

An age old problem? How Europe reduces wrinkles

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New anti-ageing products today offer a real alternative to painful and expensive cosmetics procedures such as Botox injections to iron out wrinkles. But here in Britain almost two-thirds of women swear by good old-fashioned water, with as many as 65% of Brits saying drinking lots of water is the best thing for your skin.

"In Western Europe it is German women who seem particularly aware of the ageing process. They often strive to look young and they are clearly ready to try out new products that promise the results they are looking for. But this is not only true of mature German women, as two-fifths of German girls from as young as 15 look to use these anti-ageing products as well. Although older women throughout Europe, naturally constitute the prime consumer base for anti-ageing skincare, manufacturers are keen to target younger women with products that are preventative, rather than curative," comments Michelle Strutton, senior consumer analyst at MINTEL.

What is more, German women not only use anti-ageing creams more readily than most, but also use skincare products in the hope of keeping their skin young and supple. Today over three in five (63%) German women admit to this, compared to a mere 46% of British women.

Fresh-faced French filles

In France, sales of facial skincare are expected to reach an impressive 2.2 billion Euros this year. This phenomenal figure equates to some 40% of the Western European (Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the UK) facial skincare market, with each French woman spending considerably greater than in any other European country. Indeed, French women spend the same on facial skincare (which includes moisturisers, cleansers and toners) as Spanish, German and British women do put together. Meanwhile, following some way behind France in second place is Italy with a market size of less than 1.1 billion Euros.

"France is not only the world's leading supplier of toiletries, cosmetics and perfumes but is also clearly the largest European consumer of these products. In France, skincare and in particular facial skincare, has been one of the best performing beauty sectors in recent years. A growing taste for self indulgence and women's interest in maintaining their youthful looks as long as possible has boosted the market," comments Michelle Strutton.

The British facial skincare market is worth just over 791 million Euros, accounting for a mere 15% of the European market. Only the Spanish market at 502 million Euros is smaller. That said, the Spanish market is the fastest growing market in the group, having grown some 49% over the past 5 years. This compares to growth of around 35% in France, 32% in Italy and 29% in the UK. Germany has seen the slowest growth at just 11% over the same time period, with the market now totalling 797 million Euros this year.

"The Spanish facial skincare market has been driven by innovation and increasing specialisation. With such impressive growth the facial skincare market is in fact one of the most dynamic of Spanish consumer markets and easily the fastest-growing cosmetics and beauty market," explains Michelle Strutton.

A glowing future

Over the next 5 years, the facial skincare markets in Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the UK are all expected to grow, but it is the Italian market that is forecast to increase by the greatest amount. By 2009 the Italian facial skincare market will be worth almost 1.4 billion Euros, up some 26% on 2004 figures. Interestingly, the UK market is also going to perform particularly well over this period, growing some 24% to almost 1 billion Euros.

Although the French market, the biggest in Europe, is expected to grow the least (17%) over the next 5 years, the prospects can still be seen as good for this market. Sales have thrived of late, despite the recent French economic downturn, and the French beauty industry appears to be relatively unaffected by pressure on disposable incomes.

"The ageing population across the board in Europe is now really starting to have an impact on consumer markets. Because of this the key issue facing skincare manufacturers is how to maximise the potential of the older consumer aged 50 and above. This will require a fresh approach rather than simply grouping all over 50s together as has usually been done in the past. NPD will play an important part in targeting these women, as well as in delivering new skincare concepts to all consumers and we could see tailored skincare solutions based on age, skin type and lifestyle," concludes Michelle Strutton.

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