For several years now, Asian beauty has emerged as the trend to follow in the cosmetics world. After BB and CC creams, sheet masks appeared as the new beauty phenomenon, democratized in Europe and the US by Sephora, spotted on celebrities’ Instagram accounts and developed by big brands, such as L’Oréal, Dior, Dr. Jart+ and Estée Lauder.

WHAT IS A SHEET MASK?
Sheet masks are made of pre-cut mask fabrics, soaked with serums that contain active ingredients, which answer specific skin concerns. Today, the spectrum of functions that sheet masks support is wide and constantly evolving.

REASONS FOR SUCCESS
Consumers are easily seduced by sheet masks, as they do not have to change their skin care routine to appreciate their effects. Indeed, sheet masks act as care boosters and give immediate, visible results.

Other reasons explaining the success of sheet masks are that they are:

Adaptable
They answer to every skin problem; consumers can choose the mask according to their skin condition that day, depending on environment, climate or health conditions.

Easy-to-use
You just need to open the sachet, unfold the mask and put it on the skin. You do not need to rinse after the treatment.

Both affordable and high end
Sheet masks exist for every budget, from supermarkets to perfumeries.

Travel friendly
Sheet masks can be easily carried everywhere. It is not rare to see women using sheet masks in aeroplanes, as skin suffers during travelling.

Fast
The treatment takes only 10-15 minutes once a week, so is not time-consuming.

MARKET SEGMENTATION
Different materials can be used in sheet masks for different benefits.

Non-woven fabrics [12]
Among sheet masks fabrics, cotton and synthetic materials (eg viscose, rayon) in general are the most represented on the market, as they enable brands to offer customers very affordable products. These fabrics have, however, a limited capacity to transfer actives to the skin and replenish moisture. Indeed, because of their coarse texture (like paper), synthetic masks do not adhere to skin’s contours for more than a few minutes. As a consequence, serum evaporates quickly.

The high density of competitors using this kind of material is set to maintain the popularity of these masks with cotton as the dominant fabric, even if, little by little, they are going to be abandoned for higher-quality materials.
Lyocell
A technology resulting from the transformation of hardwood into cellulose fibres, Lyocell is a natural, ecological and 100% biodegradable material, which benefits from a very good price/quality ratio. Thanks to its extremely soft texture, Lyocell prevents skin irritations and is adapted to very sensitive skin. Softer and much more absorbent than cotton (with 50% greater moisture absorption), Lyocell masks are quasi-transparent, provide a tight dermal adhesion and cover the contours of the face more fully.

Hydrogel
Hydrogel is a transparent material, composed of different water-soluble polymers, which form a fabric with a gel texture. Hydrogel masks are usually packaged as two-part systems, with top and bottom halves to apply separately on the face. These masks adhere to the face and form a protective seal as the skin absorbs the actives. Unlike common sheet mask fabrics, serum is directly added to polymers during the gel manufacturing process. More fragile than other materials, hydrogel masks are appreciated by consumers for their texture and cooling effect.

Bio cellulose
Bio cellulose is a natural material, made of ultra-fine fibres of cellulose, produced by microorganisms during the fermentation of coconut water. Initially developed for medical applications in treating burns and wounds, thanks to its capacity to bind to skin and maintain moisture bio cellulose has moved towards cosmetic applications. Like lyocell, bio cellulose is respectful of the environment and 100% biodegradable. Invisible, bio cellulose provides great comfort and a second-skin effect, thanks to its superior skin-tight dermal adhesion properties, which prevent moisture evaporation, allowing the mask to transfer cosmetic ingredients very efficiently to the skin. A high-quality material, bio cellulose is expected to show remarkable progress on the sheet masks market in the coming years. This material is available in two different forms:

- **Wet** Only a few companies are able to follow the GMP rules and to guarantee the stability of the material without using gamma rays. That is the reason why, in the past, some scandals have appeared about mouldy sheet masks.
- **Dry** A very high security product.

**FIGURES & FORECASTS**
According to a recent Google study, ‘masking’ is the top skin care trend search on the internet. Sheet masks appear to be a rising star in the global market, verified by the recent Transparency Market Research report on the sheet masks market evolution, which reports an exponential growth in the demand for masks.
In 2015, the sheet masks market represented US$160.4m and is expected to keep growing until the end of 2024 to reach $336.7m. With a CAGR of 8.7% over the forecast period, the sheet masks market represents huge opportunities for cosmetics brands.

This market increase is mainly driven by three growing skin concerns people have:
- Reversing the signs of ageing.
- Brightening the skin (mostly in the Asian market).
- And the consequences of the environment on skin; more particularly, the consequences of pollution.

Anti-pollution is a big trend that is going to continue in following years, as 92% of the world’s population suffers from excessive air pollution. As part of the brightening trend, the anti-pollution wave has been present in Asia for several years now, because the area is home to some of the most polluted cities on Earth. This concern is slowly expanding to other parts of the world, notably in big cities that also register pollution peaks, like Paris.

**TRENDS IN INGREDIENTS & SERUMS**
We find a huge variety of ingredients in sheet masks, from the most common (aloe vera, collagen) to the unusual ones, such as snake venom or snail slime, with each ingredient dedicated to treating a specific skin problem.
As the success of anti-pollution and protective skin products continues, we expect to see new ingredients and formulations in serums for anti-pollution effects, sometimes combined with anti-ageing effects, arriving on the market (notably highlighting antioxidant properties and anti-free radical systems). It will also be an opportunity to explore new promising research fields, like marine glycobiology, which already shows interesting results for actives.
Another trend is ‘less is more’ – reducing the number of ingredients in a formulation and creating...
ingredients masks

simpler formulas, but using the right ingredients. As a result, multifunctional active ingredients are expected to grow in popularity, as consumers tend to back multifunctional skin care products, such as ones with cleansing, purifying and anti-pollution effects. A good example is the recent popularity of activated charcoal in skin care products. Known for its purifying properties thanks to its absorption capacity, the black wave has invaded the bathrooms of customers. Finally, we still observe a growing demand for natural products and formulations (preservative-free, for example), but which need to be efficient too.

NEW MASK CONCEPTS
Sheet masks are not only face masks
If sheet face masks start to become well integrated into the skin care routine, we can expect the rise of sheet masks by body part segmentation: lips (already popularised by celebrities on Instagram), neck, chest, hands and feet will have their own glory hours. Consumers are more and more educated about the skin’s needs, which differ by body part. Sheet masks are not only soaked with serums
Some Asian brands already offer sheet masks soaked with face cream.

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH A SPECIALIST
Working with a specialist OEM company, especially for sheet masks, has a major advantage: control of the entire production process. Indeed, from the sourcing of materials to the packing line, an OEM company, like Lessonia, can ensure that all necessary areas of mask manufactured are covered.

Material sourcing
Lessonia has strictly chosen its materials according to the market’s needs and customers’ enquiries. From non-woven to biotechnological fabrics, Lessonia offers a variety of mask materials for the sheet masks market.

More important is the quality of the materials. After hearing of the sanitary bio cellulose masks scandal in Asia, Lessonia has undertaken to audit the bio cellulose supply chain, in order to ensure the quality of this material. Following this, Lessonia has concluded a contract with the only two suppliers able to answer expressly to the strict specifications established by Lessonia; meeting the cosmetic industry brands’ standards regarding GMP.

Mastering formulation
Lessonia offers customers the potential to formulate their own serum according to their specifications, or to choose between the different standard serums already formulated by Lessonia’s laboratory. In both cases, formulations are safe and constantly improved: as 20g of serum is applied on the customer’s face when they use a sheet mask, it is important that they feel comfortable during the treatment thanks to a very safe and non-irritating serum. For this reason, Lessonia also provides preservative-free formulations.

Equipment dedicated to sheet masks
Lessonia has invested in dedicated equipment specifically developed for the sheet mask manufacturing process. Thanks to this, Lessonia is able to answer customers’ orders rapidly, with quantity flexibility; it also ensures the impregnation process and provides customisation for large volumes.

Imregnation process
Lessonia constantly carries out tests to improve its impregnation process. Thanks to this, masks’ fabric is soaked with the exact quantity of serum required to ensure the efficacy of the final product when used by the consumer.

Quality control
At each step of the mask manufacturing process, different controls are carried out to ensure conformity of the products (bacteriological analysis, impregnation, weight, printing quality). As a player in the cosmetic industry, Lessonia answers to the GMP (good manufacturing practice) compulsory norm, ISO 22716. This norm encompasses the practical and organisational advice that is aimed to guarantee product conformity by respecting sanitary and safety criteria (production steps, control and storage conditions are evaluated). In order to constantly improve its manufacturing process and assure customers of its products’ quality, Lessonia also submits itself to an additional audit by bureau Veritas. This organisation identifies areas for improvement and checks the conformity of the company management system in advance of new GMP obligations.

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References