

## Masstige and the New Luxury: An Exploratory Study on Cosmetic Brands Among Black African Woman

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**Abstract :** The allure of luxury has long been attractive, fashionable, mystifying, and complex. As globalisation and the popularity of social media continue to evolve, consumers are seeking status products. However, in emerging economies like South Africa, where 60% of the country lives in poverty, this desire is often far-fetched and out of reach to most of the consumers. As a result, luxury brands are introducing masstige products: products that are associated with luxury and status but within financial reach to the middle-class consumer. The biggest challenge that this industry faces is the lack of knowledge and expertise on black female's hair composition and offering products that meet their intricate requirements. African consumers have unique hair types, and global brands often do not accommodate for the complex nature of their hair and their product needs. By gaining insight into this phenomenon, global cosmetic brands can benefit from brand expansion, product extensions, increased brand awareness, brand knowledge, and brand equity. The purpose of this study is to determine how cosmetic brands can leverage the concept of masstige products to cater to the needs of middle-income black African woman. This study explores the 18- to 35-year-old black female cohort, which comprises approximately 17% of the South African population. The black hair care industry in Africa is expected a 6% growth rate over the next 5 years. The study is grounded in Paul's (2019) 3-phase model for masstige marketing. This model demonstrates that product, promotion, and place strategies play a significant role in masstige value creation and the impact of these strategies on the branding dimensions (brand trust, brand association, brand positioning, brand preference, etc.). More specifically, this theoretical framework encompasses nine stages, or dimensions, that are of critical importance to companies who plan to infiltrate the masstige market. In short, the most critical components to consider are the positioning of the product and its competitive advantage in comparison to competitors. Secondly, advertising appeals and use of celebrities, and lastly, distribution channels such as online or in-store while maintain the exclusivity of the brand. By means of an exploratory study, a qualitative approach was undertaken, and focus groups were conducted among black African woman. The focus groups were voice recorded, transcribed, and analysed using Atlas software. The main themes were identified and used to provide brands with insight and direction for developing a comprehensive marketing mix for effectively entering the masstige market. The findings of this study will provide marketing practitioners with in-depth insight into how to effectively position masstige brands in line with consumer needs. It will give direction to both existing and new brands aiming to enter this market, by giving a comprehensive marketing mix for targeting the growing black hair care industry in Africa.

**Keywords :** africa, masstige, cosmetics, hair care, black females

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