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Tactile Modality in Online Marketing and E-retailing of Skincare Beauty Products (Based on English)

Multisensory marketing is becoming a must-have strategy for businesses. Online shopping that skyrocketed during COVID-19 pandemic and afterwards posed new requirements to multimodal advertising and marketing, digital technologies and ICT, search for the most effective and persuasive semiotic strategies to convey gustatory, olfactory, tactile characteristics of products. Skincare segment of the official websites of luxury beauty products manufacturers (DIOR, CHANEL, LANCÔME, SHISEIDO, LA MER, HELENA RUBINSTEIN) was selected to analyze multimodal marketing and advertising with the focus on tactile modality. Some of the basic dimensions of tactile perception – softness, moistness – are essential to skincare products and expressed by English sensory vocabulary. Tactile modality is not limited to the skincare products quality description but spans their visible effects on skin what proves that tactile and visual perceptual spaces are highly congruent. Tactile perception of skincare produce by customers differs from the merits highlighted by the manufacturers and marketers, consequently, considerable disparity is observed in tactile vocabulary used in marketing strategies and customers' reviews. Marketers stress reliability and efficacy of luxury skincare products as they are clinically-engineered and carefully tested. To make online advertising more persuasive copywriters and marketers use multimodal approach, different modes and mediums to specify skincare tactile characteristics. Instructions on application are presented verbally and visually, via photos and videos. Verbal description is future-oriented and aimed at anticipated positive effects. The promises "7 days to make a difference / smoothing effect after 28 days of using" are used as arguments in promotion of serum and face cream. Clients can enhance photos of ordinary women of different age and race groups to examine the effect of skincare products (radiance, firmness, elasticity, lifting etc.). Skincare products marketing utilizes diverse argumentation strategies, in particular, the golden rule of three; "Before/After" photos of the the verified clients – ordinary females, not celebrities or other influencers; video instructions of the experts. Sensory vocabulary in clients' reviews is more diverse, women often use emotional evaluation, semantic superlatives to express their tactile sensations.

Key words: *marketing, multimodal, multisensory, sensory vocabulary, skincare, tactile.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Touch is the first of our senses to develop, providing us with the early perceptual development of our own bodies and our sense of self via haptic exploration. It is “the fundamental mode of access to the world” [20]. “Since touch precedes the other senses, it helps form the basis of everything we understand about the world and our surroundings” [19]. Tactile sensations are vital and essential even in the womb, as early as eight weeks into a pregnancy, in early childhood for shape cognition and identification and remain critical for children’s growth and development. “Touch should be placed much more centrally in the study of early perceptual development than it currently is” [4]. It is no less important for adults’ physical and mental health, well-being and self-esteem. In modern world many adults are touch-deprived, so “touch hunger” constitutes a serious problem, sometimes described as a modern epidemic [7].

Tactile perception, often restricted to passive touch, is opposed to haptic perception (active touch). “When your skin is passively stimulated, you typically focus your attention on your internal subjective tactile sensations (although it is often possible to perceive external objects and their properties). In contrast, when you haptically explore, you tend instead to focus your attention on the external world” [11]. Tangible object properties can be categorised into macro-geometrical properties, such as shape and orientation, and material properties, such as roughness and softness. In the same way that eyes have different cells for encoding colors (red, green, blue etc.), our skin has a range of various receptors to detect vibration, temperature, pressure, texture, pain and the position of our limbs and pass it through our nervous system to the brain and humans judge them as comfortable or uncomfortable [16; 30]. Then the tactile sensation is expressed and transmitted to others by language. Basic dimensions of tactile perception might be presented via the oppositions – *warmness :: coldness, hardness :: softness, moistness :: dryness, stickiness :: slipperiness*.

Diverse research of tactile and visual perceptual spaces demonstrate they are similar and highly congruent. For instance, shape features might enable human reliance on visual or tactile sensory modalities for object recognition and provide evidence that the visual and tactile modalities not only generate two highly congruent perceptual spaces but also use the same shape features to recognize a novel object. Human brains are able to precisely and rapidly identify tactile and visual objects, an ability indicating that we use visual and tactile information interchangeably to recognize surrounding objects [24].

The adjective tactile was borrowed into English in the early 1600s, possibly through the French *tactile* from the Latin adjective *tactilis* (“tangible”). When touchscreens have become common for diverse gadgets and devices, a new sense also appears to be developing, as *tactile* is increasingly used to suggest that something

visual is particularly evocative or suggestive of a certain texture [25].

In recent years, tactile information presentation has become essential for mobile terminals and gaming devices. Understanding tactile information processing turned out important for communication technologies [16]. Touch screen technologies were found to be able to enhance the quality of online shopping experience. Other studies tested the relationship between online store sensory environments and consumer responses, the tactile sensations and choice satisfaction relationship through affective experience [22].

Online shopping imposed new requirements on multisensory and multimodal advertising and marketing, on effective and persuasive semiotic strategies to convey gustatory, olfactory, tactile characteristics of products.

2. METHODOLOGY

Perception, sensory modalities, multisensoriality, interaction of modalities have become an object of intense academic investigation during the last two decades. The phenomenology of touch, tactual experience obtained through hand and skin sense are being studied in Sense Studies [5, 7, 8, 12-15, 20, 23, 26, 29], in Philosophy of Perception and Epistemology [27], in Psychology and Neuroscience [2, 3, 9, 10, 28], in Sensory Linguistics [32], in Museology as touch experience for blind and low vision audience, a part of Object-Based Learning programs designed to enhance multisensory engagement [21]. Marketing strategies, in particular, the influencers’ impact, for the produce with essential tactile characteristics, are examined through diverse case studies [6]. Contemporary cognitive science and neuroscience gave new information about the brain and new conceptions of how sensory information is processed and used [27] what can result into reconceptualization of senses and intersensoriality.

Multimodal analysis is implemented with the focus on interaction of tactile and visual modalities. Lexical semantics, evaluation theory, argumentation theory are employed to study sensory evaluation expressed via tactile and evaluative vocabulary.

3. DATA

The textual information about skincare products on the websites of luxury beauty products manufacturers (DIOR, CHANEL, LANCÔME, SHISEIDO, LA MER, HELENA RUBINSTEIN) was used as the language data. Different modes employed to convey tactile information were analyzed: tactile vocabulary, evaluative vocabulary, visuals – photos with brief captions, videos with subtitles, the experts’ videoguides. The websites content makes it possible to compare the selection of tactile vocabulary by marketers, on the one hand, and customers in their reviews, on the other hand. Word frequency was analyzed with *Free Word Cloud Generator* (<https://www.freewordcloudgenerator.com/generatewordcloud>) on the basis of textual information

on skincare products retrieved from <https://www.chanel.com/us/> August 1, 2024.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Digital marketing and advertising use multiple channels – websites, social media, mobile marketing – that are easy to use, reliable, interactive and provide mostly visual appeal. Undoubtedly, professional digital display of products that relies primarily on visual mode helps customers make the right decision. Sight remains dominant in marketing but the appeal to other senses is growing in importance. Nowadays, the shift from traditional to emotional marketing (appeal to customers' feelings to purchase a brand or a product) and multisensory marketing (based on sensorial sensations – sight, sound, taste, smell, touch) is becoming quite obvious. Touch is of crucial importance across a wide range of social and cognitive domains, including shopping behaviour. Touching is an effective method of gathering information about the product, contributing to the purchasing decision. Some products, such as clothing, textile, footwear and many others, need thorough inspection through physical interaction and touch. The online shopping lacks opportunities for tactile information customers might gain through physically touching the product in a physical store, so online shopping is considered more risky. Therefore, marketers and e-retailers have to imitate the physical engagement experiences of a physical store to make the online shopping less risky, more multisensory and provide compensation for the lack of physical touch in online shopping [22].

Moreover, "touch" turns out to be not a single sense, but rather several working together [31]. **In addition**, tactile sensations are closely connected with emotions. For example, the research investigated the psychophysical link between pleasantness and dimensions of textures, between smoothness and pleasantness, between softness and pleasantness [18]. Other research projects tested whether tactile sensations are positively related to affective experience associated with completing the online shopping task, consumers' choice satisfaction [22].

Tactile marketing is a marketing technique that appeals to customer's feelings through the skin and touch. Multiple research projects on tactile marketing conducted lately reveal that the sensory attributes of products such as the surface texture are of vital importance in the customers perception and liking, and also in their purchase behavior during the point of sale [17].

Generally, e-retailing and online marketing posed a challenge for marketers and manufacturers in terms of effective conveyability of sensory modalities. For instance, perfume manufacturers prefer source-based strategy to convey olfactory modality, when fragrances are described through enumeration of the ingredients. Sometimes marketers utilize emotional marketing

when female customers are tempted by the perspective of acquiring irresistibility, by the image of *femme fatale* thanks to the perfume as a final touch. Marketing of lipstick and nail polish is subordinated to visual mode but lip shades and nail polish colors are given memorable, sometimes incredible, bizarre names which incorporate geographical names, symbols, abstract words not related to colors range as it is. Skincare beauty products promotion is based on some other semiotic and argumentation strategies. In particular, argumentation realized through visual mode turns out to be not less important than verbal persuasion.

Touch, tactile sensations are essential for skincare products perception as it it (tactile perception of the cream/ serum/ lotion texture), for tangible effects of skincare products application (firmness, smoothness of the skin, hydration etc.), on the one hand, and for visible effects of their application (radiance of the skin, less visible lines, wrinkles, pores etc), on the other hand. Some of the skin needs are enumerated by skincare products manufacturers (radiance, fine lines, wrinkles, pores, evenness, smoothness, firmness (HELENA RUBINSTEIN). They are directly related to tactual attributes of products as well as customers' tactile sensations and expressed through touch words. The final goal of skincare products is perfect appearance, easily noticeable and impressive visible effect – skin radiance, evenness, smoothness, firmness: *DAY AFTER DAY, VISIBLY YOUNGER, MORE RADIANT SKIN / Amino-acid-coated pigments deliver weightless coverage for a lasting, flawless look / An exquisite liquid foundation with an unprecedented serum-like texture that melts into skin and instantly creates a smoother, more radiant-looking complexion/ A longwearing, sheer-to-medium coverage foundation that glides onto skin with an even, velvet-smooth matte finish and ultra-lightweight texture for a natural-looking result* (CHANEL)/ *Le Sérum is the 1st youth-revealing Dior age-defying serum that visibly improves skin firmness and corrects the major signs of ageing: expression lines, wrinkles, visible pores, unevenness and loss of elasticity, radiance, firmness and plumpness / The cult treatment from the Capture Totale line, this hyaluronic acid-infused serum delivers an 8-hour plumping effect, visibly doubles skin firmness in 7 days, and corrects the look of expression lines, wrinkles, pores, unevenness, as well as loss of radiance and elasticity* (DIOR). The reasoning supports the observations that tactile and visual perceptual spaces are highly congruent.

Only small group of words (*caked, dehydrated, glossy, moist, oily, sculptured, smooth, warm, velvety*) out of the pretty long list of touch words [1] are used to convey tactile modality on the websites. Other tactile words acquire essential importance in conveying skincare products efficacy: *This featherlight cream targets and reduces 3 types of aging marks: Visible aging scars : wrinkles – roughness – uneven complexion. Structural aging scars : loss of firmness – sagginess – tonicity break.*

Fragilized skin : dryness – tugging sensation – weaken skin. “Touch” verbs are in abundance in the instructions of skincare products application: Take a small amount of AGE RECOVERY DAY CREAM and apply the cream all over the face and neck using upward smoothing gestures / Massage gently the balm on forehead and lower face from one side to another wrapping your face into a soothing bandage / Glide the texture over the cheek up to the temple / Smooth gently over the face, starting in the larger areas such as the cheeks and forehead. Apply upward pressure along the jawline with both thumbs, starting below the chin and ending below the ears (SHISEIDO). / Dab onto cheeks, forehead, chin and neck, then smooth over the face from the center outward to blend (CHANEL).

Most often tactile words are used to describe **skin** (skin feels smoother and firmer / Skin is enveloped in a velvety sculpting veil), **cream** (featherlight / velvety/ an ultra moist enveloping cream/ Bandage-like, soothing & nourishing, comfortable yet lightweight balm), **texture** (ultra-lightweight/ luxurious cream-to-liquid/ unique ultra moist/ silky bandage texture/ Lightweight and refreshing, the barely there gel texture delivers an ultra-sensorial feel).

Luxury skincare products manufacturers use diverse argumentation techniques to convince their customers in the superb quality of their produce. Argumentation focuses on a range of factors that are essential for skincare products:

- **efficacy**

clinically-proven/ clinically-inspired, clinically-engineered/ the new restructuring element/ fluid framework technology / Inspired by microbiome science. The result of 20 years of research & 9 patents (HELENA RUBINSTEIN)/ After more than 2000 hours of research, Absolu mastered and amplified the power of this micro-ferment through a unique biotechnological process, the Rose Black Tech™. (LANCÔME);

- **testing**

Clinical testing on 38 women after using product for 4 weeks, twice daily/ Sensory testing on 168 women after using product for 4 weeks, twice daily (LA MER)/ Self-evaluation by 35 women after 7 and 14 days of serum use (DIOR) 85% agree overall

appearance of skin is improved / 88% agree skin appears smoother / 82% agree skin appears healthier / Consumer Study with 34 women (LANCÔME). Technological innovations and principles of advertising dictate coinage of new words: Powercell Skinmunity Emulsion, Replasty Age Recovery Night Cream (HELENA RUBINSTEIN).

Obviously, the luxury skincare beauty products are engineered first and foremost for women, so the choice of words, the marketing practices and advertising discourse under analysis are aimed at female audience and look gender-marked. Nevertheless, some products provide universal care (FOR WHAT SKIN TYPE. Suitable for all skin types, even sensitive. Universal care), and this fact is visualized through the photo (Fig.1).

To make the skincare benefits more persuasive marketers use a lot of statistical data related to tactile modality (Fig.2).

Argumentation focuses on

- **key ingredients**

30% PRO-XYLANE™ for proven efficacy on 3 grades of aging scars. HYALURONIC ACID for enhanced skin repair & bandage effect. GLYCYRRHIZINIC ACID for anti-inflammatory & soothing effect. (HELENA RUBINSTEIN). Some websites provide an opportunity to see the full list of ingredients (VIEW FULL INGREDIENTS LIST).

- **rapid effect (7 days/ 2 weeks/ 28 days)**

In 2 weeks,

90% saw firmer, lifted, and more even-toned skin

95% saw brighter skin

93% saw less visible dark spots

91% saw tightened facial contours

90% saw improved firmness and sagging

84% saw less visible deep wrinkles

- **benefits of the skincare products application –**

Reduces signs of aging; Improves hydration; Boosts radiance; Enhances the efficacy of other skincare products; Based on the improvement of moisture-retention rate and transepidermal water loss (SHISEIDO).

For more affective argumentation marketers use the golden rule of three: ACTIVATE SKIN'S LONGEVITY FROM THE ROOT; REPLENISHING & REFRESHING; TONIYING MOISTURE / ACTIVATE SKIN'S LONGEVITY FROM THE ROOT; SMOOTHING; LIFTING EFFECT /



Fig.1. Universal care

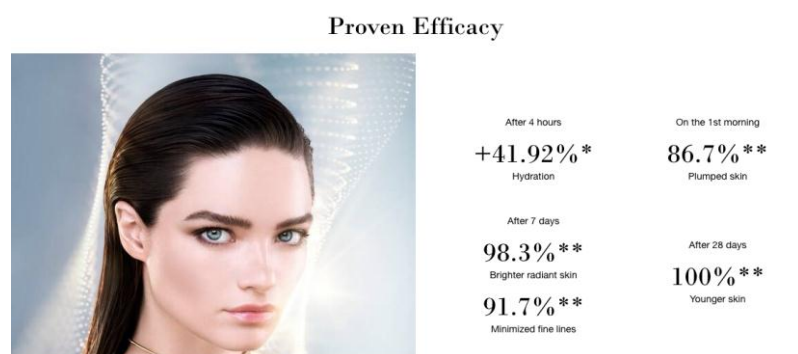


Fig.2. Proven efficacy

Refined skin texture. Helps reduce the appearance of fine lines and eye bags. Improved overall skin radiance (LANCÔME). The golden rule of three is easily noticeable in other cases when graphic means and visual mode are used for reasoning (Fig.3):

skincare product application, for instance:

Beautiful Glowing Skin
Submitted 4 months ago
By Adriana L
From USA



Fig.3. Proven benefits

• **experience of the ordinary women**

Previously luxury beauty products manufactures preferred influencer marketing, co-branding with celebrities, brand ambassadors. Nowadays, to convince their customers in high quality of skincare produce, the brands rely on the experience of average women: *Self-evaluation by 35 women after 7 and 14 days of serum use. (DIOR) / Self-assessment by 37 women after 1 month of use /Instrumental evaluation of 22 women by corneometry (CHANEL)/ Consumer tested by 110 women/ 90% saw firmer, lifted, and more even-toned skin in 2 weeks (SHISEIDO).*

To augment persuasion, the effect of the skincare products application is presented visually. Customers can maximize the photos and examine the impact of the skincare produce (Fig.4-5):

It is easily noticeable that the number of visuals (photos and videos) on the websites is increasing. DIOR utilizes several modes for marketing skincare products: brief description, photo, "Before and after photo", demo video on skincare product application. On DIOR website one can find photo manual with instructions, video with the instructions of experts. Customers can also order individual video instruction of the expert.

On some websites customers can voice their opinion about the skincare products. The reviews are written by the ordinary women, the verified buyers. Some websitess require more detailed information about their customers – age, country, skin type, the period of

Age 35 to 44

Skin Type Combination

Verified Buyer

Submitted as part of a sweepstakes entry

This product has done wonders for my skin! I am 40 years and people think I am 30. Its a serum I recommend to all to start early and you will have beauty glowing skin free of wrinkles!

MORE DETAILS

Bottom Line *Yes, I recommend this product (SHISEIDO).*

Customers like to share their tactile sensations: *Love how this feels on my skin. It's velvet. / The serum is thinner and leaves a sticky feel on my face. / It is light, fresh, and it seems to be very moisturizing. / It is a great product. It makes your skin feel soft and glowing. It leaves no makeup lines/ What I find most impressive is its luxuriously smooth and hydrating texture. / Absolutely love this make-up. It leaves a velvety texture which I love / Love the texture, light but flawless coverage, and the brush makes application easy and even (CHANEL).*

The reviews analysis reveals that customers' perception of the skincare products attributes differs from manufacturers' vision of skincare products and skin needs (for example, *Anti-Ageing, Lines & Wrinkles, Lack of Firmness, Hydration, Radiance, Smooth Skin, Pores, Dark Spots, Sensitive Skin* (LANCÔME)). Consequently, tactile vocabulary of marketers and customers on the websites differs. Customers mention some attributes and effects

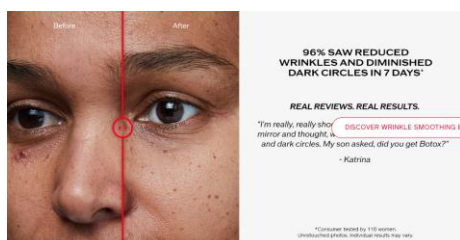


Fig.4. Efficacy of the skincare products



Fig.5. Efficacy of the skincare products: before/ after

more often: *Love the smell and the product* (CHANEL) *It smells fabulous and your skin feels amazing every time you apply it* (SHISEIDO) *In addition, it has a slightly perfume smell* (SHISEIDO) *The scent was really nice and refreshing.* (HELENA RUBERSTEIN).

The difference in selection of the vocabulary is revealed via two clouds generated on the basis of CHANEL skincare produce description (Fig.6) and 735 reviews on skincare by CHANEL clients (Fig.7) retrieved from <https://www.chanel.com/us/> August 1, 2024.

The description of skincare produce on CHANEL website (total 1208 words) contains such tactile words as *revitalizing* (41), *hydra* (28), *hydration* (14), *hydrated* (9), *smooth* (21), *smooths* (12), *smoother* (5), *texture* (13), *moisture* (12), *moisterizing* (9), *moisterizes* (7), *scent* (10), *fragrance* (6), *hydrating* (6), *nourishes* (6), *nourished* (5), *soft* (5), *softens* (5).

735 reviews (1752 words) reveal that customers use more sensory words: *soft* (76), *light* (59), *scent* (58), *smooth* (46), *fragrance* (43), *smells* (42), *hydrating* (37), *hydration* (14), *smell* (28), *fresh* (23), *moisterizer* (23), *moisterizing* (22), *moisture* (10), *moisterized* (7), *moisterize* (5), *texture* (22), *oily* (22), *refreshing* (18), *refreshed* (12), *greasy* (22), *silky* (17), *creamy* (17), *gentle* (17), *glow* (15), *sticky* (10), *lightweight* (9), *smoothly* (7). CHANEL clients highly value hydrating, moisterizing, refreshing attributes of skincare products, their long lasting effect (*long* (44)). The immense importance of emotional evaluation is quite evident in the reviews: *love* (261), *great* (103), *best* (91), *nice* (36), *excellent* (33), *favourite* (33), *beautiful* (23), *lovely* (17), *super* (10). The frequency of semantic superlatives, typical of feminine discourse, proves emotinal evaluation

of skincare produce is very important for women: *wonderful* (43), *perfect* (40), *amazing* (39), *fabulous* (14), *fantastic* (7), *awsome* (7), *heavenly* (6). Occasional critical remarks in the reviews concern price (*Very expensive*), lack of efficacy (*Waste of money!*), texture (*cakey, greasy*), non-lasting fragrance.

5. CONCLUSION

Tactile modality plays a pivotal role in description of skincare products attributes (*revitalize, hydrate, smooth, moisterize, nourish, soften*), their efficacy, benefits of their application; in argumentation with diverse focal points realized in textual and visual modes; in description of tactile sensations by the brands' verified clients. The range of sensory words is more extensive in the clients' reviews. Frequency analysis and comparative analysis reveal that description of skincare products by marketers and tactile sensations by clients has one overlapping zone expressed by the verbs *moisterize* and *hydrate* and their derivatives. Words with emotional evaluative meaning in clients' reviews rival with touch words in frequency and confirm the observations about feminine discourse as emotionally-marked. Photos and videos grow in importance on websites of luxury skincare manufacturers as a compensation for the lack of tactile sensations in online shopping. Congruency between tactile and visual spaces is easily noticeable in e-retailing and online marketing of skincare products.

Further research might cover multisensory and multimodal marketing of products, use of sensory vocabulary in marketing strategies, diverse ways of conveying tactile modality, the role of clients' reviews for other customers' purchasing decisions.

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ТАКТИЛЬНА МОДАЛЬНІСТЬ В ОНЛАЙН МАРКЕТИНГУ ТА ЕЛЕКТРОННІЙ ТОРГІВЛІ ЗАСОБАМИ ДОГЛЯДУ ЗА ШКІРОЮ (НА ОСНОВІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ)

У XXI столітті мультисенсорний маркетинг стає необхідною стратегією для бізнесу, перетворюється на важливу частину рекламних кампаній. Онлайн-шопінг, який різко збільшився під час пандемії COVID19, висунув нові вимоги до мультимодального рекламного дискурсу, до пошуку найбільш ефективних і переконливих семіотичних стратегій для передачі смакових, нюхових, тактильних характеристик товарів. Передача інформації в межах сенсорних модальностей є справжнім викликом для маркетингу, цифрових технологій, інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій. Для аналізу способів передачі тактильної модальності англійською мовою були обрані веб-сайти виробників елітної косметичної продукції (DIOR, CHANEL, LANCÔME, SHISEIDO, LA MER, HELENA RUBINSTEIN), а саме сегмент засобів догляду за шкірою. Параметри тактильного сприйняття, які є важливими для засобів доглядів за шкірою, передаються за допомогою тактильної та оцінної лексики. Тактильна модальність на веб-сайтах не обмежується описом якості засобів догляду за шкірою, а й охоплює видимий ефект їх використання, підтверджуючи конкурентність зон тактильної та візуальної модальностей. Маркетологи наголошують на надійності та ефективності люксових засобів догляду за шкірою, оскільки вони розроблені у кращих клініках та лабораторіях і ретельно перевірені. З метою переконання потенційних покупців маркетологи використовують різні семіотичні стратегії і сенсорні модальності. Інструкції щодо використання кремів викладені у текстовому форматі та представлені візуально, за допомогою чисельних фото та відео. Потенційні покупці можуть збільшити фото не інфлюенсерів, а середньостатистичних клієнтів, які належать до різних расових, етнічних, вікових груп, щоб перевірити ефект від використання засобів догляду за шкірою. Текстова інформація має проспективний характер та орієнтована на майбутній позитивний ефект. Поширені промісиви підкреслюють гарантії позитивного результату через 7/ 14/ 28 днів. Маркетинг і реклама засобів догляду за шкірою передбачають різні стратегії аргументації, в тому числі, золоте правило трьох аргументів, фото “до / після” використання кремів для обличчя та сироваток, відеоінструкції експертів. У відгуках клієнтки використовують різноманітні сенсорні лексичні одиниці, а також слова зі значенням емоційної оцінки, семантичні суперлативи для вираження своїх тактильних відчуттів.

Ключові слова: догляд за шкірою, маркетинг, мультимодальний, мультисенсорний, сенсорна лексика, тактильний.

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