**Consumer Perspective: Purchasing Habits**

 My self-care journey started out the same way that many young girls do- by finding out that my high school boyfriend cheated on me. What happens next? You probably already know. I went from a brunette to a blonde in a New York minute, trying to mend my broken heart while simultaneously breaking the bonds of my hair. Ironic, right? I’m ashamed to admit my search history in the weeks following these disasters: Why did he cheat on me? How to save damaged hair? How to get over a breakup? And perhaps the most frightening- Why is my bleached hair falling out by the handful? And just like that, my TikTok feed was full of breakup advice and self-proclaimed hair-care gurus, thus leading me down the rabbit hole of VIP Sephora memberships, Costco-sized bags of jasmine rice, and a constant stream of self-help books delivered via Amazon. As an advertising student and a reasonably tech-savvy gen-z er, I knew why I was seeing targeted TikToks and Instagram ads about products like Olaplex, Shea Moisture, and “Why Men Love Bitches” by Sherry Argov (a very enlightening read, by the way). But- the algorithm- it works, and thanks to it, I can confidently say that my heart, and my hair, are stronger and better than ever.

Olaplex:

 Olaplex is a series of hair care products that claim to repair the bonds damaged in the hair through bleaching and other forms of breakage. I was first introduced to this product on my TikTok feed (through influencer posts, not sponsored ads). I then started researching the product on Sephora and Amazon to read reviews, and I texted my hairstylist to get her professional opinion. I was buying the whole product line, so I wanted to do some research before making such a big money and time commitment. After about a week of seeing more TikTok posts about the products and seeing influencers on Instagram talking about them, I decided to purchase them off Sephora to receive membership points.

Shea Moisture:

 A Tik Tok influencer named Lily Van Brooklyn started my obsession with rice water rinses and Shea Moisture products. Do yourself a favor and go look at her videos, and you’ll understand why. This woman has the thickest and shiniest hair I’ve ever seen, and she swears by the products mentioned above. The way that Lily presents the products doesn’t seem “sponsored,” and to be honest, I’m not sure if they are. But if they aren’t, we should definitely work on getting this girl a brand deal. The Shea Moisture shampoo and conditioner is a low involvement product- it retails for about $10 each and can be bought at drugstores, but boasts all of the benefits of a salon-quality product. Once I started watching Lily’s videos, I immediately went online to purchase the products and found that they were sold out. I took this as a sign that the products did really work because 1) I have never seen a shampoo and conditioner sell out before and 2) a product can’t sell out from all new customers- which means that the product has a high retention rate and therefore, must work. I finally got my hands on the Shea Moisture products a few weeks later at my local Target, and let me tell you- it was worth the wait.