Between effectiveness and responsibility – The new role of science

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Questions from Maxi Goewe, Director Publishing/Editor-in-Chief, BEAUTY FORUM (BF), to Dr Hans Lautenschläger

Maxi Goewe, BF: How important is scientific evidence for the professional beauty market today?

Hans Lautenschläger: Marketing is keen to appropriate scientific evidence. This serves to emphasise the credibility and sustainability of the product range. However, in the full knowledge that the target audience will neither read the original sources nor understand them in detail, the 'scientific' evidence presented is often unrealistic or inaccurate.

Maxi Goewe, BF: Where do you see opportunities – and where do you see risks – in the growing proximity to medicine and biotechnology?

Hans Lautenschläger: The proximity to medicine enhances the perceived value of the service. Consequently, there has long been a persistent trend towards overstepping boundaries; in other words, many promises and treatments go beyond the limits of current legislation. Consequently, new restrictions and special regulations are constantly being introduced, for example regarding the use of medical devices and liability in treatment. This also applies to biotechnology, for instance when it comes to the use of stem cells or specific exosomes.

Maxi Goewe, BF: How is regulatory pressure changing product development and communication?

Hans Lautenschläger: Indeed, regulatory pressure on active ingredients and excipients is steadily increasing. However, experience shows that the industry continues to find creative workarounds. For example, following recent restrictions on vitamin A, bakuchiol – which has a similar effect – is increasingly being used. Or, in supposedly 'preservative-free' products, the antioxidant hydroxyacetophenone transforms on the skin into the preservative hydroxybenzoic acid (paraben).

Maxi Goewe, BF: What will 'effectiveness' mean from a business perspective in 2026?

Hans Lautenschläger: One must distinguish between advertising effectiveness and actual effectiveness. People are keen to jump on the bandwagon, as this eliminates the need for costly educational work. Ingredients that have caught on with consumers and which everyone believes they understand the benefits of are particularly popular. Examples include antioxidants and moisturising ingredients. The stronger and higher the dose, the better? Unfortunately, not – the opposite is true!

Maxi Goewe, BF: The theme of this year's BEAUTY FORUM Festival in Munich is 'Feel Ageless Beauty & Beyond'. Will the future of beauty be defined more by emotion than by appearance?

Hans Lautenschläger: From the perspective of women themselves, visual ideals of beauty will continue to dominate in the future. Men's assessment of female beauty may, however, be more nuanced. Here's my very personal (male) opinion on the matter: women who look perfect and are interchangeable generate little emotional response. Personality, on the other hand, leaves a lasting impression that appeals much more emotionally than monotony.