

The influence of gender on psychological factors in the cosmetics sector

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Disclosure Statement :	The author is not aware of any funding that could affect the objectivity of this study.
Conflict of Interest :	The author reports no conflicts of interest.
Cite this article :	Ngono Eteme Melingui, B. N. (2021). The influence of gender on psychological factors in the cosmetics sector. International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics, 2(6), 82-99. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5531952
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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5531952
Received: August 06, 2021

Published online: October 01, 2021

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Abstract:

Currently, the cosmetics industry is flourishing all over the world. It no longer seems to be the preserve of women. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effect of gender on the psychological variables of cosmetic consumption. To answer this question, a review of the literature and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 19 consumers made it possible to select relevant variables for the study. The exploration was followed by a data collection phase with 279 consumers using a questionnaire. Following the analysis of flat sorts, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation and the comparison of the means test, the results show significant differences in consumption according to gender. Explicitly, the results show that compared to men, women are more sensitive to brands and more involved in the toilet milk category. They also indicate that both men and women are concerned about their self-image and are influenced by their environment when it comes to cleansing milk. The managerial implications of this research may have a strong impact on gender-based brand segmentation and positioning strategies. Although this research is conducted on a single product category and in one region of the country, it has the merit of drawing on behavioral change theories to study a field of investigation little explored in the Cameroonian context.

Key words: brand Sensitivity, Enduring Involvement, Self-Image, Gender, Theories of Behavioral Change

JEL Classification: M3 ; M31 ; M37

Type of article: Applied research

1. Introduction :

Brands transform an intangible asset into financial value. They are undeniable assets for companies (Aaker, 1991; Bravo et al, 2017) who consider them as their most valuable asset at the origin of brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Pina and Dias, 2021) and consumer loyalty (Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2006). They are also beneficial to the consumer and society (Fournier, 1998; Kapferer, 2008).

One of the markets where brands are thriving is the cosmetics market (Euromonitor, 2021). Admittedly, the global cosmetics market has been strongly shaken by the health crisis. However, it will rebound in 2021 with an estimated growth of 3% and the explosion of e-commerce. As a result, the global online sales of beauty and personal care products have increased by 23% from 2020-2021 (Euromonitor, 2021). The growth of this market is especially remarkable in African countries. Also, global giants of global brands such as L'Oreal, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Godrej or Longrich are setting up in the continent (Business France Central Africa, 2020). On observation, Cameroon is not left behind: cosmetics have been a juicy market there since 2006, accelerating since 2016 (+15% on average over the period from 2014 to 2018). Much more, the flagship segment which is skin-care products, represents 29% of market share (Okole, 2019).

Traditionally the "preserve" of women, we have noticed over the last twenty years a change in cosmetic consumption habits such as westernization, the increasing use of professional institutes, depigmentation¹ and the rise of supermarkets which account for 73% of cosmetic sales². The desire to improve one's physical attractiveness seems to be an inherent characteristic of most individuals (Winston, 2003). Also, some men are showing a growing interest in cosmetic products to the point of becoming more and more new prey coveted by beauty brands. Several cosmetic giants (L'Oréal, Clarins, Lancôme, Vichy, Clinique, Nivéa, Chanel, etc.) have followed the lead of Nickel, a forerunner in this field³. In the West as well as in Asia, it is now the men's cosmetics market that is currently growing rapidly (Ahssen, 2019). Shaving and hair care products, which were once mainly dedicated to men's hygiene, have given way to other specific products: deodorants, face creams, anti-wrinkle and even make-up. Men's magazines (Men Fitness, Esquire, etc.) have been created. Hygiene is no longer synonymous with virility or femininity but with well-being. Even more, wellness and health have become priorities for the majority of men (Otnes and McGrath, 2001; Dano et al., 2003a, b; Ramshida and Manikandan, 2014). The 'marriage' between masculinity and aesthetics seems to signal the 'end of taboos'. Despite the Coronavirus, men are brimming with appetite for cosmetics. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic reinforces contemporary aspirations to transcend gender. It is also the author of new beauty trends (Clean Beauty, Green Beauty, Blue Beauty, the Make-up and the skinimalistic approach...) in the sense that confined, consumers carry the practices and rituals of beauty salons into their homes (Tomaz, 2020).

In Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular, the pace is not as fast as in the rest of the world but the change in habits is real. Thus, until very recently, cosmetics were exclusively for women. But gradually, men are making it their business. More and more of them are buying the products they consume. Apart from perfumes and shaving preparations, men are more likely to use face creams, body lotions and shampoos. They frequently mixed beauty salons. The market for men's cosmetics is becoming an economic reality in Cameroon as a distributor points out: "*Men rarely and hardly enter perfumeries. But there is a new trend: homosexuals. They frequent perfumeries more than women [...]. You can recognize them by their manners and their needs*" (Sébastien, 35 years old). The comments of this distributor reveal one of the

¹ *Cosmetics industry business meetings, April 2013, <http://export.businessfrance.fr/Galerie/Files/Agenda/Plaqueette-rencontres-affaires-Cosmetiques-2013-Cameroun.pdf>*

² *Alter Eco (2016), "When industry rubs shoulders with craft", No. 141, August 16-29, p.7.*

³ *Source: Capital, n°154, July 2004, p. 90.*

reasons for a real change in mentalities, namely homosexuality and the emergence of sexual minorities. A very current phenomenon (Awondo; 2012; Menyengue, 2016; Foe, 2017), homosexuality is making headlines in the Cameroonian media and social networks. The most fragrant examples are the publication of allegedly homosexual public personalities by the *Météo*, the *Nouvelle d'Afrique* and the *Anecdote*; the rise of the rights of LGBT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender) persons; the arrest of allegedly homosexual individuals among whom *Shakiro* and *Patricia*; the mediatized stay of the legally married homosexual couple, etc.).

However, not all men perceive cosmetics in the same way. Some men still think that these products are a woman's business. Therefore, they use their wives' cleansing milks. Dano et al (2003a) note that this category of men fears that those around them will learn that they use creams, since certain mentalities do not accept the idea that a man can be flirtatious without being effeminate or even homosexual. Indeed, it is not yet fully accepted in African mores (especially in Cameroon) that men use beauty products. This is what an interviewed consumer said:

"I don't talk about toilets milks with my entourage. In Africa, it is even aberrant that a man discusses these things! [...]. In reality, among the Betis, a man does not anoint himself! They say that he must "smell like a goat" to say that he must have a natural odor. [...]" (Sylvestre, 45 years old).

Men's fear is based on society's judgment that would call into question their virility. Thus, they do not dare to take the plunge and fall back on the products of their wives, whose role of influence remains important. These comments from consumers illustrate this: *"I stick to the milk my wife uses [...]" (Antoine, 41). "I use what I see in my room [...]" (Vincent, 32).*

In view of this mixed finding, it seems appropriate to look at the consumption of cosmetic products by gender. The research on male/female differences in purchasing behavior is old, but the adoption of the notion of gender to study these differences is very recent. Even so, the most important stream of research on the term gender in marketing has focused specifically on the influence of gender on women's purchasing behavior (Ben Guirat, 2008). Yet, according to Palan (2001), gender is the best predictor of consumer behavior. In fact, it is frequently used as a segmentation criterion for clothing or for cosmetics (Putrevu, 2001; Kotler et al., 2015). Thus, the objective of this article is to highlight significant causal links between gender and psychological variables of the individual. From this research object, the following main question arises: 'what is the influence of gender on the psychological factors of cosmetic consumption?

The research question will first lead us to present the conceptual framework of the research. The methodological choices will then be described. The third part will present the results, which will be extended by a discussion and the presentation of the limits and avenues of research.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development:

2.1. Marketing approach to gender

The concept of "gender" first appeared in the United States, and was born out of a reflection on sex and the use of this variable in social science research. Stoller (1968) is undoubtedly the psychologist to whom the concept of "gender" owes its popularity. He defines gender as "the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person. From this comes the idea that there is no real correspondence between gender (male/female) and sex (man/woman), establishing a form of dualism between nature and culture. Gender corresponds to the psychological and cultural attributes of men and women, acquired during their socialization (Oakley, 1972). Gender is the set of discourses that produce the difference between the sexes insofar as it is part of the economy of contributions structured by a domination of the "masculine" over the "feminine", evolving in history and in the social space (Omer-Houseaux, 2008).

Table 1: *Definitions of gender and sex*

Notion	Definition
The genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refers to roles that are socially determined: the behaviors, activities and attributes that a society considers appropriate for men and women (WHO). - Allows the social and cultural distinction between women and men (Tissier-Desbordes and Kimmel, 2002). - Is a cultural definition of appropriate behaviors for each of the two sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles" (Palan, 2001, p.4) - Gender has become the standard term for cultural distinctions between men and women, while sex is standard for biological distinctions (Wood and Eagly, 2010).
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that differentiate men and women (WHO). - Is a biological difference between men and women. Sex is based on physical attributes, whereas gender involves the study of the meanings that societies and individuals give to the categories male/female. Gender is a social construct, the social meaning of sex (Tissier-Desbordes and Kimmel, 2002). - Sex is the biological and gender is social (Stoller, 1968).

Source: *Author*

From Table 1, a significant difference between the terms gender and sex emerge. Gender refers to social categories (male and female) while sex refers to anatomical categories (male and female). However, for some authors, gender is purposely reduced to women only. It is used to mean that female thinking can transform disciplinary paradigms. Moreover, in marketing many studies have been developed from a feminist perspective (Ben Guirat, 2008). Other authors (Tissier-Desbordes and Kimmel, 2002) agree that the shift from "sex" to "gender" reflects both a rejection of the erotic symbolism of the term "sex", an affirmation of the rights of homosexuals and a desire to distinguish the biological from the cultural. Thus, in American literature, gender replaces the word "sex", which is used less and less because it is often considered politically incorrect. Today, the notion of gender is almost synonymous with that of sex (Omer-Houseaux, 2008; Wood and Eagly, 2010). Given the above, the terms "gender" and "sex" will be used interchangeably in this research.

The importance of the concept of gender in marketing is commonly recognized by both researchers and practitioners (Tissier-Desbordes and Kimmel, 2002). Indeed, according to Otnes and McGrath (2001), because of the evolution of the place of men and women in society, some men are able to go beyond the traditional sexual orientation of roles and adopt, when the situation requires it, a feminine behavior, such as buying a cleansing milk. However, the purchase of body oils is still valued by men in its utilitarian dimension as a means of achieving an objective: body maintenance. Gender can allow for a better understanding of consumption behavior and only in relevant situations (Ulrich and Tissier-Desbordes, 2013). As soon as the context of study is subject to the influence of the body and the biological, gender will be able to shed additional light on sex. For example, if the context is about products, brands or experiences that are strongly linked to sex, gender can help explain differences in consumer behavior as specified by Ramshida and Manikandan, (2014) in the case of cosmetics.

This being the case, several theories attempt to explain the psychological processes that lead to change or resistance to change. We will focus our attention on five of them that seem particularly relevant to explain a behavioral change observed in the consumption of cosmetics, more specifically cleansing milk as we mentioned at the beginning of this work. These include the Stages of Change Model (SCM), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Social Learning

Theory or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (TIB) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

The stages of change models developed by Prochaska and Di Clemente (1982) states that behavior change occurs in five distinct stages: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and consolidation. This model is based on the assumption that change is cyclical and continuous, not final. The transition from one stage to another is rarely linear: individuals will encounter difficulties that lead them back to the previous stage, but this does not necessarily mean that they should give up. Individuals are therefore described in terms of progression through a series of behavioral stages.

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) TRA is based on the premise that individuals are generally rational and use the information around them to make decisions. Before taking action, people consider the consequences of engaging in behavior. Intention is the intermediary between attitude and action: it is the decisive predictor of behavior. It represents the instructions that an individual give to himself or herself with respect to behavior (Triandis, 1977). It is a state of mind that directs individual attention and experience and activates them toward a goal (Bird, 1988). TRA is predicted by two variables: attitude toward the behavior and the subjective norms associated with performing the behavior. Attitude toward the behavior reflects an individual's feelings or degree of favorable or unfavorable evaluation of behavior. Subjective norms represent the perceived social pressures to perform or not to perform behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory therefore states that behavioral choices in toilet milk consumption are reasoned, and that intention is the driving force behind the behavior. In the development of intention, cognitive (evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of possible behaviors), affective (pleasure or disgust), and conative (action or not) variables are involved, on the one hand, and the role of the environment or social pressure on the other.

SCT developed by Bandura (1977) appeals to a less rational aspect of human behavior: self-confidence. For this author, it is essential to believe in the effectiveness of the behavior to obtain the desired result and in the personal capacity to adapt this behavior. He considers behaviors as the result of learning from the propositions and actions of the individual's environment. Thus, according to this theory, the probability of not using the toilet milks is determined by the understanding of what needs to be done to avoid an undesired effect. The identified motivations and disincentives influence the behavior and intention of individuals in a situation leading them to make a three-dimensional decision (rejection-trial-adoption): either individual reject the toilet milks (in case of a categorical refusal), or they try them first before giving up or not, or they adopt them (if they are sufficiently convinced)

Developed by Triandis (1977), TIB has a downside to TRA. It limits the scope of intention as a predictor of behavior and integrates the force of habit into this model. This model takes into account the conditions external to the individual that facilitate or complicate the adoption of the desired behavior. Indeed, in this theory, the strength of the habit, which designates the frequency with which a behavior has already occurred previously, is the predictive factor for the adoption of a behavior. In our case, if an individual has never used a cleansing milk (in the case of some men), it is the intention that will determine the adoption or not of this behavior. On the contrary, if the behavior is a habit (as in the case of women), it is the habit of the gesture that will replace the intention.

The TPB is undoubtedly an extension of the TRA. Indeed, after discovering some flaws in TRA, Ajzen (1991) modified it by introducing a third element: perceived behavioral control. Together, the attitude towards the behavior, the subjective norm and the perceived control over the behavior lead to the formation of a behavioral intention and the behavior is the observable response to this intention (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB enriches the TRA in that it takes into account all the resources that condition the realization of the behavior. Perceived control over behavior, while intended to counterbalance situations in which people have little control over their

behaviors and attitudes, also reflects the presence of external factors constraining the performance of a given behavior as well as the individual's perception of his or her self-efficacy in performing that behavior (Taylor & Todd, 1995). In the case of an individual, these factors can be diverse (individual, psychological, social, etc.). In the case of men's consumption of cleansing milk, these factors can be personal (the desire to take care of one's skin and image, to combine well-being and health, the desire to have a youthful appearance), psychosocial (depigmentation: a fashion effect, pressure from the spouse or entourage, the effect of the media, etc.), situational (the circumstances of the purchase, acne or skin problems, the climate, etc.). In view of the above, there are variables between the intention to act and the action that leads to the realization of an "anti-intentional" behavior. In other words, the intention loses its autonomy over the behavior (Assande, 2011).

2.2. Psychological Factors of Consumption Influenced by Gender

Our work is based on the main hypothesis that there are significant differences between men and women in terms of product consumption behavior and specifically toilet milks. The literature and the qualitative study allowed us to select as gender-influenced psychological variables such as brand sensitivity, enduring involvement, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-image.

2.2.1. Brand sensitivity (BS)

Brand sensitivity is the fact of looking at the brand, being attached to it, attributing importance to it. A consumer is branded sensitive if he or she is interested in consulting the information, "what is the brand?", if he or she takes the brand into account in his or her decision-making process (Kapferer and Laurent, 1992).

The consideration of socio-demographic variables (age, gender, occupation, income, education, household size, etc.) in explaining differences in BS between consumer remains mixed. Indeed, some authors (Kapferer and Laurent, 1992) believe that these variables are a poor predictor of the BS for all product categories combined. Conversely, Hebel et al (2010) show that the most explanatory criterion of brand sensitivity is gender for the choice of yoghurt, for example. However, very little work (Workman and Lee, 2012) has focused on studying gender differences in consumer BS. Yet, authors agree to argue that consumers regardless of the continent, love brands (Cheng, 2014; Deloitte, 2015; Belaïd et al., 2017). More so, women are visibly interested in brands (Ngono and Tsapi, 2014; Korai, 2017). But, few studies statically test the relationship between gender and MAS. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is formulated.

H1: Gender positively influences consumers' brand awareness.

2.2.2. Enduring involvement

Sustained involvement is a stable trait that represents the degree of interest or stimulation in a product over the long term (Higie and Feick, 1989). Involved consumers are motivated to actively seek and process information about a product category (Warrington and Shin, 2000).

Many researchers (Nyeck, 2002; Orbach et al., 2006) note that consumer involvement is strong in the case of high-risk products such as cosmetics. Moreover, Gurthrie and Kim (2009) point out that women are strongly involved in cosmetics. Based on these considerations, hypothesis 2 is formulated.

H2: Gender positively influences sustainable consumer involvement.

2.2.3. Self-image

Self-image is defined as the set of individual thoughts and feelings that refer to oneself as an object (Hanspal et al. 2017). It represents beliefs, positive or negative, that we hold about

the traits that make up our identity: it is the more or less positive evaluation we have of ourselves (Baynast et al., 2017).

To date, although the impact of gender on self-image is almost unknown, we believe by referring to the results of the exploratory study that gender has an influence on the self-image. Indeed, through the use of beauty milks, consumers are intimately connected to their health, beauty and well-being (Ngono, 2019).

Although the change in men's habits regarding the use of cosmetics is noticeable everywhere including Cameroon, we believe that the extent of the situation is not yet phenomenal. This is all the more so since the main motivation of men is utilitarian. We assume then that women remain more concerned with the looks and thoughts of others, and as Ramshida and Manikandan (2014) state, their appearance. Therefore, they have a high self-image. Also, hypothesis 3 is formulated.

H3: Gender positively influences consumers' self-image.

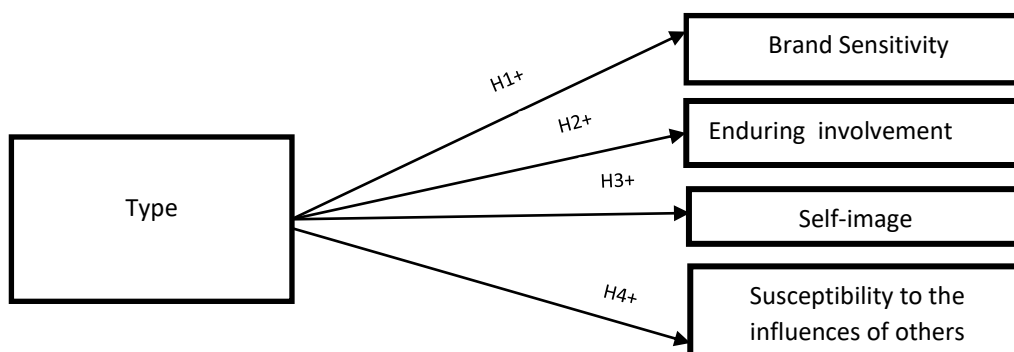
2.2.4. Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influences

Susceptibility to interpersonal influences refers to the ability to conform to the expectations of others in making purchase decisions, and/or the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others or requesting information from them (Bearden et al., 1989). These authors argue that consumer sensitivity to interpersonal influence has been fairly neglected in the consumer behavior and marketing literature. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) suggest that conformity may result from two types of social influences set in motion by different motives in conforming individuals: normative social influence and informative social influence. Normative social influence is motivated by the desire to be accepted and not rejected by others, i.e., by concerns about one's social image. Informative social influence is motivated by the search for accuracy of judgment. It results from a cognitive conflict between the individual's beliefs and the position of others. In summary, we predict that gender impacts the consumer's susceptibility to interpersonal influences. Thus, hypothesis 4 is formulated.

H4: Gender positively influences consumers' susceptibility to the influences of others.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model that forms the basis of this research. It provides a synthesis of the discussion presented above.

Figure 1: The research model



Source: Author

3. Research Methodology

This section discusses the qualitative study, data collection, sampling and measurement of variables.

3.1 Qualitative study

This research can be described as exploratory in nature. Indeed, most of the relationships between gender and the various variables of the model seem to be not yet well explored. For this reason, we chose to conduct, first, a qualitative study in the form of individual semi-directive interviews. This study was carried out with 19 (7 men and 12 women) ⁴users aged 18 and over⁵. We took care to respect the principle of saturation (Pires, 1997). The recorded interviews were analyzed using a content analysis following the procedure of Bardin (1991). At the end of this study and based on the literature, the conceptual model was proposed.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

The parent population consisted of users of beauty lotions, aged 18 years and above, residing in the city of Ngaoundéré. Data collection was done using a face-to-face questionnaire. In the absence of a sampling frame, we opted for a convenience sampling method. We administered 279 questionnaires during the month of February 2020. Finally, the choice of the toilet milks was dictated by the criteria such as a variety of brand choices in the markets, high frequency of purchase, personal nature of use, strong competition between brands and popularity⁶. To these are added the topicality of the product category: cleansing milk (LT) is the successful product category in the skin care segment (Okole, 2019).

3.3 Measurements of Variables

We propose to present the appropriate measures selected for each of the variables forming our conceptual model. It should be noted that the qualitative phase allowed us to ensure the structure of the chosen scales and to enrich them with certain items adapted to the context of the study. Sensitivity to brands is measured by the Kapferer and Laurent scale (1992). For long-term involvement, we used the P.I.A. scale (Personal Relevance, Interest and Attraction to the product) proposed by Strazzieri (1994). Self-image is measured with the Bozzo et al. scale (2008). Finally, the scale of susceptibility to interpersonal influences is inspired by Bearden et al. (1989) translated by Frini (2006). All the variables in the model were subject to a multi-item measure assessed by the 5-point ascending Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Description of the sample

The final sample is composed of 100 men (35.8%) and 179 women (64.2%) distributed according to the following age groups: fewer than 18% (3.9%), 18-24 years old (31.1%), 25-34 years old (46.5%), 35-44 years old (14.3%), 44-54 years old (3.2%) and over 55 years old (1%). This age and gender structure of the final sample is very similar to that of the city of Ngaoundéré

⁴ We interviewed more women than men because Cameroonian women consumers are the main target of the cosmetics industry and particularly of the toilet milk industry (Mission économique, 2006) for the simple reason that they take better care of their bodies than most men.

⁵ Faced with the growing influence of beauty bloggers (Sabharwal et al., 2014) in Africa, young people precisely, girls cultivate a sophisticated image early. Consequently, they perform beauty treatments (manicure-pedicure, make-up, use of body milks) and even depigmentation (Korsaga-Somé et al., 2016; Mayoughouo and Wamba, 2017). Moreover, the under-18s are poor relations in the marketing literature. Yet, they constitute a promising market (Derbaix and Leheut, 2008).

⁶ Let us recall that the beauty milk sector in Cameroon has been booming since 2006. Aware of this reality, most of the companies in this sector of activity are flooding the markets with their brands. Some of them sponsor soap operas popular with women. Others regularly innovate in terms of packaging and product ranges. Thus, as far as billboard advertising is concerned, cosmetic products occupy the hit parade of subscriptions with nearly 35% of the market. Source: Alter Eco (2014), *Tenors by sector*, n°082, May, pp. 1-15 ; Alter Eco (2016), *Cameroonian cosmetics: industry rubs shoulders with crafts*, n°141, August, pp 6-9.

from the last population census. This shows that the sample obtained is representative. Among the respondents, 75.9% said they bought their own toilet milk and 21.1% had a relative buy it for them.

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis

In order to ensure the structure of the measurement scales and their relevance, a preliminary purification procedure was carried out. This consisted of a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation followed by a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha. All factor analyses were performed in SPSS 20. Table 2 presents the main characteristics of each of the measurement instruments used in this research.

Table 2: Factor structure of the measurement scales

Indicators of the measurement scale	Factor structure			Alpha of Cronbach	Test KMO	Bartlett's spherical test (ddl) Sign.	Eigen value	% of variance explained
	Com.	F1	F2					
Enduring involvement								
The body lotion (BL) is a product that really matters to me (pert1)	0,804	0,897		0,920	0,917	1303,428 15 0,000	4,509	75,146
The BL is a product that I consider particularly important (pert2).	0,768	0,876						
The BL is a product I particularly like to talk about (int1).	0,704	0,839	-					
The BL is a product that interests me (int2).	0,726	0,852						
The BL is a product that particularly attracts me (att1).	0,776	0,881	-					
The BL is a product that I enjoy buying (att2).	0,730	0,855						
Brand sensitivity	Com.	F1	F2			-		
I don't choose a BL based on the brand (s-ach1).	0,807	0,898		0,947		1352,676 10 0,000	4,139	82,786
I look at the brand name when I buy a BL (s-ach2).	0,860	0,927						
For BLs, the brand is not very important (s-ach3).	0,781	0,884	-					
I take the brand into account when I buy a BL (s-ach4).	0,880	0,938						
This is the brand I look at first when choosing a BL (s-ach5).	0,811	0,901						
Self-image	Com.	F1	F2					
The BL I'm using is what I think it is (s-real).	0,667	0,817				568,616	2,780	

The BL I'm using fits well with what I would like to be (s-real/real).	0,715	0,846	-			6 0,000		
The BL I use matches well with what others think of me (real s-social).	0,656	0,810		0,848				69,507
The BL I use fits well with what I would like others to think of me (dreamy s-social).	0,742	0,861			0,721			
Susceptibility to the influences of others	Com.	F1	F2					
When I buy a BL, I often consult with others to help me make the best choice (i-info1).	0,726	-	0,849					
I often identify with other people by buying the same BLs and brands as them (i-nor4).	0,588	0,744	-	0,745 (F1)			2,630 (F1)	43,832 (F1)
Although I have little experience with a BL, I often ask my friends for advice about this cleansing milk (i-info3).	0,683	-	0,814		0,738	440,497 15 0,000		
I frequently gather information from friends or family before buying a BL (i-info4).	0,679	-	0,710					
If people could see me using a BL, I would often buy the brand they expect me to buy (i-nor7).	0,726	0,849	-				1,424 (F2)	23,732 (F2)
I feel integrated in my environment by buying the same BL and the same brands as the others (i-nor8).	0,653	0,806	-	0,737 (F2)				

Source: Analysis of our data

The examination of the results of the PCA carried out on the different measurement scales is satisfactory. Indeed, the factors obtained at the end of the factorial analysis all have eigenvalues greater than 1 and restore more than 65% of the initial information. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha values are all above 0.7. They are interesting (Evrard et al., 2009).

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The purpose of this research is to analyze the dependency or non-dependency relationships between gender and consumer psychological factors. To this end, we formulated research hypotheses. To validate them, we conducted the t-test that compares the differences in means. This is the independent samples mean comparison test that is often implemented in marketing to compare the means of one or more dependent variable(s) metric(s) based on a two-modality

dummy variable. In this research, the metric dependent variables are: brand sensitivity, enduring involvement, self-image, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. The dummy variable is gender with male and female as modalities. The main results of the test of comparison of means between gender and the study variables are recorded in Table 3 below.

Table 3 : Independent samples test

	Group statistics		t-test for equality of means						
	Means. Female	Average Male	T	Ddl	Sig (bilateral)	Average diff.	Standard deviation	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower	Superior
Enduring involvement	21,128	16,450	6,594	185,661	0,000	4,67849	0,70955	3,27868	6,07830
Brand sensitivity	17,290	13,030	5,594	181,577	0,000	4,26050	0,76157	2,75785	5,76316
Self-image	11,988	9,490	4,985	191,625	0,000	2,49883	0,50130	1,51006	3,48760
Inflnorm	11,095	9,650	3,192	216,582	0,002	1,44497	0,45272	0,55268	2,33726
Inflinfo	8,910	6,790	6,385	209,084	0,000	2,12061	0,33213	1,46586	2,77537
N	179	100	-						

Source: Analysis of our data

Table 3 shows that women have significantly higher means than men in all the variables studied. However, in view of the slight differences in the means of susceptibility to interpersonal influences and self-image with respect to gender, we can say that these two variables do not allow for a significant differentiation between men and women in the consumption of toilet milks. In other words, both men and women care about their appearance and are influenced by others. Furthermore, under the assumption of unequal variances, the calculated t-values are 6.594; 5.594; 4.985; 3.192 and 6.385 at 185.661; 181.577; 191.625; 216.582 and 209.084 degrees of freedom, respectively, significant at probabilities (p) of .000 and .002. Since these calculated t-values are significant at the 0.05 level, the differences in the levels of the psychological variables are significant between women and men. These results show that brand sensitivity, enduring involvement, self-image, and susceptibility to others' influences vary by gender. In other words, at the 5% threshold, men and women do not have the same level of brand sensitivity, enduring involvement, self-image and susceptibility to interpersonal influences. In conclusion, hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4 are verified.

4.4. Discussion of the Results

The results of this research show that there is a positive and significant effect of gender on brand sensitivity. This result corroborates the work of Workman and Seung-Hee (2012) which states that women are more sensitive to brands than men. Furthermore, the results found allow us to confirm hypothesis H2 and conclude that gender has a positive impact on sustainable involvement: women are more involved with toilet milks than men. This result converges with the research of Gurthie and Kim (2009) who demonstrate the high involvement of women in cosmetics. These first two results confirm the postulates of the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) and the theory of interpersonal behavior (Triandis, 1977). In our context, cosmetics are anchored in women's customs. African women are constantly in search of appearance (Ngono and Tsapi, 2014) whatever their purchasing power (Ngoulibi, 2015). Thus, in Francophone Africa, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon are the three main countries that are experiencing a boom in the cosmetics industry (Setalmaa, 2020).

Our results also allow us to confirm hypothesis H3 attesting that the gender of the consumer has a significant and positive relationship with self-image. This result is consistent with the results of Ramshida and Manikandan (2014) who indicate that men as much as women care

about their appearance: the change in behavior is real and visible. This attests to the postulate of the stages of change models (Prochaska and Di Clemente, 1992) and the predictions of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) but also of the theory of planned action (Ajzen, 1991). Hypothesis H4 is validated. This result allows us to say that there is a positive and significant effect between gender and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influences. This result is partly consistent with the findings of Kotler et al, (2015) and Ngono (2019) that women are more influenced by their relatives in terms of information and norms. However, our study contrasts with this literature in that it reveals that both men and women allow themselves to be influenced by those around them in terms of the toilet milks. This result can be explained by changing attitudes. To the best of our knowledge, hypotheses H3 and H4 have not yet been thoroughly tested in previous research.

5. Conclusion:

This research has resulted in a better understanding of the relationship between gender and the psychological variables identified in the area of the toilet milks. This research shows that women are more brand conscious and involved than men. It also revealed that men are a niche market in that they, like women, are concerned about their self-image and are subject to informational and normative social influences.

On the theoretical level, the main contribution deserves to be underlined. Indeed, the analysis of the influence of gender on the psychological variables studied presents a field of investigation that has not yet been sufficiently developed, especially in the Cameroonian context. In our opinion, this work makes a modest contribution by examining the relationship between gender and a number of psychological variables.

From a managerial perspective, our study confirms that women's sensitivity to brands of toilet milks is higher than that of men. Therefore, women are the main target of these products. This result should be exploited by cosmetic professionals who should use it when segmenting their market and positioning their brands. Moreover, gender-based segmentation is effective in several ways: (1) it is easy to know which segment an individual belongs to, (2) the segments thus defined are "broad enough to be profitable" and (3) the company can "direct its marketing efforts" towards men or women (Putrevu, 2001; Kotler et al., 2015). It becomes paramount, in our view, to communicate more about brands. Suggestively, advertising campaigns should focus on the "trans-generational consumption" of beauty lotions, identity status, the presence of relatives and purchase motivations (skin beautification, sensuality, charm, well-being, product originality, pleasure of discovering novelties, diversity of brands and product types, etc.). It is also desirable that brand managers develop strategies to increase the involvement of beauty milk consumers in particular. For this, it seems wise to take care of the packaging (Ngono, 2019). Beauty lotion bottles should reconcile effectiveness (due to their content), attractiveness (hygienic caps, rounded shapes, warm colors...) and durability (easy to carry, recyclable or reusable). Innovation is also welcome. Cosmetics companies would benefit from investing in labeling (Ngono and Tsapi, 2014). Furthermore, through containment and mask wearing, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the cosmetics industry. Consumers have changed the way they buy and use skincare products. Some products have been abandoned (deodorants, lipstick, perfumes, etc.) in favor of others (soaps, disinfecting gels, shampoos, etc.). Viruses, germs and mascara are a constant concern for consumers. Therefore, skin health remains a permanent topic and skin care creams a hot topic. Those responsible for cosmetics must be aware of this. Therefore, it is desirable that they align themselves with the new habits and practices of consumers. For example, organic and natural products have proven to be very popular in times of health crisis. We strongly suggest to the toilet milk industry to consider "organic milks", produced from natural ingredients such as flowers, fruits and vegetables (carrots, coconut, etc.), oils (palm kernel, shea, olive, etc.). Thus, milks made essentially from

shea butter or coconut help consumers (men and women) to maintain their skin during the bad dry season in the Great North or the harsh cold period in West Cameroon. These milks also boost skin immunity. Indeed, the natural ingredients strengthen the skin's defense against microbial pathogens (Omoyé, 2020). In addition, we recommend that marketers consider highlighting the societal value of cosmetic brands. They should intensify ethical and committed beauty (Clean Beauty, Green Beauty and Blue Beauty) throughout the value chain. They should raise consumers' awareness for an "environmental activism" which would be about taking care of oneself while preserving the planet. Indeed, the Coronavirus and its corollaries encourage a more natural beauty, free from injunctions and eco-responsible (Tomaz, 2020). Post-Covid-19 marketing should integrate these specificities of the new trend. Similarly, post-Covid-19 beauty should associate body, mind and planets.

This research also reveals that men are not indifferent to beauty milks. Thus, our results show the need for marketers to exploit this new and changing niche. They should offer them cleansing milks adapted to their needs, communicate taking into account their motivations (health, well-being, social approval, youthful appearance, etc.) and their entourage. Indeed, it is important to communicate well on "men's" cleansing milks to reach the objectives they are looking for. In the same vein, in addition to African women's beauty magazines (Amina, Diva, etc.), there could be magazines aimed at men in which they could be made aware of the use of the toilet milks according to skin types, climates, the composition of the bottles, etc. This awareness-raising could have a double objective: to enable them to know about toilets milk and to preserve their health and well-being, and to guard against the dangers of the liberalization of the cosmetics market (counterfeiting, imitation, etc.). Finally, online trade and local production must be emphasized. Similarly, the sale of beauty products via ultra-short circuits would gain in popularity.

Notwithstanding all the research contributions identified above, we note some limitations that we hope to address in future research. These include the fact that only one product category and one region of Cameroon were considered. It is recommended that the study be conducted on several other product categories. Similarly, extending the research to other regions of Cameroon could further enrich it.

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