

Hello, Gorgeous!

Cosmetic shoppers are leaving the department store in favor of organic outlets, and manufacturers are catering to this clientele by offering current trends and exclusive ingredients. But with this new clientele comes new confusion. *By Melissa Kvidahl*

It's difficult to walk the aisles of a drugstore without running into mineral makeup or botanical skincare items. Like the green washing of the supermarket shelves, it could certainly be argued that this focus on so-called natural beauty items is a reflection of the natural industry's growing popularity and mainstream acceptance. But one also has to wonder: while imitation might be the sincerest form of flattery, is there anything truly sincere about these products?

In the case of mineral makeup, according to some brands, the answer seems to be no. "Many competitors have come onto the market claiming to be 'mineral makeup' but, in reality, they are conventional makeup products with some minerals included and therefore do not have the same benefits that a pure mineral makeup offers," explained Kirsten Corcoran, founder and product manager at Larenim (Columbus, OH). The same problem seems to be true of some natural skincare products looking to cash in on a perceived trend—one botanical ingredient does not a natural product make.

Organic and natural product retailers can set their beauty products apart by first highlighting the difference between imposters and truly natural brands. "This industry is competing for customers who are currently purchasing skincare products from department stores, drugstores or mass market retailers," said Atali Carr,

national educator at MyChelle Dermaceuticals (Louisville, CO). "Natural products retailers can capture these sales by offering products that deliver comparable, if not better, results with the added bonus of purity, while not compromising the environment."

High-end Trends

As more shoppers flock to the natural marketplace for makeup and beauty products, they are beginning to look for traits that perhaps have not been traditionally overriding in the industry. Many companies have noticed that the natural sector is beginning to appeal to a more high-end audience than ever before, as shoppers leave the department store counters in search of natural products.

"I have noticed the natural and mineral-based cosmetic companies being more keenly focused on having fashion forward color sections, to be more on par with the modern style of department store cosmetics," agreed Corcoran.

In a similar manner, as Carr explained, the anti-aging category is booming due to increased shopper interest and higher expectations accompanying these higher prices. "High-tech skincare is emerging across all channels offering surgery-like results with the use of advanced peptides, melanin-inhibitors and plant stem cells," she said. "We want our consumers to experience the results often obtained by laser treatments, injections

and lifts in the privacy of their own home with safer, natural ingredients at a lower cost."

Further, in keeping with department store brands which offer targeted skincare for different complexions and needs, Carr is noticing that natural companies are drawing shoppers in with personalized product regimens aimed at young adults, mature complexions with sun damage and solutions for customers with sensitive or allergy-prone skin.

Clearing Confusion

As the market grows and changes, though, one thing unfortunately hasn't: consumer confusion. Especially when it comes to personal care, for which there is no USDA Organic standard, shoppers are left to believe the label claims of sometimes-dishonest companies, or do some heavy research themselves.

According to Kyle Marcell, director of marketing at Naturity LLC (Bayville, NJ), confusion has not waned significantly, despite market growth. "There are many companies out there making organic claims, when their products are loaded with chemicals," he said. "The personal care industry is unregulated, so as we see regulations put into place, we will see the confusion clarified."

This is one problem that is greatly affecting Larenim. As Corcoran explained, many shoppers and even retailers often ask if the line is organic.

Eye Colour from Larenim





"Many consumers do not understand that minerals are, by nature, inorganic," she said. "Retailers can educate their staff so that they can pass on such information. Many companies also provide very useful brochures that can be made available to the consumer."



Another way that retailers can ease some of this confusion is by researching products themselves, and only stocking those which are authentically natural or organic, said Steve Shriver, founder and president of Eco Lips (Cedar Rapids, IA).

Retailers can also tap into resources provided by companies like MyChelle Dermaceuticals, which offers periodic print and web articles to inform retailers and staff members how to decipher



Choices, Choices

While there are more choices than ever in a natural products store's beauty aisle, Steve Shriver, founder and president of Eco Lips, noticed that shoppers now want a more edited selection. "We might be on the cusp of seeing the bubble burst in terms of the number of choices retailers offer consumers," he said. "With that, we need to offer the right product mix at, of course, the right price. Value is as important as ever. When I



say 'value' I don't mean cheap—I mean it has to be worth the money." Along these same lines, retailers are offering affordable, high-quality solutions by launching private label lines.

"We have had success developing private label 'value oriented' organic lip balm for retailers across the country," Shriver added.

It seems that in the world of natural beauty and its products, less is truly more.

confusing ingredient lists. "We've also recently launched a regular Retailer Webinar training series to teach our retail partners how to explain our incredible concepts and innovative ingredients to consumers," Carr said. "Our plan is to offer consumer education in the near future and inspire shoppers to demand more information and higher quality standards."

But not all is bleak, said Mary Futher, founder of Kaia Naturals (Toronto, Canada), who has noticed three significant changes in the industry lately that have lessened confusion. First, shoppers are reading labels and researching which ingredients to seek and which to avoid. "They are also asking why and what the ingredients do," she noted. Second, media attention given to organic and natural products has helped to teach shoppers to distinguish the difference between the two, why this difference can be important and the impact of such a difference.

Finally, Futher explained that manufacturers are becoming

more transparent, and focusing on consumer education and explaining their ingredients. "For instance, at Kaia we list all of our ingredients with a brief description of why they are in the product in such a way that the average consumer can understand its inclusion and its benefits," she explained. "For example, we list panthenol: a moisturizer, derived from vitamin B5, with humectant-like properties that aid in skin absorption."

"Organic foods continue to grow, and with that comes increased consumer knowledge and receptivity to organic beauty products," concluded Shriver. "In a world where everything is 'green,' consumers are seeking authenticity through increased brand and product knowledge." 🍎

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For More Information:

- Eco Lips, (866) 326-5477
- Kaia Naturals, (416) 929-3236
- Larenim, (801) 334-1707
- MyChelle Dermaceuticals, (800) 447-2076
- Naturity LLC, (732) 678-7112
- Pure SKN, (831) 479-7546

