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Booming middle class fuels Brazil's beauty market

The beauty industry is booming in Brazil, where meticulous manicures, sophisticated scents and impeccable make-up are a must-have for women who have made the country the sector's world number three.

Last week, Sao Paulo hosted 'Nails Fashion Week' – where about a dozen domestic and foreign brands are offering up the latest trends in nail colour as well as stilettos, make-up and eyewear in a bid to seduce new customers.

"We created this event in order to spark new trends and seal new partnerships. Some brands participate but many others came to check it out. The idea is to keep getting bigger," event founder Luciana Medeiros told AFP.

For the first time this year, the salon featured more than nail products, as organisers and vendors alike have realised that the Brazilian beauty products market is expanding quickly.

About 40 million people have joined the middle class in the past decade in the Latin American powerhouse, now the world's sixth-largest economy – and beauty retailers see opportunities for major sales.

US door-to-door beauty products seller Avon has an enormous interest in Brazil, with the company's local marketing chief Ricardo Patrocinio saying the business is "growing in very interesting proportions" in the country.

"Consumers have increased purchasing power and are open to buying different kinds of products," Patrocinio said.

According to a study by market research firm Euromonitor cited recently by a Brazilian industry association, the sector generated \$43 billion (€35 billion) in sales in 2011, up 19 per cent from the previous year.

That means Brazil now accounts for 10 per cent of the global beauty products market, putting it in third place behind the United States and Japan.

The Brazilian Association of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Industry attributes the growth to several factors, including the increasing number of women in the workplace and the constant launches of new products.

Economist Marcelo Neri of the Getulio Vargas Foundation says socioeconomic factors are definitely in play: "Women are working more, have more money and are having fewer children, which allows them to have even more money."

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