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## CHAPTER ONE:

### *An introduction of vegan and cruelty free-cosmetics*

Over the past decade, the beauty industry has evolved significantly, driven by the growing demand for vegan and cruelty-free products. Consumers are increasingly seeking ethical and sustainable options.

In 2022, the global vegan cosmetics market was valued approximately 17\$ billion USD and it is expected to grow to 20.8\$ billion by the end of 2025 according to figures published by industry analysis watchdog Grandview Research. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is around 5.1% to 6.3%. The United States holds the most significant share of the market, valued at 4.6\$ billion. In 2024, Europe held a share of 33.84% of the global vegan cosmetics market. In 2023, similarly the cruelty-free market was valued at 14.84\$ billion USD and it is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.8% until 2030.

Increasingly, consumers are willing to pay more to purchase products that align with their values: nearly 70% of North Americans claim that they are more likely to use cosmetics labeled as vegan and cruelty free. This change is also the reflection of market trends: in 2020 in the UK market, over 80% of the new items were vegan. Over 65% of European consumers are also actively seeking products labeled as cruelty-free.<sup>1</sup>

However, many people mistakenly use “vegan” and “cruelty-free” interchangeably, even though the terms are not the same. Vegan products do not contain any animal- derived ingredients, while cruelty - free products are not tested on animals. A product can be vegan but not cruelty-free and viceversa.

The key differences may be summarized as follows:

- Cruelty-free cosmetics are products that have not been tested on animals at any stage of production. This applies to both individual ingredients and the final product. Many consumers choose cruelty-free products for ethical reasons, as animal testing is often seen as unnecessary and inhuman, especially with the rise of modern scientific alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Grand View Research. (n.d.). Global vegan cosmetics market size report, 2030. Grand View Research. From <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/vegan-cosmetics-market>

- Vegan cosmetics, on the other hand, do not contain any ingredients of animal origin. This includes not only well-known animal-derived ingredients but also lesser-known ones that may be hidden in formulations.

Understanding these distinctions helps consumers make more informed choices that align with their values.<sup>2</sup>

Consumers often struggle to identify animal-derived ingredients in the products they buy. The following list highlights some of the most common ones found in everyday items.

- Ambergris, used as a fixative in the perfumery industry for expensive scents and it is a solid waxy substance originating in the intestine of the sperm whale;
- Animal hair, used most often in make-up brushes. Regular examples are squirrel, fox, goat or horse;
- Castoreum, used in perfumery and obtained by the extraction of secretions from beavers;
- Cera alba/ beeswax, it is an agent used in lip balm, soap and moisturizers to prevent liquids from separating;
- Cochineal dye/carmine dye, it is a natural red used for lipsticks blushes or nail polishes created by crushing cochineals;
- Collagen, is a protein obtained from the bones, skin, ligaments and tissues of cows. Some plant-based alternatives are soya protein and almond oil;
- Oestrogen, is a hormone added to anti-aging creams to increase the effectiveness. It is obtained by extracting urine from pregnant horses. More ethical alternatives are phytoestrogens that can be derived from grapes, soybeans, flaxseed or nuts and berries;
- Gelatine, used across the cosmetics and toiletries industry and it is made from the skin, bones and connective tissue of farmed animals;
- Glycerine, is the second most used ingredient in cosmetics after water and it is used in some fragrances, oral care products, moisturizers or hair product;

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<sup>2</sup>Grand View Research. (n.d.). Global vegan cosmetics market to reach USD 24.79 billion by 2028. Grand View Research. From <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/press-release/global-vegan-cosmetics-market>

- Guanine, used for eyeshadows and highlighters because it gives the glittery and sparkly look achieved by scraping and crushing the scales of fish;
- Keratin, is a protein used to strengthen hair and nails derived from the hair and horns of various animals. Vegan alternatives are hydrolyzed wheat, soya and corn;
- Lanolin, used in lip balms, lipstick and glosses derived from sheep's wool. There is a plant-based version with the same name;
- Propolis, can be found in sun protection, acne products and lipstick. It is a hard resin found in beehives and it is used by bees to seal off holes to protect it from intruders;
- Retinol, is considered a skincare superstar but a synthetic version also exists;
- Shellac, used for manicure to provide a shiny finish is taken from lac bugs' shells;
- Squalene, found in deodorants, lip balms and moisturizers obtained from the extraction of a shark's liver;
- Tallow, used for soap foundation, nail polish and eye make-up also known as oleic acid, oeyl stearate and oeyl oleate. It is made from the fat of farmed animals.<sup>3</sup>

Many assume that if a product is labeled as vegan, it must also be cruelty-free, meaning it was not tested on animals. However, this is not always the case. A product can be vegan but still tested on animals during its production process.

### ***Relevance of the topic in today's market***

Europe has made the largest contribution to the vegan cosmetics market, holding in 2021 over 36.81% market share. The growing public preference for vegan lifestyles is expected to drive demand, particularly in countries like the U.K., France and Germany. In 2020, around 82% of all vegan products in the U.K. fell under the beauty category.<sup>4</sup> With the significant growth of the market, one projected to continue in the coming years, it is important to assess how the European Union has responded to the shift in its regulatory capacities.

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<sup>3</sup> Integra Cosmetics. (2024, June 20). The difference between cruelty-free cosmetics and vegan cosmetics. From <https://www.integracosmetics.com/en/2024/06/20/the-difference-between-cruelty-free-cosmetics-and-vegan-cosmetics/>

<sup>4</sup> The Vegan Society. (2023). The vegan beauty takeover (Revised edition). From [https://www.vegansociety.com/sites/default/files/uploads/downloads/Vegan\\_Beauty\\_Takeover\\_2023%20%28revised%29.pdf](https://www.vegansociety.com/sites/default/files/uploads/downloads/Vegan_Beauty_Takeover_2023%20%28revised%29.pdf)

The European Union (EU) has made considerable progress toward the abolition of animal testing, particularly through initiatives such as the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) entitled "Save Cruelty-Free Cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without Animal Testing. " This movement aims to:

1. Protect and strengthen the cosmetics animal testing ban: starting legislative change to gain worker, consumer and environmental protection for all the ingredients of each cosmetic without testing on animals;
2. Transform EU chemicals regulations: protecting human and environmental health, managing chemicals substances without the addition of new animal testing requirements;
3. Modernize science in the EU: committing to a legislative proposal, outlining a clear plan for phasing out all animal testing in the European Union, before the conclusion of the current parliamentary term. <sup>5</sup>

The EU has implemented, in fact, some of the most advanced legislation globally aimed at the gradual elimination of animal testing. The Cosmetics Regulation, which has been in effect since 2013, explicitly prohibits the sale of cosmetics that have undergone animal testing. At the same time, the REACH Regulation permits animal testing solely as a last option for the evaluation of chemical risks.<sup>6</sup> This regulation promotes the adoption of alternative methods, accompanied by specific guidelines and data-sharing protocols intended to minimize unnecessary testing. Furthermore, the Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes imposes very strict conditions on animal testing, with the ultimate objective of completely abolishing it. The EU also adheres to the Three Rs principle, Replace, Reduce, Refine, which legally mandates the replacement of animal-based studies, where feasible, reducing the number of animals utilized and refining testing methodologies to mitigate suffering.

Under the provisions of REACH, companies are required to prioritize non-animal testing methodologies and may propose animal testing only in the absence of possible

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5 European Commission. (n.d.). Roadmap towards phasing out animal testing. From [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/chemicals/reach/roadmap-towards-phasing-out-animal-testing\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/chemicals/reach/roadmap-towards-phasing-out-animal-testing_en)

6 European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). (2024). Annual report 2023. Use Foresight. Retrieved May 30, 2025, from <https://www.useforesight.io/news/echa-publishes-annual-report-for-2023>

alternatives. Stakeholders are given the opportunity to provide feedback on such proposals and to recommend alternative approaches.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has provided guidance regarding these alternatives, as detailed in its report issued in June 2023.<sup>7</sup> Over the past two decades, the EU has made substantial investments in research and innovation aimed at substituting animal testing. More than €1 billion has been allocated to over 300 projects, with annual funding experiencing an increase from €11 million under the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) (1998–2002) to over €75 million under Horizon 2020 (2014–2020). The industrial sector has contributed an additional €150 million to this initiative. The Horizon Europe Framework Programme (2021–2027) continues to support research into alternative testing methods, with the 2024 work programme specifically focusing on biomedical research and the regulatory adoption of these innovative practices.

In 2023, ECHA achieved significant milestones, adding eleven risky substances to its Candidate List, thereby raising the total number to 235 entries. These substances are acknowledged for their deleterious properties, including environmental persistence and potential carcinogenic, reproductive and endocrine system effects. Additionally, the agency received over 100 applications concerning hexavalent chromium, which shows that there is a growing awareness of the dangers associated with specific chemicals and the increasing demands for regulatory oversight.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the existing Cosmetics Regulation prohibiting animal testing, certain cosmetic ingredients are concurrently utilized in industrial and consumer products, which may necessitate testing under REACH for safety evaluations. REACH mandates the adoption of alternatives whenever feasible, considering animal testing as a last chance. The European Commission has clarified that animal testing conducted for non-cosmetic regulatory purposes does not activate the marketing ban on cosmetics. Data generated from such tests can be utilized in cosmetic safety assessments, as long as they are pertinent.

To further mitigate animal testing within chemical regulations, the Commission is developing a roadmap that delineates specific milestones and actions necessary for the

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<sup>7</sup> European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). (2024). Annual report 2023. Use Foresight. From <https://www.useforesight.io/news/echa-publishes-annual-report-for-2023>

<sup>8</sup> European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). (n.d.). Alternatives to animal testing under REACH. From <https://echa.europa.eu/animal-testing-under-reach>

transition to a testing system without of animal involvement. This strategy will be formulated in collaboration with EU agencies, member states, industry stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and researchers. An evaluation of the effectiveness of existing legislative and non-legislative instruments will also be undertaken to accelerate the process of phasing out animal testing through research, education, and training. These initiatives encompass exploratory workshops, enhanced collaboration with Member States, and the introduction of new training programs for early-career scientists. Additionally, increased funding will be allocated for research focused on alternative testing methods.<sup>9</sup>

ECHA's 2023 activities have also prioritized sustainability and cybersecurity. The Agency has made significant progress in lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, incorporating sustainable practices into procurement processes and improving environmental performance. In response to escalating cybersecurity threats, ECHA has reinforced its digital security framework in anticipation of upcoming EU regulations designed to enhance data protection and resilience. These actions are intended to ensure the Agency's security against the continually evolving landscape of digital threats.

The European Union has established platforms to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange in the development of alternatives to animal testing. Since its inception in 2005, the European Partnership on Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA) has brought together EU agencies, industry representatives, non-governmental organizations, and researchers to promote non-animal testing methods. EPAA endorses research projects, organizes annual conferences, and awards the Refinement Prize to young scientists who make notable contributions to alternative approaches.

The EU Reference Laboratory for Alternatives to Animal Testing (EURL ECVAM), as part of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), plays an essential role in validating non-animal methods and facilitating their regulatory acceptance. The laboratory engages in research activities, offers scientific guidance, organizes workshops,

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<sup>9</sup> European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). (n.d.). Understanding REACH. From <https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach/understanding-reach>

and promotes collaboration among stakeholders to speed up the adoption of alternative testing methodologies.<sup>10</sup>

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), introduced in 2012, serves as a mechanism through which EU citizens can propose legislative actions to the Commission. If an initiative gathers one million validated signatures from at least seven EU Member States, the Commission must respond within six months. The Commission may propose legislation, pursue alternative actions, or decide not to act, subsequently providing an official explanation for its decision.

Since the establishment of the ECI mechanism, a total of 102 initiatives have been registered. Among these, ten have successfully collected one million signatures and have been submitted to the Commission, including "Save Cruelty-Free Cosmetics," which represents the ninth successful initiative. So far, eight initiatives have elicited responses from the Commission, with the most recent being "Stop Finning – Stop the Trade" in July 2023.

The European Union remains steady in its commitment to phasing out animal testing by strengthening legislative protections, funding research into alternatives, and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders. This ongoing effort to promote non-animal methods reflects a broader transition towards more ethical and scientifically advanced regulatory practices across Europe.<sup>11</sup>

As the beauty industry continues to evolve, a comprehensive understanding of the distinction between cruelty-free and vegan cosmetics has become increasingly vital. The optimal choice for consumers is to select products that are both cruelty-free and vegan, as these embody the highest ethical standards in the industry.

This transformation in consumer values reflects a burgeoning commitment to animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and ethical production practices. As awareness regarding these issues grows, consumers are seeking products that not only perform well but also agree with their personal values. By supporting brands that prioritize ethical

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<sup>10</sup> European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). (2025, April). ECI Day 2025: European Citizens' Initiative needs to reach its full potential. From <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/eci-day-2025-european-citizens-initiative-needs-reach-its-full-potential>

<sup>11</sup> European Commission. (2023, July 25). Questions and answers on the European Citizens' Initiative. From [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_23\\_3995](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_3995)

beauty, consumers can significantly influence the industry and promote the broader adoption of cruelty-free and vegan methodologies.

### ***Objectives and scope of the thesis***

Today's consumers, particularly members of Generation Z and Millennials, desire more transparency in their beauty products. They seek to understand where their products come from, the methods of testing employed and the overall environmental impact of these items. Brands that fail to share their ingredient sourcing and testing practices risk losing consumers and their trust. In this era of increased accountability, beauty companies that follow ethical standards not only appeal to conscientious shoppers but also take the lead in advancing a more sustainable and compassionate future for the beauty industry.

The legal framework within the European Union mandates that cosmetics sold inside must be free from animal testing, thereby ensuring that purchases from ethical retailers are both legally compliant and morally responsible.

The emergence of conscious consumerism underscores the growing market for ethical beauty products. Consumers are increasingly willing to invest in items that reflect their values, even at a premium price. This shift in purchasing behavior not only supports the case for ethical beauty but also sends a powerful message to the beauty industry: consumers are engaged, and their voices drive significant change.<sup>12</sup>

By choosing products that are both cruelty-free and vegan, consumers can ensure that their beauty routines contribute positively to an ethical movement. Supporting brands that care about animal welfare, sustainable production, and transparency helps to cultivate a beauty industry that is more compassionate towards animals, the environment and future generations. Through these informed choices, we can collectively create a beautiful landscape that is not only aesthetically appealing but also ethically and environmentally responsible.<sup>13</sup>

As we move forward into this evolving landscape, the importance of making informed and ethical purchasing decisions cannot be overestimated. The power resides in the hands

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<sup>12</sup> Fox, M. (2023, December 22). Green glamour: 12 clean beauty brands leading the eco-revolution. Forbes. From <https://www.forbes.com/sites/meimeifox/2023/12/22/green-glamour-12-clean-beauty-brands-leading-the-eco-revolution/>

<sup>13</sup> Rixin Cosmetics. (n.d.). 15 top Gen Z beauty trends (2025 & 2026). From <https://rixincosmetics.com/blog/gen-z-beauty-trends/>

of consumers, their choices can and will have a significant influence. People should embrace a beauty revolution that honors kindness, sustainability, and compassion, recognizing that beauty should never come at the expense of our planet or its inhabitants.<sup>14</sup>

This thesis aims to add further insight to this discussion by examining the evolution of understanding of ‘ethical beauty’ through time, providing historical context to current discussions. It then analyses two contemporary ethical beauty brands – a European and a Korean one – in order to assess how such brands frame their commitment to ethical beauty in their marketing strategies. The thesis concludes by drawing some conclusions regarding the future evolution of this important market.

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<sup>14</sup> Statista. (n.d.). Gen Z and the beauty industry in the United States. From <https://www.statista.com/topics/9238/gen-z-and-the-beauty-industry-in-the-united-states/>

## **CHAPTER TWO: The evolution of make-up**

### ***The Georgian era***

The 18th century, known as the Georgian era, was an age of both massive ostentation and profound inequality. For the wealthy, appearances were everything, and their outward look became a deliberate display of affluence. It was an era where fashion, makeup and lifestyle reflected the vast wealth gap that defined society. They showed their power through art, houses, clothes, hair and entertaining.

This was also a time of immense social disparities. Half of Britain's productive land was controlled by just 310 titled families, a strong indicator of the power imbalance. The visual language of wealth extended to cosmetics and hair, which became symbols of privilege and excess.

A famous phrase, later popularized by Dolly Parton, perfectly captured the sentiment, "The higher the hair, the closer to God". The preparation of a Georgian look required an entourage of servants. The hairdresser, a very important figure in this process, earned a salary equivalent to hundreds of thousands of pounds today, out-earning even the butler or housekeeper. Such extravagance symbolized the competition among the elite to remain at the forefront of trends and demonstrate superiority.

Makeup during the Georgian times was such an important symbol of wealth and status. The very act of applying makeup became a public performance, with individuals inviting others to witness their morning toilette. Makeup was not just an accessory but a statement of power, influence and wealth.

Some diseases, like smallpox, and the increase of the consumption of alcohol and sugar left many people scared. Skin care gained prominence and there was an improvement of cosmetics. Traditionally they were made at home, family recipes were passed down from generation to generation. Then in the 18th century, making cosmetics became more commercialized. New exotic spices and scents found their way in, thanks to the expansion in global trade.

The use of white lead-based makeup, known as ceruse, was particularly widespread. By the 18th century it was common knowledge that lead was poisonous but despite people kept use it. Lead can be absorbed through the skin, it can cause infertility in women and

if a person consumes it for a prolonged period of time it could lead to deafness and eventually to death.

Women had unblemished skin because it indicated wealth and not forced to work outdoors, they were pale with symmetrical features and delicately painted makeup to enhance natural beauty.

The role of women was to uphold beauty, grace and domestic harmony, which aligned with their societal representation as passive and ornamental.

A perfect example of makeup in the Georgians is the use of black patches, created with different types of materials like taffeta. They were the perfect concealer of the day, if they had a blemish, a spot or a mark left from the disease, they could just use one of them to cover it. However, they were used also as a secret language, for example a heart on your right cheek would tell the world you were married and a heart on your left cheek would say that you were single. They explained also your political leanings, a patch placed closed to your eye meant that you were passionate and possibly a mistress.

A man's physical appearance, instead, was often associated with his health and vigor. Pale skin indicated a life of leisure, men had symmetrical features, a strong jawline, clean shaven face and well-shaped nose. Aristocratic men wore powdered wigs, only at the end of the 18th century. Hair was usually worn short and neatly styled.

This gender division and the disparity in societal expectations were accentuated by the diffusion of some lists, like the Gentleman of Pleasure's Pocketbook. Men ranked women based on beauty, elegance and grace, underscoring the objectification of women in Georgian society. Men, at the opposite, were ranked by their achievements and intellect.

One of the more fascinating phenomena of the Georgian era was the "Macaroni". They represented a specific subculture of young, wealthy men who embraced extravagant fashion and behavior.

The term macaroni derived from Italian pasta, that was considered exotic at the time. It was used to describe men who had traveled to Europe, particular to Italy, on the Grand tour and returned with a taste for highly extravagant clothing, food and manners. Those

men were part of the upper class or aspiring middle class. Their lifestyle often symbolized excessive indulgence in luxury and fashion.<sup>15</sup>

This excessive indulgence in fashion and behavior made them a favorite target for satirists and cartoonists of the time. Satire played a significant role in Georgian society, with caricatures highlighting the excesses of the upper classes. Cartoons often exaggerated the thick, black eyebrows of the wealthy and the decadence of their white-painted faces. These visual critiques symbolized a growing awareness of the moral decay associated with the elite's obsession with appearance and luxury.

By the end of the 18th century, the Georgian aesthetic began to symbolize the moral and social failings of an unequal society. The French Revolution of 1789 sent warning signs through Britain to warn them about the challenging norms of the time. The revolution's ideals of equality and practicality influenced British tastes, leading to a rejection of the elaborate styles of the past in favor of simplicity and sensibility.

The Georgian era's obsession with beauty and display reflected deeper societal issues. While the wealthy used their appearances to assert dominance, their excesses became a symbol of decadence, ultimately contributing to the demand for change. The new century would bring not only a shift in aesthetics but also the beginnings of a reimagined social order.<sup>16</sup>

### ***The Victorian era***

The beauty ideals of the Victorian era, particularly in the 1860s, differed significantly from the extravagant aesthetics of the Georgian period. While Georgian fashion and beauty were defined by excess, ostentation and public display, Victorian ideals emphasized modesty, restraint and natural beauty, through this natural and minimalist makeup. This contrast is evident in official portraits of Queen Victoria, such as the one from 1859, where her clothing is lavish and extravagant, yet her face remains simple and unembellished.

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15 Hair and Makeup Artist. (n.d.). Women's Georgian makeup. <https://hair-and-makeup-artist.com/womens-georgian-makeup/>

16 BBC. (2021). Makeup: A Glamorous History – Series 1, Episode 1: Georgian Britain [TV series episode]. In Makeup: A Glamorous History. BBC Two. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000vcc2> (original broadcaster).

This shift reflected broader societal changes. The Georgian era was marked by staggering inequality, with the aristocracy showing their wealth through elaborate clothing, grand homes and extravagant beauty rituals. Social status was visually reinforced and public self-representation was a crucial marker of privilege.<sup>17</sup>

The Victorian approach to beauty was deeply tied to morality, social class and the evolving role of women in a rapidly industrializing world.

By the mid-19th century, magazines aimed specifically at middle and lower class women, providing advices on skincare, fashion and etiquette. These publication reinforced the notion that a woman's ability to secure a husband, by extension her financial future too, depended on her beauty. Women were expected to cultivate a "natural" appearance through meticulous self-care. Makeup was seen as deceitful and improper. The paradox of Victorian beauty was that creating a natural, effortless look required significant effort and artificial enhancements.

At the same time, urbanization and industrialization transformed society. The Industrial Revolution led to brilliant engineering advancements and expanded global trade. For middle- class women, their world was not broadening, it was becoming more confined. While men ventured into industry, commerce and public life, women were increasingly relegated to the private sphere, expected to embody domestic virtue and purity.

In contrast to the social extravagance of the Georgian period, Victorian society was deeply concerned with morality, propriety and self-restraint. Makeup, once a symbol of aristocratic decadence, became associated with vice and immorality, particularly with actresses and sex workers. The rapid growth of cities during the 19th century heightened anxieties about public morality, leading to strict social expectations, especially for women. The urban environment reinforced the division between respectable femininity and perceived moral corruption. Victorian beauty standards were not just about aesthetics, they reflected deeper social structures, urban transformations and gender norms that defined the era.

One of the most unusual beauty trends of the Victoria period was the association between tuberculosis and attractiveness. The disease caused a pale complexion, flushed cheeks

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<sup>17</sup> Preston Park Museum. (n.d.). Victorian beauty. <https://prestonparkmuseum.co.uk/victorian-beauty/>

and a shining skin, features that were considered desirable at the time. Women who did not naturally exhibit these traits used artificial methods, despite the societal stigma attached to wearing makeup. By the 1890s, having a flush or bitten lips without cosmetics became nearly impossible for many.

For those who dared to use color cosmetics, discretion was essential. Being caught even purchasing makeup, especially rouges and lip stains, could destroy a woman's reputation.

Victorian times were also marked by a strong public concern for the prevalence of prostitution in the growing urban environments, and a strong connection was thus traced between makeup, sex and morality. Policing prostitution was seen as necessary to maintain the moral purity of middle- and upper- class women, whose sexuality was highly regulated and idealized. While prostitution was not illegal in Victorian Britain, but activities associated with it, such as solicitation, brothel-keeping and public indecency, were subject to police intervention. Even actresses, who had no choice but to wear makeup on stage, were seen as prostitutes.

Victorian society was deeply preoccupied with the regulation of female sexuality. The British government introduced the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1864 to combat the spread of sexually transmitted infections, particularly syphilis and gonorrhea. Those infections were causing high rates of illness and reducing the efficiency of soldiers and sailors.

Under these laws, any woman suspected of being a sex worker could be forcibly detained and subjected to an invasive medical examination. Refusal to comply could result in imprisonment for up to a year. These laws instilled fear in women, discouraging them from going out unaccompanied. In response, feminists and social reformers, led by Josephine Butler, formed the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1869. Their campaign highlighted the discriminatory and inhumane nature of the legislation, ultimately leading to its repeal in 1886. The movement was one of the earliest examples of feminist activism in Britain.

Despite societal restrictions, the beauty industry flourished even if overly rouged women were considered vulgar, reinforcing the belief that visible makeup was incompatible with cleanliness and virtue.

By the mid 19th century, advances in sanitation and public health led to a greater emphasis on hygiene. Scientists recognized the link between poor hygiene and disease, prompting

the construction of sewers and public bathhouses. The idea of cleanliness could prevent illness extended to beauty routines across all social classes. Industrialization allowed for mass production of soap, making it affordable for even the lower classes.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most successful cosmetics manufacturers of the Victorian era was John Gosnell and Co, a company that still operates today. Originally a soap producer, Gosnell capitalized on the Victorian obsession with cleanliness to build a beauty empire. The company's most popular product was the cherry toothpaste, but it soon expanded into perfumes, face creams and powders. The acceptance of these products paved the path for the modern cosmetics industry. Even Queen Victoria, despite her disapproval of makeup, used face powder to cover sunburn. Her image was frequently used in advertisements to lend respectability to beauty products. Victorian face powder was typically made from potato starch, a safer alternative to the toxic lead-based powders of earlier centuries. The shift from lead to bismuth-based formulations resulted in pearl white, a slightly pearlescent cream that provided a safer alternative to traditional enameling techniques. As beauty and self-care became more commercialized, companies like Gosnell capitalized on emerging trends, marketing their products to an increasingly image-conscious society.

At the same time, another movement was shaping ideas about appearance and personal identity: phrenology. It was a pseudoscientific practice that claimed to determine a person's intelligence and character based on the shape of their skull. Developed by German physician Franz Joseph Gall, phrenology was sometimes used to justify racial and class-based prejudices. Scientists of the time sought to categorize humans based on physical traits, arguing that skin color and facial structure reflected inherent qualities such as intelligence, morality, or laziness. These ideas contributed to racial classification theories that would persist still into the 20th century.

Even today, traces of Victorian beauty ideals remain. The belief that clear skin indicates self-care and good health still influences modern beauty standards. The persistent association between youth and attractiveness, as well as the pressure to appear effortlessly beautiful, can be traced back to the rigid expectations of the Victorian age.

Men's grooming also underwent significant changes during the Victorian age. At the start of the period, clean-shaven faces were the norm, but this changed dramatically with the

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18 Vintage Makeup Guide. (n.d.). Victorian look. <https://vintagemakeupguide.com/victorian-look/>

Crimean War in the 1850s. British soldiers returning from battle, unable to shave during their deployment, wore full beards, which quickly became associated with heroism and masculinity. Beards remained fashionable for the rest of the century, symbolizing strength and virility. The military mustache became a particular point of pride. British army regulations even mandated that soldiers had to grow mustaches. It was a trend, influenced by Indian soldiers, who were admired for their facial hair. Men who struggled to grow facial hair faced social pressure, leading to an underground market for false mustaches. The requirement remained in place until World War I, when soldiers were finally permitted to shave according to personal preference.

Hair color also carried social implications. Red-haired men and women faced prejudice due to anti-Irish and anti-Scottish sentiment, which was rampant during this age. Fair-haired women, especially blondes and brunettes like Queen Victoria, were considered the ideal. Hair dye technology advanced with the use of silver nitrate, which produced an intense black hue, an early precursor to modern chemical hair dyes.

Victorian beauty was shaped by complex social forces, from the rise of industrialization and mass media to rigid moral codes that linked appearance with virtue. Women were expected to be naturally beautiful, yet society imposed impossible standards that required careful maintenance and, at times, discreet cosmetic enhancement. The fear of visible makeup reflected broader anxieties about morality and propriety, while the era's fascination with hygiene laid the foundation for the modern beauty industry. Meanwhile, men's grooming trends reinforced ideals of masculinity and national identity, demonstrating that beauty standards affected both genders in distinct ways.

The Victorian age was a paradox of modesty and artifice, where beauty was expected to appear natural despite the careful effort required to achieve it. Social norms dictated restraint, yet advancements in cosmetics and skincare quietly flourished behind closed doors. As industrialization expanded, beauty became increasingly commercialized, and by the late 19th century, mass production made cosmetic products more accessible than ever before. The obsession with cleanliness, the pressure to appear effortlessly attractive,

and the gendered divide in beauty standards all trace their roots to this transformative period in history.<sup>19</sup>

### *The roaring twenties and the jazz era*

The 1920s, often called the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties, marked a revolutionary shift in beauty and fashion. It was a time of radical change, with society breaking free from the puritanical restraints of the Victorian era and embraced a new and modern aesthetic. After the devastation of World War I, a generation of young people was determined to enjoy life and assert their independence. This newfound freedom was reflected in the beauty trends of the decade, where women had more choices than ever before, though still not as many as today, the shift was transformative compared to previous generations.

The defining characteristic of 1920s beauty was its boldness. It was a stark contrast to the restrained elegance of the 19th century, with women embracing striking colors, short haircuts, and daring silhouettes.

At the beginning of the decade, wearing colorful cosmetics was still considered somewhat scandalous, and there were few places to buy them. However, department stores like Selfridges played a crucial role in normalizing makeup by introducing the first-ever beauty counters, making cosmetics more accessible and socially acceptable. The rise of beauty icons, such as the Dolly Sisters, identical twin performers known for their glamorous lifestyle, helped shape the flapper look. The trend emphasized a slim, androgynous figure, short bobbed hair, and dramatic makeup. Beauty innovations satisfied this aesthetic, from tiny portable razors for hair removal to new deodorants designed for active, modern women.<sup>20</sup>

Advertising in the 1920s was aggressive and often played on insecurities, yet it was also a symbol of women's growing autonomy. One product that captured this sense of freedom was the Art Deco compact, which combined face powder, lipstick, and cigarettes in one sleek, camera-shaped case. It was a statement of independence, mothers had been

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19 BBC. (2021). Makeup: A Glamorous History – Regency Britain [TV series episode]. In L. Thomas (Executive Producer), Makeup: A Glamorous History. BBC Two. Available at: <https://youtu.be/VE1cd7P7USI?si=Q-FbeCZwI3xZJFKB>

20 Victoria and Albert Museum. (n.d.). Giving face: Women's make-up, style and status in the 1930s. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/giving-face-womens-make-up-style-and-status-in-the-1930s>

forbidden from wearing lipstick or smoking in public, but their daughters openly defied these norms. The flapper was seen as reckless and undisciplined by critics, yet societal change was unstoppable. With 800,000 men lost in the war, women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, and by 1918, they had secured the right to vote in Britain.

Short hair became a powerful symbol of rebellion. The bob, whether in the form of the Eton crop, the shingle, or the Marcel wave, was seen as so shocking that some women were fired from their jobs or banned from schools for cutting their hair. Beauty innovations kept pace with these changes. The era introduced modern foundation, moving away from toxic lead-based paints toward more refined formulas. Eyeshadows came in only two shades, blue and green, but their use signified a break from Victorian naturalism.

Hollywood also had an enormous influence on beauty culture. By the 1920s, half of Britain's population (20 million people) went to the movies weekly. Silent film stars needed makeup that could withstand close-ups, and crude stage greasepaint was no longer sufficient. Max Factor entered the scene, a visionary who revolutionized cosmetics by developing flexible, lightweight "Pan-Cake" makeup that looked natural on camera and in real life. His innovations laid the foundation for the modern beauty industry.

Celebrity culture fueled beauty trends, much like social media does today. Actresses like Theda Bara, Hollywood's original "vamp," popularized the smoky eye, while Clara Bow, the first "It Girl," made the Cupid's bow lip iconic. Movie fan magazines provided women with beauty tips, celebrity gossip, and fashion advice, making glamour more accessible. The desire for a sun-kissed complexion, a complete reversal from past centuries, emerged after Coco Chanel accidentally got sunburned on a trip to Cannes in 1923, inadvertently sparking a global tanning trend.

The era also produced one of the first global Black beauty icons—Josephine Baker. As an African American woman, she broke racial barriers and redefined beauty standards with her signature style and electrifying performances.

The expansion of the beauty industry meant greater variety. Where once there had been only a few shades of rouge or lipstick, now there were endless choices. Sampling became a key marketing strategy, allowing women to try colors before committing. Synthetic dyes led to an explosion of vibrant shades, and the late 1920s and 1930s saw the birth of many makeup brands that still exist today. As competition grew, marketing became more

sophisticated, emphasizing luxury and scientific advancements to appeal to modern women.<sup>21</sup>

Helena Rubinstein, one of the first female entrepreneurs in the beauty industry, played a pivotal role in shaping modern skincare. She introduced the concept of skin analysis and tailored beauty routines, combining luxury with affordability. She understood the power of branding and advertising, using celebrity endorsements and elegant packaging to elevate her products. Meanwhile, the era's obsession with science led to bizarre beauty trends, such as radioactive skincare, marketed as a miracle cure for aging and dull complexions.

Lipstick, a long-standing cosmetic, underwent a transformation in the interwar years. It became portable, thanks to the invention of the twist-up tube, allowing women to apply it anywhere. The shape of the lips was just as important as the color, with stencils available to achieve the perfect "movie star" pout. By the mid-1930s, makeup was no longer a rebellious statement, it was an everyday expectation. Once confined to exclusive stores like Selfridges, beauty products were now available in pharmacies and department stores everywhere.

By the late 1930s, the beauty industry was deeply embedded in daily life, and the brands that had emerged during this era, Max Factor, Helena Rubinstein, and others, became household names. The Second World War further cemented the role of makeup in society, as women were encouraged to maintain their beauty as a patriotic duty, boosting morale in a time of crisis.

What had once been an act of defiance had become an essential part of modern femininity.

The Roaring Twenties marked a turning point in beauty history, where makeup became not just socially acceptable but an essential part of modern womanhood. What began as a rebellious statement against Victorian restraint quickly evolved into a booming industry, driven by Hollywood, advertising, and the rise of beauty icons. The freedom to

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<sup>21</sup> Treasure House of Makeup. (n.d.). 1950s makeup.  
<https://www.treasurehouseofmakeup.co.uk/blog/1950s-makeup/>

experiment with different looks, from bold lips to sculpted brows, symbolized a new era of independence and self-determination for women.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Last 100 years: Changing Beauty Standards***

During the great depression in 1930s, glamour remained an escape. Women's makeup style transition towards a more natural and refined aesthetic compared to the bold looks of the previous decade. The dramatic eyes makeup of the 1920s transitioned to a softer eye makeup with a palette of blues, greens and shimmering golds and silvers applied just beyond the eyelids. Eyebrows were often drawn into extremely thin lines or entirely removed and redrawn with a pencil to achieve a delicate appearance.

Lipstick remained a central element of makeup, although in the 1930s more natural lip shaping took over from the small lips of the 20s. The shades used were from a strong shades to lighter, with more natural tints. However, rouge application became more understanding, reflecting to your growing interest in health and well-being.

Mascara typically available in cake form with a brush was used in haste, eyes with various colors offering a creative style.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1950s makeup, became a central part of femininity driven by first and influence of Hollywood glamour. World War second brough rationing but women still found ways to maintain beauty routines. This decade so a strong emphasis on hyper feminine beauty, standards like flawless, smart skin, arched eyebrows, eyeliner, and both lipstick in shades of red and pink. In fact, his period was called also "lipstick wars", a fierce commercial battle among cosmetic companies, like Revlon or Max Factor. These firms competed for dominance in rapidly expanding markets with American women spending approximately \$93 million on lipstick only in 1959.

Makeup emphasized practicality, morale boosting femininity and red lipstick became a patriotic symbol during this period. One of the most iconic figures of the 50s beauty

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22 BBC. (2021). Makeup: A Glamorous History – Victorian Britain [TV series episode]. In L. Thomas (Executive Producer), Makeup: A Glamorous History. BBC Two. Available at: <https://youtu.be/cp2aOknDDkg?si=2Stjk30V8v2XrBmI>

23Vocal Media. (n.d.). The evolution of makeup trends from the 1920s to today. <https://vocal.media/blush/the-evolution-of-makeup-trends-from-the-1920s-to-today>

culture was Audrey Hepburn whose elegance and distinct aesthetic left a lasting impact on fashion and makeup trends.<sup>24</sup>

In the 60s the mod makeup look became a very used and famous trend of the decade. Everywhere, women embraced the doll like aesthetic with rounded voluminous hairstyles, Barbie doll dresses and wide-eyed makeup. The focal point of the makeup was the eyes and enhancing them with graphic lines, creating a doe eyed or “Twiggy-style” look. Black eyeliner and dark eye shadow were commonly used to draw bold crease lines above the natural lid, a technique that visually reshaped the eye. The look was completed with heavy mascara or false eyelashes to exaggerate their appearance.

Eyeshadow and blush colors were typically soft and pale shades like cream white and powder blue were applied to open up their eyes, while pastel pinks added a gentle flush to the cheeks. This look signaled a break from the glamour of the 50s and embraced a new more playful and experimental approach to fashion and beauty. It also aligned with the decade’s spirit of innovation, rebellion and youth leading to social change.<sup>25</sup>

The 1970s were a decade of contrast and personal freedom in makeup. On one side the natural beauty movement gained importance using browns, oranges and greens for eye shadows. They used soft eyeliner, natural lashes, a sun kissed glow achieved through bronzer and a lip gloss in nude shades during the day. On the other side the disco scene brought bold, glamorous nighttime looks with shimmering eyeshadows metallic highlights and dramatic eyeliner. Makeup into ‘70s reflected a growing desire for self-expression and individuality over rigid beauty standards.

The 1980s brought a further evolution. Reflecting a buoyant economic era, makeup became all about making a statement, using bright blush electric eyeshadow and glossy lips with confidence. Women were influenced by pop culture icons like Madonna and Cyndi Lauper, who made makeup an explicit tool of female empowerment.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Treasure House of Makeup. (n.d.). 1950s makeup.  
<https://www.treasurehouseofmakeup.co.uk/blog/1950s-makeup/>

25 Charlotte Tilbury. (n.d.). Y2K makeup look. <https://www.charlottetilbury.com/it/secrets/look-del-make-up-y2k?srsId=AfmBOoo-uUjB2KbAs30FFIkTC2rvaHqy3mHhnUw16pZxQ5G3qNFgnEK8>

26 Vocal Media. (n.d.). The evolution of makeup trends from the 1920s to today.  
<https://vocal.media/blush/the-evolution-of-makeup-trends-from-the-1920s-to-today>

The 1990s, reflecting the more somber economic spirit of the era, were the time of minimalism and makeup trends reflected this. Women preferred smudged eyeliner, matte skin, brown lipstick and thin eyebrows. This was the era of Kate Moss and Winona Ryder with their iconic looks that are still inspiring today, known as the famous “makeup no makeup trend”.

The early 2000s were all about shine shimmer and playful color. Frosted eye shadows in silver, blue and lavender enlightened the eyes often paired with dramatic winged liner. Lips were glossy and plump with nude glosses, lined with darker lip pencil creating an iconic lip combination. Body shimmers and glowing bronzer, essential for that sun kissed look, became highly popular. Thin arched brows framed the face white pink blush gave cheeks a youthful flush. Icons like Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera Influenced a lot of women during these years.<sup>27</sup>

The 2010s marked the transformative era in beauty driven by the rise of social media. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube reshaped the beauty industry, turning everyday people into influencers and makeup into a global conversation. One of the most famous trends was contouring, popularized by Kim Kardashian. Contouring and highlighting became essential techniques to sculpt the face, often paired with baking, overlining lips and setting sprays to lock everything in. The “Instagram brow” became a signature look sharply defined with concealer and filled in with pomade or powder. Lips were matte and became a massive trend with brands like Kylie cosmetics, one of Kim's sisters. Eye shadow palettes exploded in popularity with cat creases, halo eyes and dramatic false lashes that were key elements in full glam looks. This decade was also the beginning of more inclusive beauty with brands like Fenty beauty created by Rihanna setting new standards by launching foundation ranges with over 40 shades.<sup>28</sup>

The 2020s have embraced a dual personality and makeup celebrating both birth skin colour, inclusive beauty and bold self expression. During this period, creativity has exploded, especially on TikTok where makeup has become more expressive and colorful than ever. Vivid eyeshadow shades like electric blue, neon, pink and acid green have made

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27 Charlotte Tilbury. (n.d.). Y2K makeup look. <https://www.charlottetilbury.com/it/secret/look-del-make-up-y2k?srsId=AfmBOoo-uUjB2KbAs30FFIkTC2rvaHqy3mHhnUw16pZxQ5G3qNFgnEK8>

28 Inchiostro Virtuale. (n.d.). Bellezza e cosmesi anni 2010. <https://inchiostrovirtuale.it/bellezza-e-cosmesi-anni-2010/>

a powerful comeback paired with sparkle effects, lines or holographic eyeliner brows that have gone, fluffy and natural with the “soap brow” trend, lips have shifted back to horses and bouncers, prioritizing hydration and shine over heavy pigment. Blush has evolved to because it was applied higher on the cheeks and also across the nose for a lifted and youthful effect.

Inclusivity has been especially central during this era, with more brands of friends under natural, diverse, shade ranges, and cruelty, free formulas. Marketing slogans have been framed around the approach of “whatever you are embracing, I’ll create a makeup routine for you”, emphasising authenticity, experimentation, and personal expression.<sup>29</sup>

As has been highlighted in this brief overview, the history of makeup has evolved considerably over the years, reflecting in many ways broader societal trends. Each decade brought new styles that reflected how people lived, felt and expressed themselves. Today, makeup is more than just beauty: it is a way for consumers to show who they are. Makeup celebrates freedom, diversity, and individuality – and the emergence of ethical beauty is a fundamental part of this transformation.

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29 Makeup.it. (n.d.). Make-up anni 2020.  
<https://makeup.it/articles/108/#:~:text=Nella%20palette%20di%20queste%20nuance%20vive%20e,effetto%20sparkle%2C%20renderanno%20il%20tuo%20make%20up>

## **CHAPTER THREE: Analysis of the modern cosmetics consumer**

### *Consumer demographics and preferences in the beauty industry*

The global cosmetics market is over \$500 billion USD, the global vegan cosmetics market size was estimated to be \$17 billion USD in 2022 and it represents only around 3.4 % of the global cosmetics market. It is estimated to grow between 5.1 % and 6.3 % a year and some research believes that vegan cosmetics market will reach \$26.2 billion by 2030.<sup>30</sup>

One of the most important factors that drives market expansion is the rise of vegan consumerism all over the world. Consumers are against animal cruelty and are more inclined to purchase cosmetics that don't contain any animal ingredients. In the last few years, we have seen a shift in the cosmetics market motivated mainly by ethically conscious consumers opting for vegan products.<sup>31</sup>

Globally between 2014 and 2019 there were an increase of 175% of vegan cosmetic launches.

Europe represented in 2021 the 36.81% of the vegan cosmetics market and in 2024 the 33.84%. It is estimated to be valued at USD 8.83\$ billion by 2030 and its major national markets are Germany, U.K., France, Italy and Spain.

The US represented 27% of the vegan cosmetics market with \$4.6 billions from the total. Canada represented 4.6% and Japan 2.8%. China represented the 17.4% at \$3 billion and it is estimated to grow fastest experiencing a growth rate of 7.9%.<sup>32</sup>

China is going to be the largest market by the end of the 2020. For this reason, they removed mandatory animal testing for important products only in May 2021.

A total of 41 countries worldwide have now banned animal testing for cosmetics. Among them, Mexico made history in 2021 as the first North American country to enact such a ban. The European Union plays a leading role, with all member states enforcing a comprehensive ban on the testing and sale of animal-tested cosmetic products. In 2022,

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30 Grand View Research. (n.d.). Vegan cosmetics market size, share & trends analysis report by type, by distribution channel, by region, and segment forecasts, 2023 – 2030. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/vegan-cosmetics-market>

<sup>31</sup> The Vegan Society. (2023). Vegan beauty takeover 2023 – Revised April 2024. <https://veganavenue.com/vegan-cosmetics-industry-statistics/>

<sup>32</sup> Vegan Avenue. (n.d.). Vegan cosmetics industry statistics. <https://veganavenue.com/vegan-cosmetics-industry-statistics/>

seven US states have banned the sale of cosmetics tested on animals and they are: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, and Virginia. Also in Brazil, 10 states have a ban in place.<sup>33</sup>

Vegan innovation is no longer limited to cosmetics; skincare and haircare are also evolving, offering ethical alternatives that align with conscious consumer values.

In the year 2021, the skincare segment represented approximately 34.01% of the market share. This phenomenon can be attributed to the increasing awareness among consumers about the advantages linked to the application of the product on their skin, as these products are generally formulated from plant-based components, resulting in a reduced probability of itchiness, irritation, acne, and other skin-related issues.

The hair care sector is expected to experience the highest compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.8% from the year 2022 to 2030. Vegan hair care has a wide range of different products, including shampoo, hair oil, hair conditioner, hair masks, and various others. These products are offered in multiple formats to meet consumer needs, which is contributing to the increasing demand for hair care products within the market.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that the color cosmetics sector will be the second most rapidly expanding category within the vegan cosmetics market. E.L.F. Cosmetics, KVD Vegan Beauty, and Bite Beauty represent prominent brands that provide vegan color cosmetics within the market, consequently driving growth in value sales.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Vegan Society. (2023). Vegan beauty takeover 2023 – Revised April 2024. <https://veganavenue.com/vegan-cosmetics-industry-statistics/>

<sup>34</sup> Grand View Research. (n.d.). Vegan cosmetics market size, share & trends analysis report by type, by distribution channel, by region, and segment forecasts, 2023–2030. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/vegan-cosmetics-market>

## ***Ethics and consumer behavior in purchasing decisions***

Consumer interest in ethical and sustainable beauty is rising. Millennials and Gen Z are leading the demand for plant-based and cruelty-free cosmetics. These demographics are guided by ethical principles and typically possess higher purchasing power.

The drivers for growth are:

- Rising a awareness of animal welfare issues
- Growing interest in veganism and ethical lifestyles
- Increase demand for clean, safe and sustainable beauty products
- A cultural shift toward ethical consumerism where purchase decision reflect personal and environmental values.

In July 2023 the Vegan Society did a reporter entitled “vegan beauty takeover” that was revised in 2024. It is an organization in the United Kingdom that holds the distinction of being the oldest registered charity for issuing vegan certifications, in the U.K the number of consumers adopting veganism has risen by 350% compared to a decade ago.<sup>35</sup> It has registered over 30,000 vegan cosmetic product and more than 65,000 products and are registered now with the vegan trademark. Enrolling with internationally recognized vegan organizations aids manufacturers in enhancing their brand reputation.

The report shows with the next two graphs that the labels “cruelty-free” and “vegan” are similarly linked to items that don’t include any animal products and have not been tested on animals. By analyzing the information from 2021 until 2023, it shows that since 2021 more people are incorrectly associating cruelty free with items that don’t include animal derived ingredients and must not have undergone animal testing. This could indicate an expectation from customers that cruelty free products shouldn’t include animal derived ingredients. The results from this report indicate that the term cruelty free is significantly better comprehended, more than vegan.

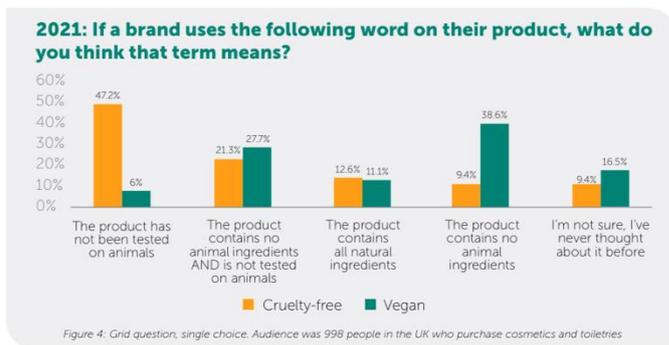
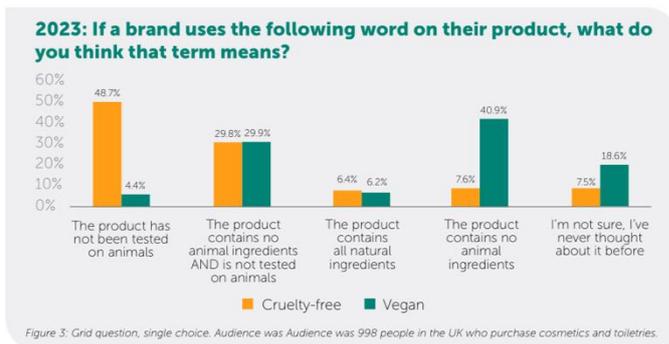
However, as can be seen in the figure below, more than half of respondents answered wrong. Only 29.9% of UK respondents correctly identified definition of a vegan cosmetic

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<sup>35</sup> Grand View Research. (n.d.). Vegan cosmetics market size, share & trends analysis report by type, by distribution channel, by region, and segment forecasts, 2023–2030. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/vegan-cosmetics-market>

product and even more concerning is that over half misunderstood or were I'm sure about the meaning of the terms. The survey indicates that 42.9% of participants would like to see more vegan registered products such as shampoo, skin care, makeup, and deodorants. In particular, female customers show significantly interest in a full range of vegan offerings.

**Figure n. 1: Grid question, single choice. Audience was 998 people in the UK who purchase cosmetics and toiletries<sup>36</sup>**



In both the U.S. and the UK, the beauty category dominates the vegan product space, with 66% and 69% of all online vegan products belonging to the beauty sector, respectively.<sup>37</sup>

Together, these factors are reshaping the global beauty industry and pushing brands toward more transparent, cruelty-free, and plant-based offerings.

Vegan products are easily accessible to consumers in the market through various distribution channels, including specialty stores, supermarkets, hypermarket or e-commerce. The use of the last channel increased a lot after the recent COVID-19, that has

<sup>36</sup> The Vegan Society. (2023). Vegan beauty takeover 2023 – Revised April 2024. <https://veganavenue.com/vegan-cosmetics-industry-statistics/>

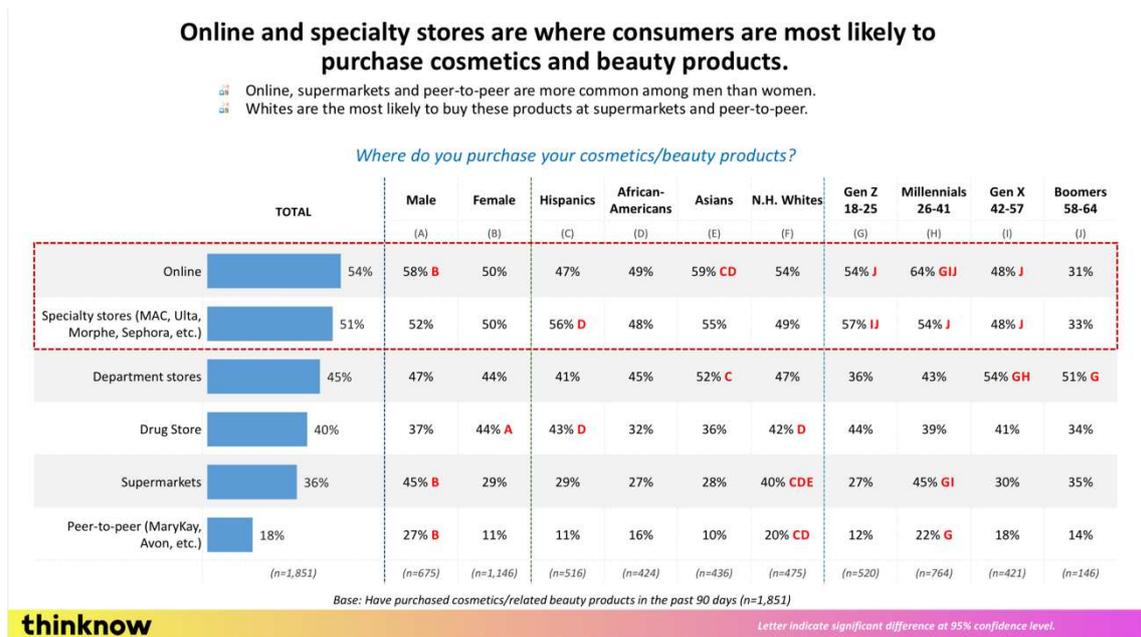
<sup>37</sup> ThinkNow. (2023). Beauty & cosmetics report 2023. <https://thinknow.com/thank-you/?source=28276>

severely impacted the increase of the industry. The pandemic interfered with the production and the sales of vegan cosmetics mostly through offline channels due to social distancing and stay-home policies. The supply chains were altered drastically and almost permanently. The e-commerce channel in fact is projected to have a CAGR of 8.8% from 2022 to 2030 and of the world's most prominent online distributors of vegan cosmetics is Amazon.

As we can see in the next figure, online shopping list, all channels at 54% with even higher prevalence among millennials with 64% and Gen Z with 54%. This reflects the younger generations' preferences on the convenience and accessibility of the e-commerce. The dominance of online platforms not only makes products more accessible but also integrates perfectly with social media environments where influencers operate, allowing consumers to have immediate availability of the product that they are referring to.

Specialty stores like Sephora or Ulta are the second most popular channel with 51% and they are used more among Asian with 55% and Gen Z with 57%. Usually, the prevalence of this retail also aligns with brands that feature vegan or cruelty free lines, like Fenty beauty or E.L.F. cosmetics.

**Figure n. 2: “Where do you purchase your cosmetics/beauty products?”<sup>38</sup>**



38 ThinkNow. (2023). Beauty & cosmetics report 2023. <https://thinknow.com/thank-you/?source=28276>

This combination has encouraged manufacturers to invest more in research and development, in fact their goal is to launch new products to meet the rising demand for vegan alternatives. Cosmetics Europe, a European trade association focused on cosmetics and personal care industry, confirmed that in 2018 there were 77 scientific innovation centers in Europe dedicated to this topic.

Due to the growing worldwide concerns related to the production and marketing of cosmetics that contain synthetic components, consumers are progressively adopting their plant-derived alternatives. At a higher level, the new global sources of raw materials that provide vegan ingredients will greatly contribute to the product demand, as consumers are in search of innovative cosmetic products that offer substantial health advantages. In this regard, it is obvious that manufacturers will procure ingredients from South Korea (for example, yuzu citrus fruit), Australia (such as kakadu plum), and Indonesia and Malaysia (which include rambutan) in the future.

Industry players generally promote their products by emphasizing their commitment to obtaining genuine and globally recognized vegan standard certifications.

Numerous organizations dedicated to the rights of animals, such as the Humane Society and Cruelty-Free International, are working diligently to increase the number of U. S. States to enforce such prohibitions. From the perspective of manufacturing vegan cosmetics, the prohibition of animal testing will have a favorable impact on the demand for cruelty-free products during the anticipated period. In recent years, an increasing number of countries have enacted legislation prohibiting cosmetics that have been tested on animals. For example, in December 2023, Canada implemented an official prohibition on cosmetics tested on animals and their trade through the Budget Implementation Act. The ban applies to false labeling of animal-tested products and t ended a ten-year campaign on the ban of cosmetics, trade countrywide and animal testing.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Grand View Research. (n.d.). Vegan cosmetics market size, share & trends analysis report by type, by distribution channel, by region, and segment forecasts, 2023–2030. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/vegan-cosmetics-market>

## The Role of Influencers in Shaping Vegan Cosmetic Product Purchases

The rise of influencer culture has significantly transformed how consumers, especially younger generations, interact with beauty brands and make purchasing decisions, particularly concerning ethical and plant-based products such as vegan cosmetics. According to the Beauty & Cosmetics Report 2023, 33% of total participants reported that influencers were among their top sources of information when choosing cosmetic and beauty products, with 50% among Gen Z consumers and 39% among Millennials.

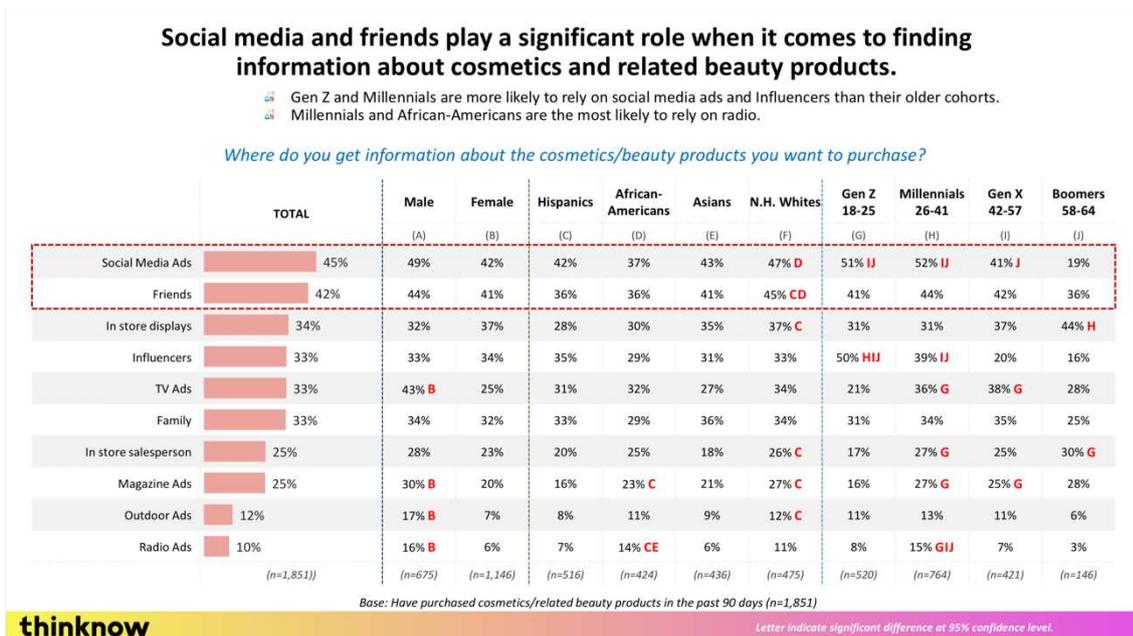
**Figure n. 3: “How important are each of the following to you personally, when it comes to choosing your cosmetics or beauty products?”**



In this figure we can see the weight consumers place on various brand attributes when selecting cosmetics and beauty brands. We can notice that article and inclusive values are prominent: 47% of consumers indicate that is very important that a brand is cruelty free, emphasize, especially by Hispanic and non-Hispanic white consumers with 48% both. This priority aligns closely with vegan product attributes and eat, suggests a strong intersection between cruelty free branding and vegan consumer appeal. 29% of total participants consider it very important that the brand is an all-vegan makeup brand, especially among millennials with 35%. Another key factor include inclusivity and the use of natural ingredients, 36 of consumers rate it is very important.

On the other hand, we can see that celebrity endorsement is the least influential factor with only 28% of participants taking it as one of the main factors to purchase that product. This decline of conventional endorsements highlights the transition towards marketing influenced by “real” social media influencers, whose impact comes not from fame but from authenticity, shared values and a genuine connection with their audience.<sup>40</sup>

**Figure n. 4: “Where do you get information about the cosmetics beauty products you want to purchase?”<sup>41</sup>**



This chart further confirms that beauty consumption is not merely about product features, but is deeply interconnected with social identity, digital media influence, and generational values. We can see that 50% of Gen Z and 39% of millennials actively rely on influencers for product information and this is particularly important when considering that younger consumers are more likely to express concern about brand values such as safety, natural ingredients and inclusivity.

Influencers often play a dual role, not only showcasing products but also acting as educators and advocates for conscious consumption by promoting aqua, friendly products

40 ThinkNow. (2023). Beauty & cosmetics report 2023. <https://thinknow.com/thank-you/?source=28276>

41 ThinkNow. (2023). Beauty & cosmetics report 2023. <https://thinknow.com/thank-you/?source=28276>

to relatable and aspirational content. Authenticity is crucial because customers trust influencers, who truly believe in sustainability.

However, concerns like greenwashing and financially motivated endorsements can undermine trust and credibility. Influencers impact purchasing decisions, particularly among younger generations, by making sustainable products appear trendy. While this can encourage eco-friendly behavior, it also leads to impulsive, trend-driven purchases.

Psychological mechanisms such as emotional appeals and trust drive consumer engagement with influencer content. Especially when influencers are transparent and sincere, enhances the effectiveness of sustainability campaigns. Challenges like greenwashing and impulsive buying persist but can be defeated by authentic micro-influencers or by promoting ethical marketing standards.

A study led by two researchers from the University of Indonesia entitled “The role of social media, influencers in shaping sustainable purchasing behavior: genuine, consumer interest, or impulsive trends?” adopted a quantitative research designed to examine this phenomenon of social media influencers on sustainable purchasing behavior with a particular focus on trust, emotional engagement, and financial literacy.

The research, targeted individuals aged from 18 to 35 who actively engage with influencers that promote sustainable production on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Data were collected through an online survey with close ended questions to measure influencer credibility, trust attitude towards sustainability, purchasing behavior, emotional engagement, and financial literacy. Answers were taken using a five-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

A total of 300 respondents participated in the survey: 60% were female, and 40% were male. The age distribution showed that 70% were millennials, born from 1981 to 1996, and 30% were members of GenZ born, from 1997 to 2012. Over 85% of them reported that they follow influencers who promote sustainable products for example reusable goods plant-based food and eco-friendly fashion. Approximately 65% of the participants admit that they had purchased at least one product by an influencer in the previous six months. Almost 78% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were encouraged to buy eco-friendly products due to influencer promotions, especially reusable water

bottles (45%), organic skin care (30%) and sustainable fashion (25%). However, 55% of these purchases were driven by genuine interest insit ability while the other 45% were impulsive driven by emotional or social influence.

The study also found that micro influencers, that have fewer than 100,000 followers, were more effective dynamic influencers in promoting sustainability and engagement. While micro influencers had an engagement rate of 30% and a trust rate of 40%, micro-influencers had an engagement rate of 70% and a trust rate of 80%.

Another element that it is really important for the latest generations of consumers is financial literacy, that could serve as a protective factor that could reduce impulsivity and improve spending awareness, especially when we talk about the by now pay later (BNPL) service. This study highlights the importance of financial education in promoting responsible, spending habits. This type of initiative can empower consumers to make informed the sustainable financial decisions that could reduce the long-term risks of impulsive buying.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, the data from the Beauty & Cosmetics Report 2023 illustrates a distinct trend: influencers play a crucial role in promoting vegan beauty products, particularly among younger, digitally-native consumers who search ethical transparency and personal relevance in their cosmetic choices. Brands aiming to sell vegan and cruelty-free cosmetics should therefore strategically invest in influencer sponsorship that emphasize authenticity, sustainability, and inclusivity, core values that are becoming increasingly central to modern beauty consumption.

In fact, these kinds of studies are especially important in today's changing marketplace. They advance the discussion of sustainable marketing by analyzing the interaction between consumer, psychology, brands behavior and influencer credibility and trust.

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42 Syahribula, S., Elliyana, E., & Rosmiati, R. (n.d.). The role of social media influencers in shaping sustainable purchasing behavior: Genuine consumer interest or impulsive trends?

## CHAPTER FOUR: Ethical beauty across borders: a study of Nabla, a European brand, and Laneige, a Korean one

### *Nabla*<sup>43</sup>

#### History, mission and vision of the brand

Nabla was born in Italy in 2013 as an independent brand dedicated to transparency with its customers. Nabla's aim was to deliver makeup that is not only high-quality but also safe and effective. Their approach achieved the use of premium ingredients for their products through careful research and a preference for natural. At the heart of their company, according to their promotional literature, there is a commitment to transparency, honesty, and freedom.

Their formulations and products are designed to be innovative, beautiful, functional and 'never ordinary'. For Nabla, makeup is a tool of expression and a way to celebrate individuality. Their products allow people to discover and define their unique style.

The value of their cosmetics reflects care and precision invested in their development, aiming to meet the highest standards. Their mission is to offer these premium products at fair prices. This is possible, thanks to their passion that prioritizes quality of profit margins.

It is a cruelty free firm, certified by PETA, and they really care and respect animals. Their products are never tested on animals, either any of their individual ingredients, and they don't authorize any third-party to do so. They refuse to sell in markets where animal testing is not a legal requirement.

The name "NABLA" holds a deep significance because it is a scientific symbol used to describe the nature in a clear and precise way. It reflects their belief in



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<sup>43</sup> All images in this paragraph were sourced from NABLA Cosmetics' "New Arrivals" collection page, accessible at <https://nablacosmetics.com/en/collections/novita>, accessed on June 4, 2025.

learning from nature. At the same time, Nabla is also the ancient name for a harp associated with Apollo to God of the arts. These double meaning captures their vision that makeup is both science and art, a powerful form of expression that merges the creativity with knowledge to bring beautiful life.<sup>44</sup>

### Product range and ethical standards



... Daniele Lorusso, known online as ‘mrdanielemakeup’ is the artistic director of the brand. A talented makeup artist from Puglia and a web phenomenon with over 800k subscribers on Instagram, 450k subscribers on YouTube and 240k on TikTok. Daniele plays a central role in NABLA’s creative vision. Personally involved in the development of every product he approaches each creation, from the initial idea to the final formula.

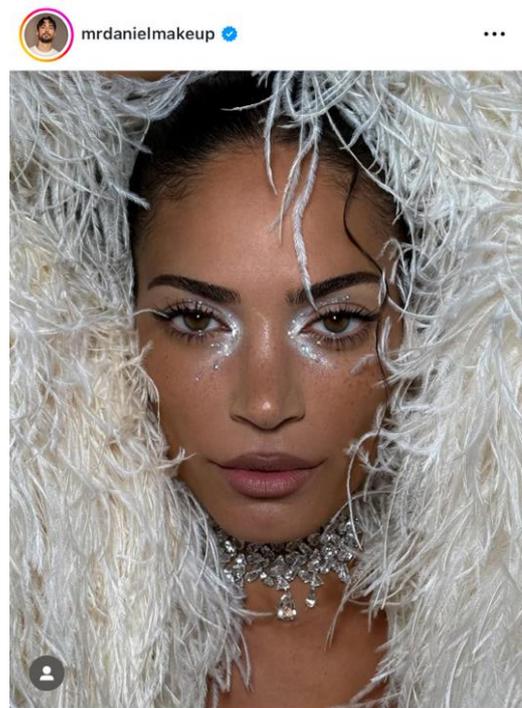
28,2 MILA 66 66

Piace a lisa.migliorini e altri  
mrdanielmakeup Velvety pink Glam on @valentinacabassi  
using @nablacosmetics combining Close-Up Blurring

He focuses on creating unique textures, innovative finishes, and carefully curated colors schemes. Nabla is the result of a strong united team that works together in complete harmony.

As he said, with his role as artistic director, he oversees every aspect of the brands identity, including the design of packaging, ensuring it is both practical and aesthetically appealing.

He also personally manages campaign concepts, collaborating with outstanding visual artists like



43,3 MILA 145 223

Piace a deborafullii e altri  
mrdanielmakeup @elodie Pride Edition

44 Nabla Cosmetics. (n.d.). About us. <https://nablacosmetics.com/en/pages/about-us#:~:text=The%20formulas%20that%20we%20use,QUALITY%20CONTROL>

Elodie, Anna Pepe or Gaia, or influencers like Elisa Maino, Valentina Cabassi or Giulia De Lellis. He makes sure that every element aligns with the brand vision and emotional universe.



Each choice is openly explained, including how specific ingredients or procedures affect formula. Even when synthetic components are used for performance reasons, Nabla always chooses the most refined and least invasive options. This is clearly communicated through videos and products descriptions, to be aligned with the transparent approach of the brand. Daniele's love for makeup is

showed by his tutorials, creating a united community and a unique platform of artistic exchange.<sup>45</sup>

As we can see from the photos of new models, Knobler embraces the European trend of bold, colorful, self expression, or makeup is used as a tool for creativity, empowerment, and individuality.

The most predominantly used aesthetic is vibrant eyeshadows, graphic liner, experimental textures, and customizable finishes. In this case makeup becomes a form of personal storytelling and rebellion against conventional norms, and we can see it through their products.



### **Marketing strategies and consumer engagement in Europe**

NABLA's journey of transparency, and creativity took a huge step forward with "The beauty house" a documentary-style reality project that brought the brand philosophy to live in a new way. Released on YouTube and developed across two seasons the series offered viewers unfiltered behind the scenes look into NABLA's universe opening the doors to the people, processes and fashion that are behind the brand.

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45 Focus. (n.d.). Giovane e controcorrente, green e social: è il make-up di Nabla. <https://www.focus.it/ambiente/ecologia/giovane-e-controcorrente-green-e-social-e-il-make-up-di-nabla>

The project featured five prominent beauty creators: Ale Hilton with 190k followers on YouTube, Debora Fulli with 320k followers on YouTube, Eleonora Tani called The Lady with 445k followers on YouTube, Loretta Grace called Grace on your Dash with 760k followers on YouTube and Melissa Tani with 370k followers on YouTube. Each influencer brought their own audience, voice and creative vision to the project, helping to expand NABLA's reach across a different community of beauty lovers.



This project aims to reflect the brand commitment to openness and artistic expression, showing the creative process in real time from the brainstorming, the product development of a campaign, the creation to the final lunch. It was a strategic marketing initiative centered on authenticity and emotional storytelling. This work built real trust and engagement through the community, reinforcing NABLA's identity as a brand rooted in honesty, creativity and innovation.

The impact was significant and generated substantial views and engagement across platforms, confirming its reputation as a digital first beauty brand. By this way now, NABLA connected with a new generation of customers. They use of a long firm influencer collaborations allowed the brand to align with modern customers, expectations and setting a new standard for meaningful brand engagement.

This documentary inspired our community of makeup lovers by breaking down industry walls, and offering a role personal perspective without filters and scripts, just real people creating real beauty.<sup>46</sup>

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46 Youmark. (n.d.). Show Reel Factory, in collaborazione con Nabla Cosmetics, firma la seconda stagione del docu-reality The Beauty House. <https://youmark.it/ym-interactive/show-reel-factory-in-collaborazione-con-nabla-cosmetics-firma-la-seconda-stagione-del-docu-reality-the-beauty-house/>

## *Laneige*<sup>47</sup>

### **History, mission and vision of the brand**

Laneige is a South Korean skin care brand established in 1994. Its name is derived from the French word “la neige”, meaning the snow reflecting its emphasis on hydration, purity and freshness. Over the years as cultivated a strong, global presence with sophisticated branding strategies focusing on young modern customers.

Its mission is “skincare driven by curiosity and science, open to wonder”. It is considered a luxury skin care brand because it offers high-quality products that combine innovation and effective formulations. The brand’s development is linked to its Water Science™ technology, which is the basis of its innovation in skin care. They are committed to provide visible and tangible results with scientifically proven products.

Despite its global popularity and branding as a science driven and innovative skin care company it’s not classified as a free or vegan brand in 2025. It’s owned by a company called AmorePacific, a company that tests on animals. We can say, in fact, that not only Laneige is not cruelty free, but neither is their parent company. They stated that it doesn’t conduct animal testing unless required by law, this means the brand permits animal testing in markets like China, where it is requested for certain imported cosmetics.



Consequently, Laneige doesn’t meet the full criteria set by internationally, recognized cruelty free, certifying organization like PETA. The brand writes in its website the following statement:

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<sup>47</sup> All images in this paragraph were sourced from Laneige’s “Open to Wonder” brand story page, accessible at <https://www.laneige.com/int/en/brand/open-to-wonder/>, accessed on June 4, 2025.

“Amorepacific Corporation, the parent company of the Laneige brand, strictly prohibits animal testing having begun its commitment to alternative testing methods over 30 years ago. We ourselves do not test on animals nor do we ask others to conduct animal testing for us. If obligated by law or regulatory bodies for reasons of safety, however, limited exceptions may apply. Our consumers’ safety and peaceful coexistence between nature, people, and business is priority and Amorepacific remains committed to providing quality products worldwide.”<sup>48</sup>

The company doesn’t confirm with a certification the absence of animal derived ingredients across its product range, making it difficult for customers to identify which, if any, products are suitable for a vegan lifestyle.<sup>49</sup>

This aligns with broader industry patterns in South Korea, where cruelty free and vegan certification are still not widespread. The Korean government implemented the partial ban on animal testing for cosmetics in 2018. Even though, traditional Korean skin care often incorporates animal-based ingredients and customers still ask for certifications in vain.

Even if many established brands, including Laneige, have yet to align fully with cruelty free or vegan standards, a new wave of Korean beauty brand is beginning to adopt more ethical and sustainable practices, some examples are Dear, Klairs, Purito of Sioris.<sup>50</sup>

This shift highlights the importance on prioritizing cruelty free and vegan practices, ensuring both integrity and transparency in the global skin care industry.

### **Product range and ethical standards**

Laneige’s product lines are systematically divided into distinctive dimensions or divisions each tailored to make specific skin needs: the Hydration line (Water Bank series), the Moisturizing and Toning line (Cream Skin series), the Sleeping Care line (overnight masks), and the Makeup category (such as Neo Cushion Foundation).

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48 Laneige. (n.d.). Frequently asked questions. <https://us.laneige.com/pages/frequently-asked-questions?srltid=AfmBOooMgDLN95LyjOOGfmC1JPk5ugPCQmJYVbGomGWHm9YY1sZ7q5X3>

49 Ethical Elephant. (n.d.). Is Laneige cruelty-free & vegan? [https://ethicalelephant.com/is-laneige-cruelty-free-vegan/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://ethicalelephant.com/is-laneige-cruelty-free-vegan/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

50 Cruelty-Free Kitty. (n.d.). Is Laneige vegan? <https://www.crueltyfreekitty.com/brands/laneige/#:~:text=Is%20Laneige%20vegan%3F,even%20if%20they%20are%20vegan.>



Laneige “Open to wonder” campaign embodies the brand’s philosophy of focusing scientific study with imaginative innovation to revolutionize contemporary skin care. Guided by the question “What if?”, Laneige continually challenges traditional beauty norms by introducing hybrid formulations that simplify skin care routines with a focus on needs of the users. For example, the brand has changed traditional production by converting cream into toners and combining lip balms with

sleeping masks to better meet the habits of modern customers. This creative approach is especially present in Laneige’s hybrid skin care collection, which combines lasting skin health advantages with the results of cosmetics. An example is the Neo cushion and skin veil base that provides not just a cosmetic coverage, but also it hydrates and nourishes the skin.

At the core of Laneige’s identity is its commitment to hydration science with its Water Bank Blue hyaluronic line to provide deep and long lasting moisture. Their Sleeping beauty technology is also a testament to their commitment, it includes overnight products like the Water Sleeping mask and Lip Slipping mask, which are designed to revitalize your skin while you sleep.

With its comprehensive approach, Laneige not only responds to various skin issues, but also strengthens its brand image as an international authority in hydration centric skincare. With a focus on innovation and the effectiveness, the brand has become a leading beauty brand by pushing constantly the boundaries of product formulation and design without compromising the needs of the customers.<sup>51</sup>



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51 Laneige. (n.d.). Open to wonder. <https://www.laneige.com/int/en/brand/open-to-wonder/>

## Marketing strategies and cultural engagement in Korea

Korean beauty influencers and celebrities have become powerful global trendsetters, combining skincare expertise, fashion forward aesthetic and digital understanding in the K - beauty sector. This icon not only show the products, but they also redefine beauty standards and influence consumer behavior on an international scale.

One of the most known influencers is Pony, Park Hye-Min, a pioneering figure in the K beauty movement. With her YouTube channel called, Pony Syndrome, she has introduced millions to Korean beauty techniques, showing radiant skin, minimalism and self-expression that enhance her artistry, authenticity, and professionalism. her position as a global cultural ambassador fo K-beauty has been strengthened through lobation with multinational brands, such as Mac cosmetics.<sup>52</sup>



Another important figure, that combine the pop culture and beauty, is the New Zealand born singer of BLACKPINK: Rosé. She serves her as a global ambassador for the high-end Korean skin care business Sulwhasoo. Air image and reach demonstrate the core values of K beauty that are sophistication brightness and comprehensive skin care to a worldwide audience.

As the Italian edition of Vanity Fair notes, influencers like Pony and Rosé are among the most followed Korean beauty figures among the younger generations like Gen Z, acting as both brand, ambassadors, and culture translators effectively embracing the philosophy of K- beauty internationally.<sup>53</sup>

Korean beauty influencers and celebrities are not just social media creators and ambassadors, but they are also visionaries. They redefine beauty standards and establish new worldwide benchmarks for how beauty is appreciated and expressed.

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52 Lefty. (n.d.). Korean beauty influencers. <https://lefty.io/blog/korean-beauty-influencers>

53 Vanity Fair Italia. (n.d.). K-beauty: influencer coreane e bellezza. <https://www.vanityfair.it/article/k-beauty-influencer-coreane-bellezza>

## *Comparing ethical approaches in Korean and European cosmetics*

### **Differences in product offerings and ethical agreements**

The difference is in product offerings and aesthetic trends between Korean and European markets reflect not only cultural preferences, but also the differences between the regulatory norms and ethical priorities as the beauty business continues to globalize. Despite the fact that Korean beauty is known for its innovation and focus on skin health, European companies have developed a unique identity based on more transparency, strong aesthetics and adherence to regulations. These differences have significant consequences for influences, marketing strategies, brand, positioning, and customers perception in both areas.

K beauty which is influenced by centuries of traditional skin care practices, and supported by high-tech advancements, is primarily concerned with improving and maintaining skin health. The idea of dewy and moisturized skin continues to be fundamental, the product line usually consists of multi-step skin care, routines, such as toners, essences, ampoules, sheet mask and SPF reach moisturizer, as well as base makeup design to enhance rather than conceal. The widespread popularity of cushion foundations, BB and CC creams, and light tints shows this "no-makeup makeup" approach, which aims to create a natural and lawless look.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, European beauty products frequently focus on expressive self-presentation, with an emphasis on color and individuality. Products with high pigmentation, lipsticks with bright colors, and contouring products that define the face are more likely to be used by consumers. Although skincare is still crucial, the European cosmetics market generally combines skincare and makeup in fewer steps, concentrating on products that are multifunctional or save time. Brands frequently align themselves with seasonal fashion trends and runway aesthetics, underlining a balance between creativity and efficacy, and encouraging users to embrace more audacious looks as a form of self-expression.

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54 The Guardian. (2025, March 21). The next wave of Korean beauty is here – and it's bigger than ever. <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2025/mar/21/the-next-wave-of-korean-beauty-is-here-and-its-bigger-than-ever>

The concept of cruelty, free and vegan certification, that was considered niche, has increasingly become a central issue in global cosmetic regulation and customer cautiousness.

The regulatory and ethical framework, especially in relation to product certifications and cruelty-free criteria, is a key difference between the two markets. Animal testing for cosmetics has been prohibited in the European Union since 2013, and the importation of items tested on animals is also forbidden. Because of this, cruelty-free certification is now the standard in many regions of Europe, rather than a selling point. Consumers are also becoming more vocal about wanting transparency regarding the origins of ingredients, environmental effects, and labor ethics, which has led to the popularity of organic, vegan, and eco-certified labels.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast, even if the Korean beauty industry has advanced significantly, not all K-beauty businesses have adopted cruelty-free methods. Asia presents a more complex and evolving landscape, particularly in South Korea. Historically, Korean cosmetics industries were required to conduct animal testing for products that should have been exported to China, where post-market animal testing was mandated by regulators.

However, significant regulatory progress has been made in 2018 with Korea implemented them. It's animal protection act which banned animal testing for cosmetics were alternative methods are available. Despite this, many K-beauty companies are still finding it difficult to obtain cruelty-free certification that is accepted worldwide. However, an increasing number of independent and indie Korean brands, including Dear, Klairs, Aromatica, and PURITO, are actively developing cruelty-free, vegan, and eco-friendly product lines to meet evolving consumer expectations both at home and abroad.

The official certifications that we can find in creative free beauty products are:

- Leaping Barney certification, it confirms zero animal testing throughout product development and their ingredient supplier must make the same promise
- PETA's beauty without bunnies, it confirms that brands don't test on animals

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55 European Commission. (n.d.). Ban on animal testing. [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/cosmetics/ban-animal-testing\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/cosmetics/ban-animal-testing_en)

- Vegan society logo, that certifies products without animal-derived ingredients, but doesn't guarantee cruelty free status automatically<sup>56</sup>

Despite these improvements, Asia lacks a uniform or region wide standard for cruelty free or vegan labeling, which results in market inconsistencies. Due to the lack of official third-party certifications like PETA or the Vegan society, some companies may promote themselves as vegan or cruelty free, leading to customers skepticism and greenwashing concerns.

The development of Korean beauty trends is often influenced by a mix of social media popularity, skincare science, and popular culture, particularly K-pop and K-dramas. Trends like "glass skin," or "gradient lips" "promote a youthful, subtle appearance often become widespread across Asia before gaining engagement in the West among customers. Contrarily, European trends frequently emerge from fashion cities like Paris, Milan, and London, where runway presentations and designer partnerships drive the beauty sector. Reflecting a wider cultural acceptance of individuality, diversity, and creative expression, trends like striking graphic eyeliner, neon color schemes, and statement brows are prevalent here.<sup>57</sup>

In conclusion, the Korean and European beauty industries are both vibrant and powerful in influencing global beauty standards, but they are still based on very different cultural, moral, and regulatory frameworks. Korean beauty focuses on skin health, gentle enhancement, and ritualistic care, which appeals to consumers who seek natural perfection. In contrast, European beauty places a premium on ethical transparency, courageous self-expression, and fashion-forward innovation, all of which resonate with consumers who value individuality and conscious consumption. For companies, influencers, and marketers looking to succeed in the complex and more and more connected worldwide beauty market, it is essential to comprehend these differences.

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56 Luxiface. (n.d.). The surprising truth about Korean skincare: Cruelty-free beauty secrets revealed. <https://luxiface.com/it-it/blogs/k-beauty-skincare-routine/the-surprising-truth-about-korean-skincare-cruelty-free-beauty-secrets-revealed>

57 Vogue. (n.d.). K-beauty trends 2025. <https://www.vogue.com/article/k-beauty-trends-2025>

## **Influence of each brand's approach on ethical marketing and the cosmetics industry**

The influence of Korean beauty, also known as K – beauty, with their social media influencers has emerged as a powerful driver of consumer behavior, especially among younger generations, like Gen Z, who are increasingly dependent on digital platforms for information, socialization, and consumption.

The quick expansion of K – beauty is a significant aspect of the wider cultural movement known as the Korean wave, or Hallyu, which has influenced how people see South Korea culture worldwide. It's not an isolated phenomenon because with the popularity of the Korean television shows in Asia, at the beginning of the 2000s, Hallyu has expanded into a diverse cultural enterprise that sell more than just music and movies but also fashion and beauty products.

By the mid 2000s, Hallyu had penetrated not only Asian markets, but also western cultural ones, primarily through the success of Korean cinema at international film festivals, helping to introduce Korean culture products through new audiences in Europe and North America. In contrast to Asia, where K-pop and dramas were prevalent, the West first reacted to Korean cinema's artistic merit. This evolution of Hallyu, which combined mainstream pop in the east and cinematic prestige in western culture, resulted in a unique, cultural mix that also led to increase in related sectors like K beauty.<sup>58</sup>

K beauty established itself as a measured tool of soft power within this ecosystem. Social media channels, especially in China, have become essential for consumers to learn about and choose which cosmetics items to buy.

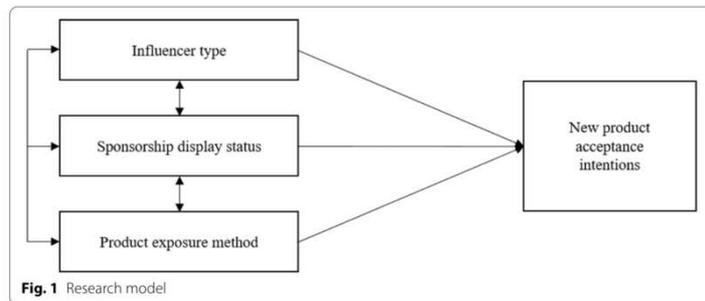
A recent study, called “The impact of K beauty, social media, influencers, sponsorship, and product exposure on consumer acceptance of new products” conducted by Lei Wang and Jin Hwa Lee (2021), examined how the type of influencer, presence or absence of sponsorship,

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58 Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. (n.d.). Negli ultimi anni si è assistito a una maggiore ibridazione tra moda e film d'arte e non.  
<https://www.unive.it/web/it/7162/dettaglio/905#:~:text=Negli%20ultimi%20anni%20si%20è,film%20d'arte%20e%20non>

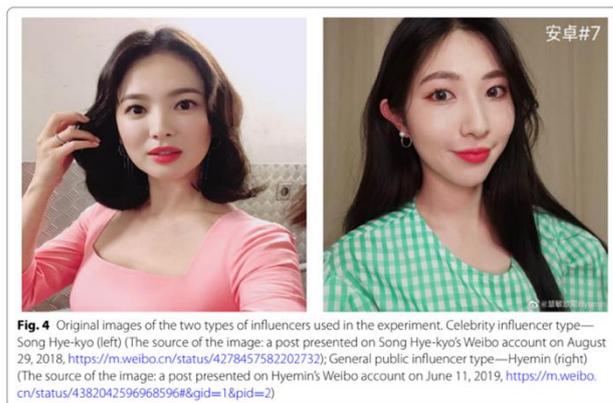
disclosures, and the presentation of K beauty products affect Chinese millennial customers decisions to purchase new K beauty products.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure n. 5: The research model used by the study**



The authors used eight different versions of fictional Weibo posts that varied the influencer type, celebrity versus the general public, the presence or absence of sponsorship disclosure and the product exposure, visible versus not visible, in a strong experimental design. The study used a sample of 800 millennial female customers, who heart a significant demographic in the Chinese cosmetic industry.

**Figure n. 6: Examples of posts used by the researchers**



According to the results, there is a subtle interaction between these factors. The post made by general public influencers are a greater positive impact on people’s acceptance of new products than those made by celebrity influencers. These alliances with the growing perception that influencers are perceived as more dependable and accessible and genuine by the general

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59 Wang, L., & Lee, J. H. (2021). The impact of K-beauty social media influencers, sponsorship, and product exposure on consumer acceptance of new products. *Fashion and Textiles*, 8(15)

public, particularly among younger customers who value honesty above celebrity status by sharing personal experiences, honest reviews and captivating stories, and such influencers frequently establish lasting connections with their audience, which creates a sense of closeness and trustworthiness.

Another critical finding from this study is the effect of sponsorship display. In general post that didn't show showcase sponsorship were better at promoting customers adoption of new items. Its explicit commercial disclosure could trigger customers, persuasive awareness, causing them to view the content as advertising and react negatively. However, the negative impact was reduced when sponsorship was combined by a general public influencer, and when they dip with product exposure, it actually leads to the greatest rate of new product acceptance. Because influencers can protect customers from skepticism, it is possible that it would be more likely to engage in sponsored transparent material.

The primary impact on consumers intentions was not statistically significant, but their exposure to the productive have an interesting outcome. this indicates that the products' persuasive ability depends on the context in which it is presented in particular on its relationship to the influencer type and sponsorship red, and then just been displayed in a post. The impact of product exposure became more evident when it was assessed as a component of two way or three-way interactions. For example, celebrities were far less effective than influencers from the general public when a product was displayed, and such included a sponsorship disclosure on the other and famous influencers were more effective when there was no product exposure or sponsorship disclosure.

The three-way interaction between influencer type sponsorship, display and product exposure method provides the most coherent insight. When all three elements were present, there was the greatest acceptance of the new product. This implies that the message is viewed as informative and reliable, which increases its effective when all marketing components are synchronized and delivered honestly by relatable person. On the other, and the lowest acceptance occurred when a celebrity influencer displayed sponsorship, but the product wasn't shown indicating that such posts are likely perceived as fake or excessively commercial.

These findings have significant consequences for marketing strategy. One focusing on the Chinese market in the cave beauty industry brands should think about utilizing popular public

influencers who have gained the confidence of their audience. Transparency in sponsorship might be beneficial if applied with the appropriate kind of influencer. Moreover, visual presentation of the product, although not decisive on its own, may increase the credibility and informational value of the message when used strategically.

This study also adds to the larger body of knowledge on digital marketing and influencer psychology by experimentally, confirming the effects of important marketing factors in cross cultural environment. This study examines the unique dynamics of Chinese customers behavior in response to Korean beauty content, while earlier studies have concentrated on western markets or made generalization about influencer behavior. It highlights the necessity of using marketing strategies that are culturally aware in foreign markets and reflects the increasing convergence of culture, business, and the media.

Finally, this study emphasizes the growing complexity of customer decision-making in the digital era. Consumers are now active participants in brand messages, analyzing questioning and reacting to marketing material depending on its perceived intent, credibility and visual signs. Maintaining customers engagement and trust with depend on the authenticity and strategic integration of influencer marketing as the digital marketplace becomes more crowded in conclusion K beauty influencers have a significant effective on consumer behavior, especially when material is genuine and aesthetically, appealing with open marketing strategies. This effect is incorporated in the larger context of the Hallyu wave, which continues to influence, worldwide, cultural consumption through organized government support, media exposure, and the inspirational power of its ambassadors. Companies that understand and leverage this dynamic which are based on both emotional appeal and strategic communication will be in a better position to succeed in the increasingly complex and socially connected beauty market.<sup>60</sup>

Following the global expansion of the K beauty phenomenon and its integration into divider Hallyu wave, it is crucial to examine how beautiful influencers operate in verse cultural settings, especially in Europe.

European beauty influencers tend to take a different approach, emphasizing authenticity, reliability and consciousness, while Korean influencers often show an inspirational and

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60 Wang, L., & Lee, J. H. (2021). The impact of K-beauty social media influencers, sponsorship, and product exposure on consumer acceptance of new products. *Fashion and Textiles*, 8(15)

polished image with the flawless skin, aesthetic harmony, and meticulous skin care. These differences not only reflect divergent, cultural values, but also demonstrate the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies across regions.

As various market studies have highlighted, European customers have different expectations, and influencers who interact with their audience through honest opinions and genuine life experiences tend to connect better. A study, called “Fashion and Beauty Influencers and Romanian Millennials: Exploring the Dynamics of Consumer Behavior” conducted by researchers at the University of Babes-Bolyai Ephemeredes, discovered that social media influencers have a major impact on customers preferences, especially when the content reflects cultural values and personal identity.<sup>61</sup>

Another study, done by a researcher at the University of Rotterdam called “Beauty bloggers, and their influence on consumer by intentions, the case of the Netherlands”, explores how deep perceived persona of beauty blockers affects by intention of customers, especially the Dutch one. It focuses on specific personality traits and relational factors in the context of YouTube beauty content. The study found that the perception of a vlogger as kind, friendly, relatable, enthusiastic, energetic and outgoing increases customers willingness to purchase products. On the contrary, vloggers viewed as highly responsible and organized negatively impacted the decision-making process of the customers. Beauty influencers who appear as professional figures might reduce the perceived authenticity, leading to decreased consumer trust.<sup>62</sup>

Consistency also plays a critical role in the customer relationship in Europe. According to recent studies, an increasing number of customers are disengaging from brands and influencers that do not share their beliefs. A recent industry analysis found that around 70% of customers would stop buying from a brand or unfollowed an influencer if they saw unethical behavior or discrepancy in values. This demonstrates the increased analysis that influencer content experiences, not just for its aesthetic appeal, but also for each transparency and article integrity

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61 Abrudan, M.-C., & Enyedi, P. D. (2021). Fashion and beauty influencers and Romanian millennials: Exploring the dynamics of consumer behavior. *Studia UBB Ephemeredes*, 66(1), 5–26.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361061715\\_Fashion\\_and\\_Beauty\\_Influencers\\_and\\_Romanian\\_Millennials\\_Exploring\\_the\\_Dynamics\\_of\\_Consumer\\_Behavior](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361061715_Fashion_and_Beauty_Influencers_and_Romanian_Millennials_Exploring_the_Dynamics_of_Consumer_Behavior)

62 Ten Have, C. (2017). Beauty vloggers and their influence on consumer-buying intentions [Bachelor’s thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam]. Erasmus Thesis Repository. <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/39696/Have-Charlotte-ten.pdf>

The legal and regulatory environment in the European Union are also crucial. Marketing is heavily regulated and supports these behavioral patterns. Such policies have been created to safeguard customers against deceptive marketing and increase trust in the online marketplace.<sup>63</sup>

The European market for cosmetics is also different from its Asian counterpart due to economic factors. Rising living costs across much of Europe, have contributed to two shifts in consumers purchasing behavior, increasingly favoring, affordability and value-driven products. Despite customers' interest in skincare and well-being, this trend has reportedly resulted in a slowdown in the purchasing of premium cosmetics sales. Influencers in fact need to be mindful of this economic sensitivity and choose and promote products that align both with aspirational lifestyles and practical budgets.

The influence of European beauty influencers cannot be evaluated, only through the perspective of global trend such as K beauty. Instead, their efficiency comes from their ability to create a sustained engagement with European customers. Their expectations are focused on authenticity, reliability, and ethical conduct.<sup>64</sup> The beauty industry will be stronger by the end of 2025, and it will generate over \$148 billion in revenue with around 43% of transactions taking place on e-commerce sites. This is the growing importance of digital material like influencer campaigns. They are now influencing the customers' expectations, the brand perceptions, and even redefine beauty ideals in their own cultural context, they are not just advertising goods.

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63 Riedenstein, C. (2024, May 30). Europe gets tough on influencers. TechPolicy.Press.  
<https://techpolicy.press/europe-gets-tough-on-influencers>

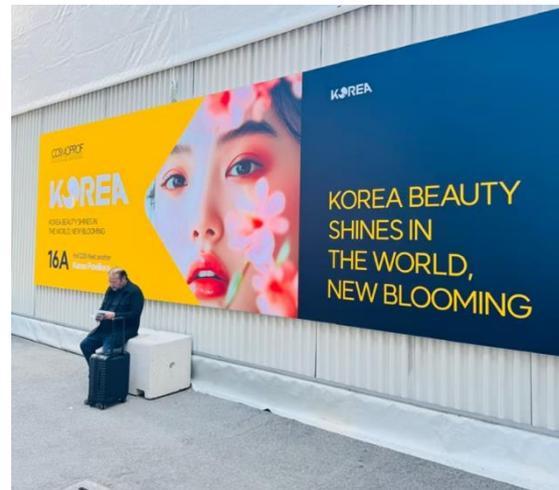
64 CosmeticsDesign-Europe. (2023, November 29). Do beauty influencers still have real 'influence'? And more answers to your selling on social questions.  
<https://www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com/Article/2023/11/29/Do-beauty-influencers-still-have-real-influence-And-more-answers-to-your-selling-on-social-questions/>



<sup>65</sup>A concrete example of how these dynamics are shaping the global cosmetics industry was demonstrated at Cosmoprof worldwide Bologna 2025, one of the world's leading trade shows for beauty and personal care. <sup>66</sup> With over 3128 exhibitors representing 69 nations and over 255,000 industry professionals representing 150 countries, the 56<sup>th</sup> edition was

a success that broke all previous records. For the first time ever all sectors, that were skin care, hair, nails, progress, green beauty and packaging, were held at once over four days, which made it easier for visitors to find a way around and facilitated better meetings between distributors buyers and brand representatives. The exhibition was more effective thanks to the clear separation of the sections, such as Cosmopack, Cosmo perfumery & cosmetics, and Cosmo hair & nail beauty salon.

A highly visible development was the emergence of Korean Beauty also called K beauty, result of the increasing global demand for Korean cosmetics and skin care products, the fair saw a significant increase in the number of Korean brands. They were displayed in two national pavilions and eight different exhibition areas were dedicated to Korean products. Among the 242 Korean firms that participated them 110 were located in a dedicated government pavilion organized by KOTRA and IBITA. This space allowed Korean brands to showcase innovations in vegan, cruelty free and skin focused product areas that align both with evolving western and Asian customers values, some examples that embrace these values are Needly and Manyo that's exhibited with their stands.



<sup>65</sup> All photos in this paragraph were taken from the article “Cosmoprof Bologna 2025: Show Report” published on Trend Traveller (<https://trend-traveller.com/2025/03/27/cosmoprof-bologna-2025-show-report/>), accessed on June 4, 2025.

<sup>66</sup> Korean Products. (2025, February 20). Auto draft 57. <https://korean-products.com/2025/02/20/auto-draft-57/>

Innovation was a key topic in the Cosmo Park area, which evaluated the full beauty supply chain. Businesses showed packaging that was recyclable refillable and biodegradable, emphasizing sustainability and digitalization. Additionally, companies representative AI-driven personalization tools that analyze the personal skin conditions and recommend tailored skincare products. The trend of “smart beauty” was evident among server exhibitors, indicating a pure path for future development in the sector.<sup>67</sup>



During the event also a number of Italian companies also distinguished themselves. Extralandia was an example that gained attention with its gender - free makeup production. The company is owned by Christian Filippi, a very young Italian influencer. This company was a reflection of larger industry shifts towards inclusivity, sustainability and innovation.<sup>68</sup>

We can see the innovation also through the significant investment that Cosmoprof made with the digital matchmaking tool and networking. The “Cosmoprof My Match” platform of facilitated smooth, live, and virtual interaction between buyers and exhibitor system. Buy your programmer hosted more than 15,000 meetings with the qualified operators from important markets including Europe, North America, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. In addition, industry executives gave educational sessions and forums on topics such as green chemistry, inclusive marketing strategies, the growth of dermacosmetics and the use of artificial intelligence in the beauty industry.<sup>69</sup>

The event confirmed that the future of beauty industry will be increasingly shaped by ethical innovation, technological integration, and cross cultural exchange. It also confirmed that customers across markets are not only buying beauty, but they are also buying value, transparency, and identity.

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67 Cosmoprof. (2025, March). Conferenza stampa 2025: Svelate le novità della nuova edizione. <https://my.cosmoprof.com/media-room/news/conferenza-stampa-2025-svelate-le-novita-della-nuova-edizione/>

68 Trend Traveller. (2025, March 27). Cosmoprof Bologna 2025: Show report. <https://trend-traveller.com/2025/03/27/cosmoprof-bologna-2025-show-report/>

69Cosmoprof. (2025). Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna 2025 – Post show release [Press release]. [https://www.cosmoprof.com/media/cosmoprof/press\\_releases/2025/Cosmoprof\\_Worldwide\\_Bologna\\_2025\\_post\\_show\\_release.pdf](https://www.cosmoprof.com/media/cosmoprof/press_releases/2025/Cosmoprof_Worldwide_Bologna_2025_post_show_release.pdf)

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### *Conclusion*

The beauty industry is facing a profound transformation, characterized by a growing global awareness of ethical practices, sustainability, and customer consciousness. This thesis studied the historical, cultural and economic evolution of cosmetics and makeup in particular, with a particular attention on the shift towards vegan and cruelty - free products, especially in the Korean and European markets.

Beginning with a historical analysis, the thesis outlined how beauty standards and cosmetic practices have always reflected broader societal values, shifting in focus across different eras, from Georgian and Victorian times to the 21st century. Examining the evolution of the cosmetics market in the most recent decades, the analysis has noted how transparency and sustainability have become more important to modern customers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, than merely aesthetic appeal. This change is demonstrated by the rise in vegan and cruelty-free beauty products, as more customers place a higher value on sustainable ingredients and environmental responsibility and animal welfare. Terms “vegan” and “cruelty free” are still sometimes confused but the demand for both persists, highlighting the need for improved labeling and information throughout the industry.

The thesis then presented a detailed analysis of the differences between the European and Korean approaches to ethical beauty, examined through the case studies of Nabla and Laneige. Nabla represents a European model characterized by transparency, cruelty-free certification, and expressive individuality. On the other hand, ethical practices at Laneige are still restricted by regional laws and cultural standards, particularly in the area of animal testing, despite the company’s focus on innovation, hydration and even if the company is currently without a cruelty-free certification.

The analysis also highlighted the role of influencers, especially micro influencers, in playing a critical role in shaping customers behavior. Influencers have revolutionized marketing by combining authenticity with advocacy, promoting values as well as product. However, issues like greenwashing and impulse buying highlight the significance of financial culture and communication in influencer-led marketing.

Summarizing the findings presented here, it can be argued that the cosmetic industry is moving towards a more inclusive and ethical future. Customers are demanding goods that reflect their values, and brands that are seen as fulfilling this need will be able to become market leaders. Maintaining a balance between performance and principles, as well as innovation without compromise to demonstrate compassion, is thus increasingly essential for the beauty industry. The future of beauty may be one that embraces both people and the planet through responsible, marketing, conscious consumerism, and inclusive practices in order to promote positive and lasting change.

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