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Current Issue

Breaking News
Formulary
Grayson Report
New Products
New Package
Personnel Round Up
Meetings
Print Version
Ad Index

Suppliers

Company Profiles
Literature Showcase
Corporate Profiles

Editor's Page

About Happi
2004 Media kit

Welcome to

Cosmeticpackaging&
Design.com!

Welcome to

Happi Latin America!
Happi China

Article Library

Index To Stories
Formulary Archive

Web Guide

Company Websites
Professional
Resources

Personal Care Cybrary®

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mailing list



subscribe



unsubscribe



As the potential in the ethnic hair care market grows with population influx and interracial families, so are offerings in various ethnic hair care categories. Bold reds and bright blondes are very popular this year in the ethnic hair color category. And items were also added in hair treatment and styling venues.

The ethnic hair care market has moved out of niche and onto supermarket shelves as well. Pantene's Pro-V Relaxed & Natural range is one example as marketers vie to grab the attention of multiethnic consumers as they move into higher income brackets.

Chicago-based Hunter Miller Group said African-American spending power is expected to soar from \$645.9 billion this year to \$852.8 billion in 2007. And this group's spending share in the hair care sector is nothing to ignore—30%—according to Hunter Miller.

African-American shampoo sales jumped 37.3% to \$7.8 million, according to Information Resources Inc. (IRI), Chicago. Shampoo unit sales rose 33%. Conditioner sales increased as well, up 11.5% to \$19.9 million. These figures exclude Wal-Mart sales.

Hunter Miller insisted in its "Born to shop: the purchasing behavior of African-Americans" report that African-Americans base their health and beauty purchases on their unique physiological needs, and spend 47% more on personal care products than other groups. More African-Americans also prefer "status symbol" brands than Caucasian consumers. But that doesn't mean they don't like a bargain.

The Virtues of Value

Though African-Americans account for two out of every three dollars spent by minorities, they still want more bang for their buck, according to Multicultural Marketing Resources' The Source Book of Multicultural Experts. The marketing research firm is based in New York.

WSL Strategic Retail, New York, NY, reported all consumer shopping habits have changed dramatically in the past four years, due to the free-fall of the U.S. stock market, increased unemployment, corporate and religious scandals and the aftermath of September 11. Numbers suggest consumers are shopping more, but at discount retailers.

In the first months of 2004, 63% of American

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women had shopped a supercenter, up from 32% in 2000 and 62% of women at all income levels had shopped at dollar stores, up from 56% in 2002. More than half of respondents had gone to a warehouse club, up from 35% in 2000, according to WSL.

Specifically, African-American consumers are twice as likely as other consumer groups to travel an hour or more to shop at a factory outlet, 37%, compared to 27% of all consumers, according to the Hunter-Miller Group.

As a result, African-American hair care companies are starting to lower their price points. Queen Helene introduced bonus sizes of the company's best-selling products. Cholesterol Hair Conditioning cream and Cholesterol Conditioning & Strengthening cream with Ginseng, are deep conditioning treatments for dry and damaged hair and now come in 5-pound tubs. Also, the alcohol-free Hard-to-Hold styling gel retails in a 5-pound jar. Executives said the gel adds fullness to the hair during blowdrying or touchups.



Queen Helene's popular Cholesterol cream now retails in a 5-pound tub.

"While many things happen in our lives, everybody wants to look good," insisted Shawn Tollerson, vice president of marketing, Soft Sheen-Carson.

Soft Sheen-Carson's new HiRez colors in just one application.



Soft Sheen-Carson recently launched HiRez High Resolution hair color. Executives said that permanent hair color can be achieved in just one application, unlike some other competitors, saving consumers valuable time and money.

"Because people of African descent have naturally dark hair, when they color it, they may need multiple colorings to

get results," explained Ms. Tollerson. "Now this product moves dark hair to brighter shades in just one application."

And experimenting with colors is very popular, especially red and brown shades, according to Soft Sheen-Carson executives. HiRez is available in 10 vibrant shades, ranging from Ruby Quake to Café Ole. They cost \$7.99 each.

Color Is More Than Hair Deep

Several other hair color lines were recently launched as well. Executives are hopeful, even though sales dipped 9.4% to \$20.4 million in 2003, according to IRI. Clairol Professional spiced up its Textures & Tones with a reformulation. The hair color formula and after-conditioner now contain double the moisture with Brazil nut oil and wheat protein. The result is soft, silky and manageable hair. Clairol Professional executives said 85% of African-American women relax their hair, which causes

considerable damage.

"Damage and breakage are the No. 1 concerns for African-Americans," insisted Lynne Boehn, senior manager of new business development, Clairol Professional. "And the conditioner gives longer-lasting hair care results."

Textures & Tone's 14 colors have the same hues and shade names; however, the reformulated products also retail in new packages. The larger boxes now feature color-coding for the brown, red and blonde variants, an African fabric motif background and larger model photos. The updated Textures & Tones logo is also larger and more pronounced. In-store, consumers can compare bigger swatches of hair as well.

"Blonde hair has become more fashionable and we wanted to make sure consumers can see we have the right shades for them," Ms. Boehn explained. "Though our best-selling SKU is black to cover gray, blondes last year came to the forefront primarily because of fashion trends, stars and music talent."

"We have noticed that hair color is still hot, especially reds and blondes," agreed Pumla Cossie, director of marketing and Dawn Phillips, brand manager of Colomer USA's multicultural team. "Highlighting in bold and vibrant colors is still making waves."

Crème of Nature added a new Blonding kit for men. Colomer USA executives said the men's ethnic hair color category is steadily growing while the women's ethnic hair color category is declining, and comprises nearly half of the hair color business.

"Believe it or not, the top four SKUs in the total ethnic hair color category are SKUs for men and two of the three top ethnic hair color brands target men," insisted Ms. Cossie and Ms. Philips. "There is opportunity here."

Crème of Nature also launched two new crème-gel hair colors for African-American women, Ragin' Red and Golden Brown. Parent company Colomer USA executives said red is a very on-trend color.

"Currently, two of our three top-selling hair color shades are red," noted Ms. Cossie and Ms. Philips. "Additionally, a trend in hair color today is a 'play' on multi-colors in highlights. The application of two or more complementary shades in the Crème of Nature color brand adds color dimension that is very trendy."

The crème-gel hair colors contain hydrolyzed wheat protein and sea collagen to penetrate and protect hair. Executives said relaxed hair that is double-processed (colored and relaxed) needs internal protection during color processing. The formulation is also non-drip.

Tangoing with Color

Last year, Colomer USA's Revlon Professional introduced Latina models to its packaging, and executives said Revlon Realistic has been well received in the Latina community.

Luis Garcia, of San Antonio-based consulting agency Garcia 360°, said companies' communication plans should show Hispanic consumers that they understand what is important to them culturally. In his report "Keys to Successful Marketing to Hispanics," he noted that almost half of Latinos living in the U.S. are foreign-born and carry a predisposition toward brands that were popular in their home countries. However, data shows that younger Hispanic consumers are, the longer they live in the U.S., more likely to consume English media as much as they do Spanish. The annual median household income for Hispanics in the U.S. has also risen to more than \$40,000.

Revlon Professional added its proprietary crystal

technology to the new Revlon Professional Realistic crème gel hair color. The technology creates an enhanced interaction between pigments and keratin for strong hair color retention. Executives said the formula also delivers moisturizing ingredients to the hair.



Revlon Realistic added creme-gel hair colors to its lineup.

P&G invested approximately \$90 million in Hispanic advertising last year for several of its brands. P&G's multicultural marketing vice president and general manager Graciela Eleta said in an interview with BusinessWeek that Hispanic consumers are seeking different kinds of pleasures, sensations and new experiences.

Natucor, a Brazilian company whose products are distributed by Dax in the U.S., knows all about new sensations. Dax is introducing Fleury Radiant hair color to dollar stores. The colors all feature a warm base and trend-setting shades such as Bluish Black and Chocolate. Executives insist that, in time, ethnic products will broaden to most consumers. Even now, there are three distinct Latin populations in the U.S.—Caribbean, South American and Mexican. And there are several hair types within those populations.

"When you go to Latin America, there are no ethnic products in the stores, they're for everyone," explained Dax president Vincent Durante. "To target Hispanics, you have to make a product that everyone can use."

Expressing Individuality

The same can be said for African-American hair, although many consumers share concerns such as breakage. Approximately 75% of African-American consumers use chemical relaxers, which is the largest ethnic hair care category, according to Hunter Miller. IRI reported African-American chemical sales grew 3.5% to \$33.5 million in 2003. Relaxing is known to be extremely damaging to hair, but it is preferred due to the versatility it offers.

"Consumers want the ability to wear different hairstyles in terms of their mood," explained Lynette Boone, director of marketing, Dark & Lovely. "People are doing their own thing; it's not about loose, flowing hair, it's about manageable and flexible hair."

Soft Sheen-Carson recently re-launched Dark & Lovely, a collection of relaxers. The products now feature a moisture replenishing system, a mixture of natural humectants and body-enhancing polymers to seal moisture into the hair, largely due to consumer requests. It also ties in with recent hairstyles, a third of which are deemed "natural" styles.

"The whole idea of textured hair is an emerging trend," said Soft Sheen-Carson's Ms. Tollerson. "African hair naturally has a curl pattern and now people are wearing very free, curly, unstructured looks. Relaxed hair also has movement to it by the way it is cut."

The packaging also got a makeover, featuring modern hairstyles and girl-next-door models for the average consumer.

The new Dax Relax from Dax Inc. features an all-in-one jar system with the No Lye Relaxer crème, Liquid Activator, Protective gel, Conditioning Neutralizing shampoo and Leave In conditioner. They are fortified



Executives said Dax's Wave & Groom gives men the option of a "Denzel Washington" look.

with aloe, chamomile, grape seed, lavender, passionflower, rosemary and tea tree to strengthen hair. The accompanying Dax Relax maintenance line, with products such as Texturizing Foaming mousse and Indian Sage spray, contains special "memory" polymers to keep hair in place for hours.

For men, Dax offers the new Wave and Groom Texturizing kit. Available in regular and extra strength, the kits house a texturizer crème, indicator shampoo and gel. Together, the products create soft, natural-looking curls and waves, without drying out the hair.

A Sense of Style

Several new hairstyling products are designed with relaxed hair in mind. Colomer USA introduced Lottabody Professional foam wrap, a mixture of conditioning agents and styling polymers to help set styles into place. The liquid dispenses as a foam for endless options.

Executives at Oloff Beauty, New York, said overall, ethnic hair needs movement. However, most products available are too heavy and greasy, and relaxers only compound the problem. Oloff distributes and co-creates Barex Italiana, a salon hair care line that took 20 years to develop due to the selection of performance-driven silicones for shine, frizz control, hold and other results. "Many companies use the same silicone for all of their hair products," insisted Guita Dovas, president and chief executive officer of Oloff Beauty. "That is the wrong way to use silicones."

The company offers hair maintenance products such as Frizz shampoo, as well as styling products and intense treatments, ranging from the hair-calming Hairgomine styling gel to the wheat protein-enriched Shock treatment.

Ms. Dovas also pointed to an emerging hairstyling trend for controlled afros. However, "Products play an important part in this look," she said. "If the right products are not used, the hair will look fried."

Breaking the Stereotypes

Other executives agreed that natural hairstyles are making a comeback. But it is important to understand the structure of hair to keep it in check.

African-American hair is asymmetrical from root to tip, a structure that is shared among curly hair types, according to research presented at the L'Oréal Ethnic Hair and Skin Research symposium last October. New York-based hairstylist Ouidad, dubbed the Queen of Curl, said the tightly coiled shape of African-American hair leaves the cuticle susceptible to dryness and damage from heat styling, chemical processes, the sun, pollution and artificial hair. She said curly care products are the sixth largest growing segment in the hair care industry and nearly 70% of women in the U.S. have curly hair. Ouidad offers a line of products specially designed for curly hair, which often times is fine as well.

"The belief that curly hair is coarse is an illusion," insisted Ms. Ouidad. "Ninety percent of curly hair is fine and African-American hair is one of the finest heads of hair around. It looks strong and tough, but really there is so much fine hair in one place, that it expands on the head."

Ouidad will launch the Curl Quenching conditioning gel in May, the latest addition to the Curl Quenching shampoo and conditioner designed for damaged hair.

Zotos International's Naturelle division launched the Slickline collection in August. The four-step system works to equalize the moisture level in hair while adding humidity and moisture barriers to prevent frizz and maintain hairstyles. Ingredients such as silicones, humectants and moisturizing conditioner are found in the Smoothing shampoo, Smoothing conditioner, Lite Smoothing cream, Extreme Smoothing cream and the anti-Frizz Shine mist. They are sold at Sally Beauty Supply stores and other professional distributors.

Sexy Hair Concepts' Sexy Silky hair care line features ethnic hair-friendly products such as Silky shampoo and Drench for Dry hair. They contain moisturizing silk proteins and silicones, according to executives.

Dr. Miracle's, a new ethnic hair care line designed to promote strong and healthy hair, debuts in May. The products contain the tingling "Feel It" formula and a thermalceutical complex with antioxidants, amino acids, proteins and anti-inflammatory agents. The line includes products such as Anti-Breakage Strengthening crème. They will be available at www.drmiracles.com.

The Natural Choice

Some marketers are looking to natural ingredients to answer hair care concerns. In February, hairstylist Barry Fletcher launched a 4-SKU line of hair care products, Barry Fletcher Holistic Hair, exclusively in Wal-Mart stores in the northeastern U.S. The products feature moisture-enriching natural humectants such as aloe, avocado and jojoba. They also help consumers save money and learn about hair.

"It is important for the consumer to establish a relationship with their hair," insisted Mr. Fletcher. "Consumers can no longer afford the luxury of buying products constantly or going to the salon every two weeks."

The line includes Barry Fletcher Holistic Hair Moisture shampoo, Deep Penetrating conditioner, Egg cream and Humidity-Resistant holding spray. Mr. Fletcher hopes to add eight SKUs by the end of the year and expand into Target, Rite Aid, Eckerd and military bases. The line is mentioned in Mr. Fletcher's recently launched book "Hair is Sexual."



Barry Fletcher uses natural ingredients in his Holistic line.

"One of the key components to using the right products is the ability to understand texture," added Mr. Fletcher. "It is what controls or dictates the style of hair."

The line is also backed by an educational circuit. Mr. Fletcher is participating in a 20-city hair care seminar tour this summer in the U.S.

Dudley Products Inc., Kernersville, NC, launched True Indulgence, a natural ingredient-based spa line of hair and skin care products. The line includes Inner Peace Stimulating shampoo to soothe itchy scalp and detangle hair, Inner Healing Hydrating conditioner to nourish the hair, Inner Brilliance Essential Oil complex to tame frizz and Inner Growth crème strengthener to stimulate hair growth. All of the products contain botanicals such as peppermint, green tea, rose hips, grape seed oil, wheat germ, papaya, ginseng and rosemary.

The Problem Solvers

Besides fragility and dryness, many African-American consumers



Pantene targets dandruff with Relaxed & Natural Anti-Dandruff shampoo.

suffer from scalp conditions. Pantene expanded its Pro-V Relaxed & Natural line last month with Anti-Dandruff shampoo. Procter & Gamble data showed dandruff was a common problem among African-Americans.

“According to Pantene research, dandruff is prevalent among African-American women,” noted Theresa Silver, P&G African-American hair care brand manager. “In fact, 80% have experienced dandruff at some point in their lives.”

However, 61% of African-American women never use an anti-dandruff shampoo and 32% of women believe it is harsh to the hair. Besides essential oils and deep conditioners, the shampoo contains pyrithione zinc to prevent and treat the itching and flaking of the scalp associated with the fungus that causes dandruff. Executives said the pH-balanced surfactant system is also safe to use on chemically-treated, relaxed, color-treated or natural hair. Pantene Relaxed & Natural Anti-Dandruff shampoo also contains the signature Pantene fragrance.

In other anti-dandruff news, J. Strickland & Co., Memphis, TN, acquired the Glovers brand of anti-dandruff shampoo.

For those with a sensitive scalp, Crème of Nature offers the new Professional Sensitive Scalp Relaxer system. The formulation does not contain lye and was designed to be non-irritating. The relaxer also leaves all types of hair silky, straight, manageable and healthy, according to executives.

It seems there is no shortage of options for ethnic consumers in the hair care market, and industry executives will continue to watch the sector grow and flourish.

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