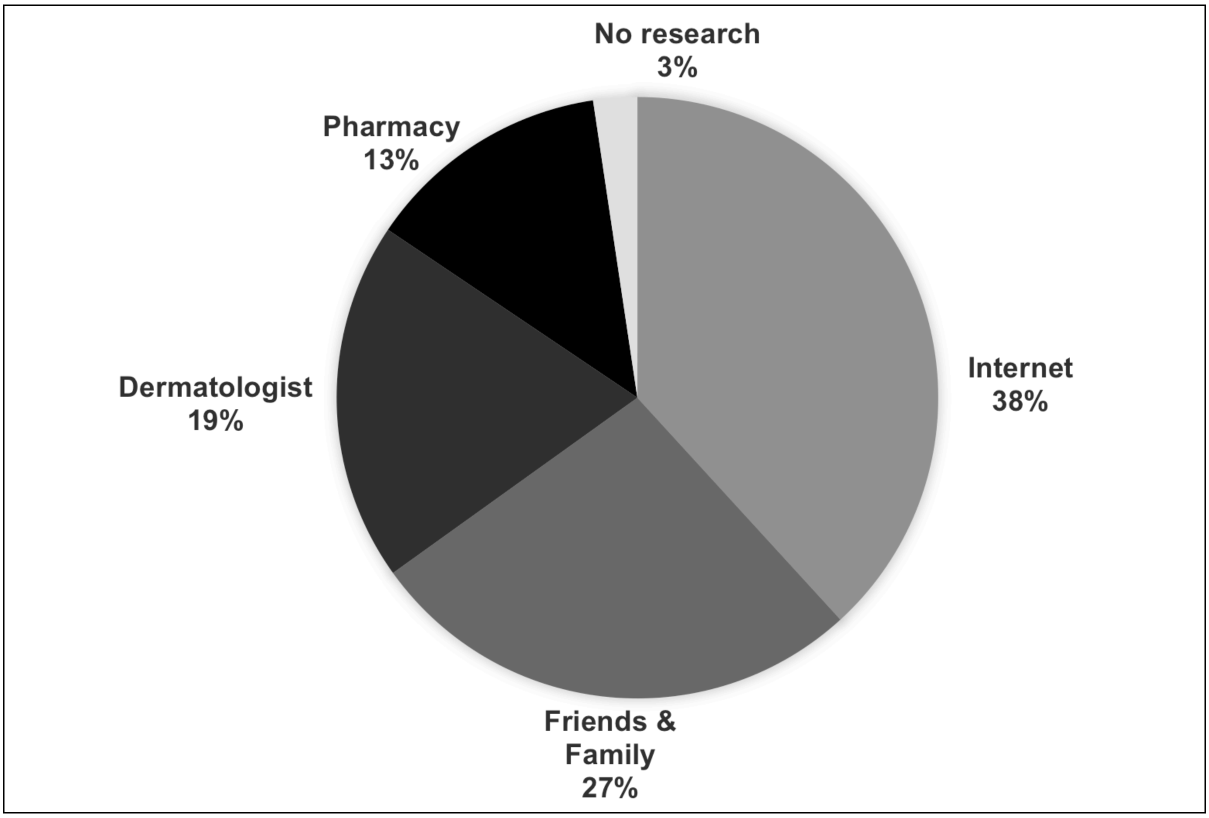


Appendix E: Pre-Purchase Graphics

First step after noticing a skin disorder

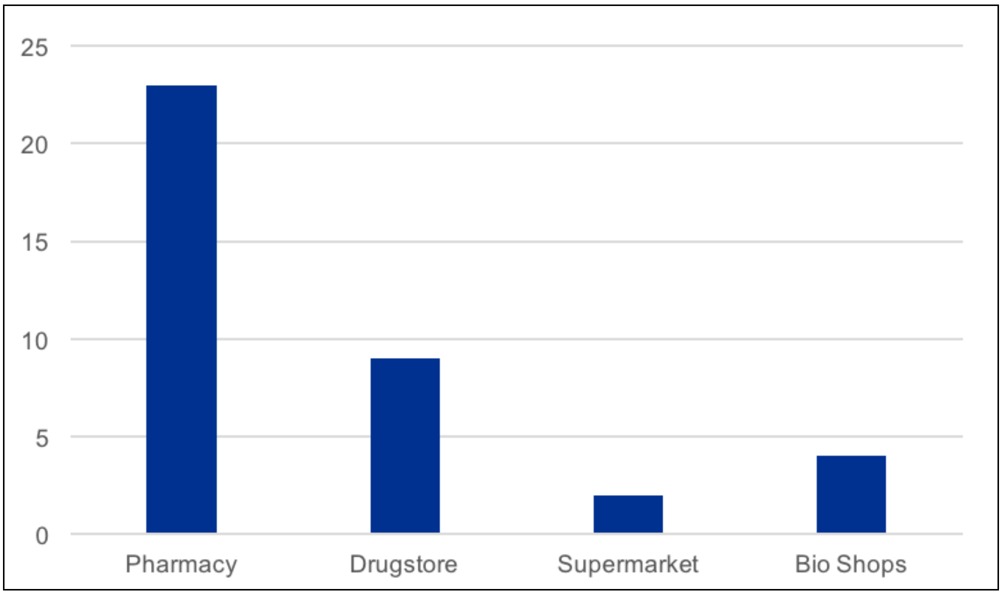


Information research channels

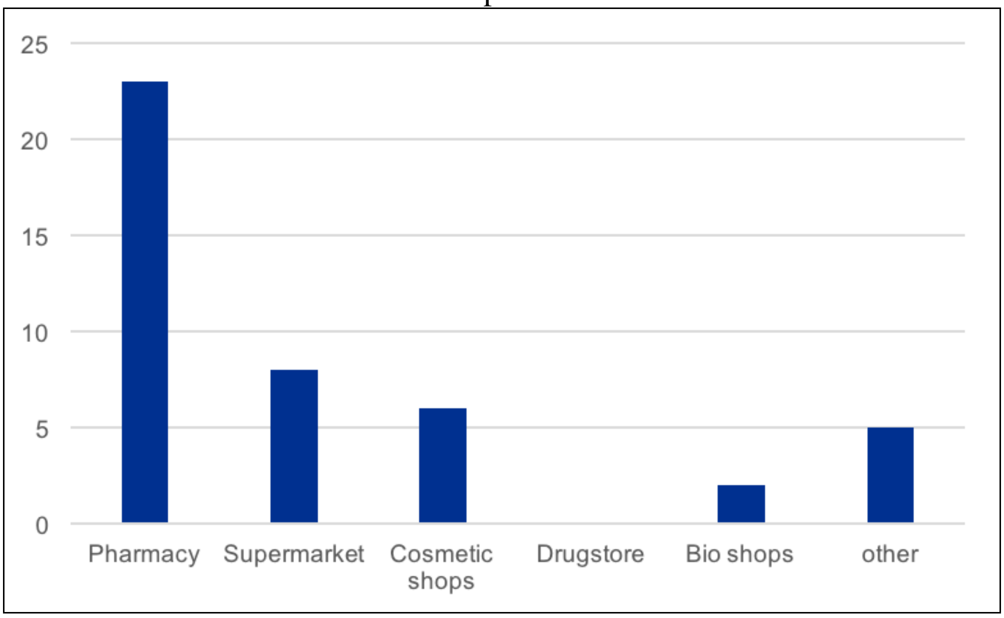


Appendix F: Distribution Channels split by Countries

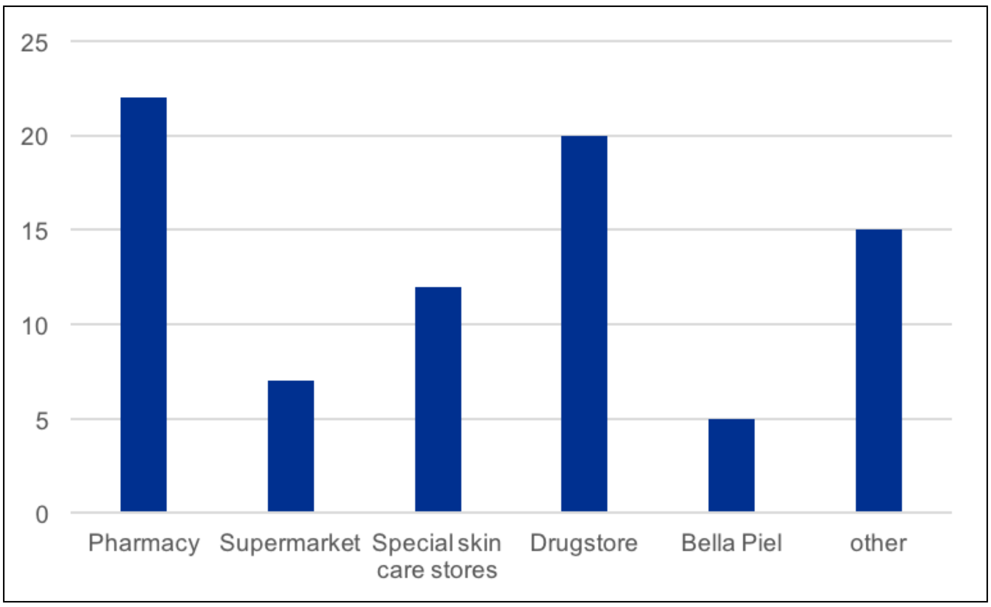
France



Spain



Colombia

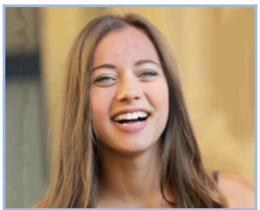


Appendix G: Buyer Personas

NAME: Marie Duguet

AGE: 21[1]
OCCUPATION: Student[2]
STATUS: Single
LOCATION: Grenoble, France[3]
TIER: Extrovert[4]
ARCHETYPE: Innocent[5]

Athletic[7] Passionate[8] Nature-Lover[9]



"I want to liberate a good energy to people around me. If I feel bad with my skin, I won't be the best version of me to the world" [24]

VALUES ON PRODUCTS

- Natural ingredients [12]
- Reviews and recommendations[11]
- Efficiency [13]
- Environment friendly[9]
- Design and packaging [14]
- Price[10]

GOALS - GAINS

1. To feel comfortable with her face[15]
2. To have a healthy skin [16]
3. To find long-term effective solutions for her skin disorders[17]

FRUSTRATIONS - PAINS

1. After a certain time, products do not show any effects anymore[18]
2. She feels insecure with her skin because of oily skin condition[19]
3. Pharmacies do not offer enough information

Marie is a 21 years old French student in Business and Administration at the University of Grenoble. She has a really simple lifestyle, balancing her studies in which she is deeply focused and her personal life. She has been trying a lot of different brands for oily skin, from drugstore brands to pharmaceutical ones, but she found out that she was quite intolerant to some products. Thus, she wants to find a brand with mostly natural products, environmental-friendly and respecting sensitive skin.[20]

PERSONALITY

Intuitive – Observant
Thinking – Feeling
Judging – Prospecting
Assertive – Turbulent

ACTIVITIES

- Sports[25]
- Friends[26]
- Culture[27]
- Studying[28]

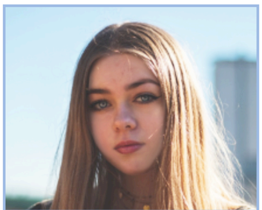
PRODUCTS – BRANDS

EAU THERMALE Avène [31]
LA ROCHE-POSAY LABORATOIRE PHARMACEUTIQUE [30]
BIODERMA LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE [29]

NAME: Ana García

AGE: 20[1]
OCCUPATION: Business student[2]
STATUS: Single
LOCATION: Barcelona, Spain[3]
TIER: Enthusiastic
ARCHETYPE: Lover

Social Natural Dedicated[4]



'I think that with a healthy skin, we don't need make up, we don't need anything. Because our skin is naturally beautiful' [5]

VALUES ON PRODUCTS

- Healthy [6]
- Recommendations [8]
- Price [9]
- Quality [10]
- Result [11]
- Brand[10]

GOALS - GAINS

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle [12]
2. Wants to feel pretty without make-up [13]
3. Cause a good first impression [14]

FRUSTRATIONS - PAINS

1. Sensitive skin to changing weather conditions and chemical ingredients in skin care products [15]
2. Has scars caused by acne and is afraid to get more [16]
3. Limited budget [17]

Ana Garcia is a studying and living by herself in Barcelona. She loves being with her friends in her free-time but is mainly dedicated to her studies. For her, exercising and a balanced diet are important and belong to a healthy lifestyle. Further taking care of her skin is crucial for her, which is why she always tries to find the best products that fit her budget. [18]

PERSONALITY

Intuitive – Observant
Thinking – Feeling
Judging – Prospecting
Assertive – Turbulent

ACTIVITIES

- Going out with friends[20.1]
- Social Media[20.2]
- Watch movies[20.3]
- Sports/gym[20.4]

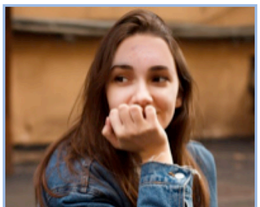
PRODUCTS – BRANDS[21]

LA ROCHE-POSAY LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE
NIVEA
VICHY LABORATOIRES

NAME: Angélica Gonzáles

AGE: 21[1]
OCCUPATION: Student[2]
STATUS: Single
LOCATION: Bogotá, Colombia[3]
TIER: Health Conscious[4]
ARCHETYPE: Artist

Educated[5] Healthy[6] Busy[7]



"I want to find a balance between my expectations about myself and what society expects me to be" [8]

VALUES ON PRODUCTS

- Price [9]
- Doctor's recommendations[10]
- Reviews[11]
- Known Brands[12]
- Quality/Efficiency[13]

GOALS - GAINS

1. Wants to maintain good outward appearance and feel attractive[14]
2. Wants to achieve a healthy lifestyle by doing sports and balanced diets[15]
3. Keep being a dedicated student, while having a part-time job[16]
4. Maintain her work-life balance by cultivating her social life on the weekend[17]

FRUSTRATIONS - PAINS

1. Bad skin conditions that lower her self-esteem[18]
2. Social pressure due to people commenting on her skin conditions[19]
3. Feeling stressed by the overload of work[20]
4. Having limited time for her social life[21]

Angélica Gonzáles is 21 years old and studies business. She lives in Bogotá22 with her parents23 and has a private health insurance. Currently she is very busy as she is about to finish her studies and is trying to find an internship. Even though her parents support her financially, she has to supplement her budget by working as a part-time waitress24. She cares significantly about her outward appearance. Her self esteem depends on how other people see her.

PERSONALITY

Intuitive – Observant
Thinking – Feeling
Judging – Prospecting
Assertive – Turbulent

ACTIVITIES

- Sports[29]
- Movies and series[30]
- Reading[31]
- Music, partying[32]

PRODUCTS – BRANDS[33]

NIVEA
Eucerin
Neutrogena
EAU THERMALE Avène
LA ROCHE-POSAY LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE

Appendix H: Customer Journeys of France, Spain, and Colombia

Customer Journey France

	AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	BUYING DECISION		USE	ADVOCACY	
ACTIONS	Recognize skin disorder (acne and oily skin) Try To find what went wrong, make research, Is advised by a friend or a medical expert[1]	Compares/ evaluate the alternatives by looking at specific characteristics: Price, design, composition, opinions/ reviews Ask if people have experience with the brand[4]	Go to the pharmacy and choose between the alternatives in mind[7]	Picks the product and pays	Start using the product Wait a few weeks to see if effective results are coming[10]	Renew the purchase after a good experience[13]	Share general opinions about skin care products[16]
GOALS	Find an effective solution for the skin problem[2]	Find the best product / brand for skin care and its skin disorder[5]	Buying the product they want [8]	Sticks to the budget Buys a product that respects her skin condition [9]	The product does not harm the skin, quick results are visible [11]	Repeat a good experience[14]	Shares her experience with friends
FRUSTRATIONS			The pharmacist gives not enough information	The product contains bad ingredients for the skin	The skin quickly gets used to the product and the product is not effective any longer		
EMOTIONAL JOURNEY	🙁 *Concerned and insecure by the problem and high hopes for solution*	☺ *Thinking of finding the right solution*	☺ *Has satisfaction to buy a new product matching expectations*	😐 *Money well spent* [9]	☺ *Satisfied with product purchased*	☺ *Tells friends and family about the product* **Easy process**	☺ Writes an online review/ social media posting **Happy to share**
INSIGHTS	They are looking for help by asking friends and/or medical expert	Experience with the brand of others are important	If they go to the pharmacy they are not really convinced yet	They are convinced about the product and they desire the product	The customers gives it a trial period and following the process up	If the customer is satisfied they are going to rebuy it	After a good experience they are going to share it with family or friends

Customer Journey Spain

	AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	BUYING DECISION		USE	ADVOCACY
ACTIONS	Identifies the skin problem (acne and oily skin) [22]	Asks the pharmacist for recommendations Talks to friends about it Searches on the internet for more information [25]	Goes to the pharmacy Looks for a product for acne skin [27]	Goes back to the pharmacy to buy the product [29]	Start using the product Wait a few weeks to see if the product is giving the expected results [31]	Keep buying the product due to the product's results Recommend the product [33]
GOALS	To create a good first impression [23]	To find the best product for her skin disorder [26]	To find the best solution To get good recommendation and helpful information from the pharmacist To find the best value for money [28]	To stay in the budget To buy a natural and high-quality product for the specific problem To have an easy purchase[30]	To see improvement of the skin [32]	To meet expectations[34]
FRUSTRATIONS	Realizes while looking at social media and comparing to others[24] Low self esteem	Gets lost because there are too many products and too much information Feels confused due to too many options	Doesn't get the help from the pharmacists	Doesn't stay into the budget	Doesn´t get the results as fast as she expects it	
EMOTIONAL JOURNEY	*Frustrated and unsure because of skin problems* **Frustrated**	*Has found a lot of possible solutions* **Requires effort**	*Looks forward to buy a product for her specific skin* **Excited**	*Has satisfaction to buy a new product matching expectations* **Excited**	*Satisfied with product purchased* **Satisfied**	*Tells friends and family about the product* **Easy process**
INSIGHTS	High awareness of a healthy skin	Recommendations of other people are important	People trust the pharmacists' opinion	People prefer to buy in pharmacies	People expect a quick result	People will recommend if they like the product

Customer Journey Colombia

	AWARENESS		CONSIDERATION		BUYING DECISION	USE	ADVOCACY	
ACTIONS	Notices pimples and/or oily skin[34]	Asks friends and family If the problem continues for +2 weeks, goes to dermatologist [38]	a)Sets an appointment with dermatologist if condition is severe and gets a treatment [42] b)Goes straight to pharmacy if the condition is minor [43]	Looks for a pharmacy or dermatologic store, prices and reviews (if not given by dermatologist) [48]	Goes to dermatological store/ pharmacy [52]	First application of the product	Re-purchases	(if asked) shares opinion and reviews[60]
GOALS	To have a healthy skin with no effort (pimples are just a result of unhealthy diet and will go away with no measures) [35]	To get more information and understand the cause(s) [39]	To get an appointment quickly and then gets the right diagnosis and treatment [44]	To find the best place and price to buy (with health system partnerships) [49]	To buy a product with the best value for money[53]	To solve the problem, to be satisfied with the product and brand [56]	Repeat a good experience [59]	To share feedback
FRUSTRATIONS	Not understanding the cause of bad skin conditions [36]	Expectations not fulfilled (pimples go away without measure) [40]	Poor or bad service of health insurance Uncertainty when choosing a doctor [45]	Feeling insecure because of variating prices and low control of brand [50] Concerns about dermatologist's biases (gets commission with companies)	Not knowing if the product is going to solve the skin problem and knowing that dermatological products are expensive [54]	Wasting money [57]	Not having the same results	
EMOTIONAL JOURNEY	*Neutral emotion as long as problem does not continue [37]* 😐 **Calm expectant**	*Stressed about disorder but encouraged to solve it* **Stressed** ☹️	*Wishes to find a good dermatologist [46]* **Insecure** ☹️	*Finds several distribution channels with different prices* 😐 **Confused**	😊 *High expectation to find the product and receive a good service* **Excited and hopeful**	😊 *a)Satisfied with purchased product* **Satisfied** *b)Not satisfied with purchased product* **Dissatisfied**		😊 *Happy to share her experience [61]* **Joy**
INSIGHTS	Usually users know their skin and know if the disorder is because of food or something more complex [37]	If the disorder continues, people first try to solve it by asking for advice from friends and family [41]	People with private health systems are the ones who usually go to the dermatologist and care about their skin [47]	Users tend to go to pharmacies that is recommended by dermatologist (partnerships between dermatologists or health insurances) [51]	Dermatologist has the last saying [55]	Satisfaction depends on noticeable changes after a short time [58]		Users are willing to share opinion with friends and family [62]

Declaration of Authorship

"I assure you that I have done this bachelor thesis independently, that I have listed all aids that I have received and used and all sources of publications. I have identified the contents of the sources in particular the contents from the internet taken."

Münster, 17.02.2020

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