

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

SK-II declares #INeverExpire in latest age-related societal effort

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SK-II's *The Expiry Date* reinforces that age is just a number. Image courtesy of SK-II

By JEN KING

Beauty marketer SK-II is exploring the internal and external pressures women face as they mature in its latest global marketing campaign.

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SK-II's "The Expiry Date" follows three Asian women as they grow from young girls to women, exploring how they are self-conscious of the "proverbial expiration date" they have been assigned. SK-II's latest advert tackles the social stigmas women face if they are not successful, married or mothers by a particular age, a narrative that plays out across cultures.

"Skincare and beauty is a field where women embrace these products to prevent the signs of age or as a means to turn back time if their skin has been affected negatively," said Kimmie Smith, celebrity fashion stylist and co-founder/style director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York.

"The thought behind skincare and beauty is about enhancing your features or to get back to your natural essence," she said. "It's essential to remind the consumer that being present in your skin is an essential as this is another element that each person wears on their skin when they're out and about."

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with SK-II, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [SK-II](#) was reached for comment.

I never expire

The Expiry Date was developed from discussions based off an online survey about age-related social pressures conducted by SK-II and its parent company Procter & Gamble in May 2017.

SK-II's survey asked the views of 4,280 women and 3,261 men, ages 18 and older, in Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The survey found that only two out of 10 women in Asia are comfortable with the idea of aging.

In Japan and South Korea, for example, the majority of women surveyed are unhappy with the thought of getting older. Chinese women share this concern as well, especially among those who are single and nearing 30 years of

age.

Indeed, more than half of Asian women surveyed felt comfortable and offended by other people's view of their age or marital status. Nearly 72 percent of South Korean women, and 62 percent of Chinese women, have experienced this discomfort and scrutiny first hand.

SK-II's *The Expiry Date* grew out of the survey's findings, with the skincare brand hoping to start a Pan-Asian discussion on the topic of aging and societal pressures. The effort is a next-step extension of its #ChangeDestiny philosophy.

"Many people have an idea in their minds that by a certain age they will be in a certain place in life," *Athleisure Mag's* Ms. Smith said.

"This is reinforced by friends, family and even the sequential life steps that one feels needs to be taken prior to the next step," she said. "Age tends to be the marker in these life advancements."



The 3 women in The Expiry Date are branded with a 1987-2017 expiry date. Image courtesy of SK-II

SK-II's video begins in 1987 with the birth of three women in Seoul, South Korea, Shanghai and Tokyo. A voiceover narrates and starts by asking, "Do we share the same dreams? What is expected of us? Will love always be carefree?"

As the narrator continues, scenes show the three women age and become increasingly self-conscious of how they are perceived by their friends, families and strangers. Each woman is shown hiding or tugging on her sleeve to cover up her "expiration date," shown to expire in 2017 when she turns 30 years old.

SK-II's video shows the women's accomplishments, but also displays their envy and worry about not keeping up with their peers as others get married and start a family, as society expects.

The narrator then asks, "Do we have an expiry date?" if the correct boxes are not ticked off before turning 30 years of age. And if so, are the women any less worthy of love and acceptance?

Although the video does not come to a definitive answer, SK-II leaves the viewer empowered with a message of inspiration to aspire to be whoever she chooses to be. Overall the message is that a woman's destiny should be defined by her thoughts and what she shares with others.

As the video ends, "You are more than your age" appears on the screen before transitioning to "Don't let others put an expiry date on you."

SK-II is using the hashtag #NeverExpire to promote the campaign and generate conversation on the subject.

The Expiry Date | SK-II #ChangeDestiny

SK-II worked with creative agency Forsman & Bodenfors for *The Expiry Date*.

Changing destiny one effort at a time

The *Expiry Date* campaign builds off SK-II's 2016 effort to empower women with a message of strength and independence.

SK-II helped single Chinese women overcome the stigma of being labeled a Sheng Nu, or leftover woman, in an emotional documentary-styled advert.

A Sheng Nu, meaning an unmarried female over the age of 27, is considered incomplete by Chinese society. SK-II's "Marriage Market Takeover" film, which went viral in April 2016, brought to light the difficulties these women face

since being cast as Sheng Nu.

Part of SK-II's larger #ChangeDestiny movement, where the brand looks to defy age- and gender-related stereotypes, the Marriage Market Takeover film worked to empower Sheng Nu to change their own destinies and challenge society's views on being unmarried ([see story](#)).

SK-II followed the Marriage Market Takeover campaign with "Dream Again," an effort meant to encourage female consumers to dream again, regardless of their age or demanding responsibilities.

The campaign was based on a survey conducted among 5,400 women in 14 countries, the results of which found that there were key barriers such as financial support, fear of leaving one's comfort zone and not fitting traditional definitions of success preventing the pursuit of childhood dreams. But, SK-II found that "doing what you love" and being satisfied with life's outcome are not universally shared by female consumers.

In the film, a number of women speak to an "adult expert" about how they have drifted away from childhood dreams as they matured and the responsibilities of life became the primary focus. As the four-minute video experiment concludes, the adult expert is shown to really be two young girls, hiding behind the camera ([see story](#)).

"There is a big difference between aging gracefully and maintaining a fresh look versus putting requirements on where one should be in life that are based on your age," Athleisure Mag's Ms. Smith said. "Great skincare, along with eating right and making good life choices, allows the face to be taken care of due to the ingredients of various products which doesn't generate stress to the user.

"Placing yourself into scenarios that are fixed in time due to age is a stress inducer and one that should be avoided as many of these 'life plans' are out of your control in terms of when they happen to a person," she said.

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