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GENDER AND AGE IN
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR*Two Permanent Markers of Our Identities*In South Korea, It Is Not Easy **Being** a Woman!

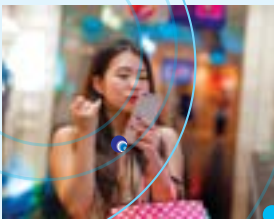
If you are a woman and live in South Korea, you are supposed to look beautiful. No excuses!

Looking good is considered your personal responsibility and if you are not looking good, you are lazy and not trying to look good. On job résumés, employers routinely ask for your photo and you also have to fill in your height and weight. While male applicants also have to fill in this information, female applicants are scrutinized more for their looks. If you are already employed, it is risky to show up without makeup: You will likely be ostracized by your boss.

In 2018, some enterprising young women in South Korea started a social movement termed “Escape the Corset.” Once the pursuers of the beauty of the self, they turned to stop beautifying themselves. On social media, they posted photos of crushed cosmetics and themselves donning outfits that were no longer tight-fitting on their bodies. While still committed to their movement, they have faced severe social punishment. They have become outcasts at school and at work. Many of them have even faced being uninvited to their own family gatherings. They cite their reward as a feeling of freedom: the money, effort, and mind space they have freed up.

Unabated, the pressure on women to look good continues. The culture of “lookism”—where you are discriminated against at work and in social life due to your looks—is visible everywhere in South Korea. In lockstep, the beauty industry is conspicuous in the marketplace. A recent book, *Flawless: Lessons in Looks and Culture from the K-Beauty Capital*, chronicles the omnipresence of the beauty culture in South Korea. Its author, Elise Hu, a correspondent and host-at-large for NPR, puts it this way:

In the Myeongdong shopping district and along supercool streets of Gangnam, I could stand on a corner and see a “Face Shop” across from a “Face Shop” across from a “Face Shop”!



My age and gender define me but I have no control over them!!

