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Lifting the Lid on Cruelty-Free Cosmetics: Analysing the Emotions behind Ethical Consumerism

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01. ABSTRACT

Ethical consumerism has emerged as a social pressure that companies must respond to (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). As consumers are becoming more aware of their role and potential effect of changing the products they buy (Gillani and Kutaula, 2018).

Movement towards cruelty-free products has gained traction, with many brands changing strategy to alter their core operations towards 'cruelty-free' (Chitrakorn, 2016; Cruelty Free International, 2020).

There remains scope to understand why consumers continue to purchase brands that test on animals. Thus, the underlying aims of this study are to examine trends, increasing awareness and acceptability of cruelty-free products within society, and examine views that have contributed towards ethical consumerism.

02. RESEARCH AIM:

To investigate the role of emotions in ethical consumerism of cosmetic products in the UK.

Figure 1: Cruelty-Free Logos (Adapted by Owens, 2022).

03. LITERATURE

Ethical Consumerism

·Ethical consumerism can be defined as a voluntary decision by a consumer to buy goods and services, aiming to positively affect certain social and/or environmental issues (Doane, 2001; Jones, 2017).
·Muncy and Vitell (1992) developed the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES) that examined consumer ethical beliefs regarding various questionable behaviours.
·Consumers report positive attitudes towards ethical goods, but their intentions and behaviour often do not follow suit (White, MacDonnell and Ellard, 2012).
·In 2020 ethical consumer spending hit a new record of £100bn, reaching a new high and showing a clear increase. The market for ethical personal products has only slightly increased (Ethical Consumer, 2023).

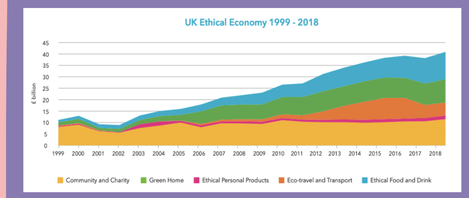

Figure 2: UK Ethical Economy (Ethical Consumer, 2019, p.2).

Beauty Industry

In 2022, the global cosmetics market experienced a growth of over 16%, compared to the previous year. Skincare, haircare, make-up, perfumes, toiletries, and oral cosmetics are the main product categories of the cosmetic market (Statista, 2023).
·The UK beauty and personal care industry is projected to reach £12.96bn in 2024 (Statista, 2024a).
·The UK is eight-largest cosmetics market, with the USA and China taking the two top positions (Statista, 2024b).

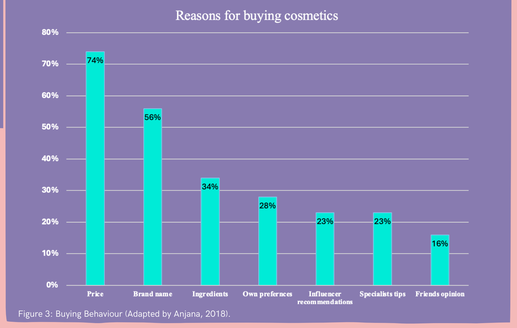

Figure 3: Buying Behaviour (Adapted by Anjana, 2018).

03. LITERATURE

Cruelty-Free

Cruelty-free means that no animals were harmed by the companies or suppliers in the creation of the final product (Cruelty Free International, 2023a).
Due to legislation, companies also must declare whether they test on animals, given demand from the public and increased political momentum relating to such issues (Chitrakorn, 2016).
A total of 3.06 million procedures were completed on animals in Great Britain in 2021 (UK Government, 2022; PETA, 2023).
Out of the total number of procedures only 10% were required by law, the rest were conducted voluntarily (Cruelty Free International, 2023c).
The animals typically used for the procedures are rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, rats, and mice (De Pauliny, 2021).
It has been shown that non-animal methods in cosmetic testing have shown better results in predicting human responses in the real-world than the animal tests they replace (Humane Society International, 2023).

03. LITERATURE

Emotions

Cohen and Areni (1991) suggest emotions to be markers, which are stored in an individual's memory and subsequently recovered to inform a decision.
·Primary emotions - Sadness, joy, fear, anger, disgust and surprise.
·Secondary emotions - nostalgia, compassion, pride and remorse.
Cognitive dissonance supports the contention that consumers are negatively disposed to information that makes them uncomfortable (Miller, Clark and Jehle, 2015).

04. METHODS

Qualitative semi-structured interviews will be conducted with female participants. As British women spend on average £400 annually on cosmetics (Read, 2020), and £1.36bn in 2023 on facial skincare (Capecchi, 2018); The highest in Europe (Statista, 2020) with 60% of women wearing makeup on a weekly basis (Waldersee, 2019).

It is proposed that 15-30 interviews are conducted or until saturation is reached on this topic, to ensure accurate findings.

The data analysis will utilise thematic analysis. In the aim of providing an in-depth insight into ethical consumerism, to understand participants buying behaviour and views of cruelty-free products.

05. SUMMARY

As such, there remains scope to further investigate gradual movements towards the increasing development of cruelty-free products.

Determining and understanding why consumers continue to purchase brands that test on animals.

Thus, the underlying aims of this study are to examine gradual trends towards cruelty-free products, increasing awareness and acceptability of cruelty-free products within society, and to examine emotions that have contributed towards ethical consumerism amongst some people and groups.

Important!

Much more to come, I am only in my first year of part-time PhD.

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