Cruelty In Cruelty-Free Cosmetics: Is An Indian Consumer Contributing Towards Cruel, Unethical Cosmetic Companies?

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Abstract

In 2014, India banned the testing of cosmetic products on animals, becoming the first South-Asian country to do so. In 2016, the Indian Mica industry came into the limelight for employing children as young as 5 years old, in mica mining industry. Several big cosmetic giants like Estee Lauder, Unilever, Procter and Gamble were found sourcing mica from these mines. This gave rise to a new label called 'Ethical Makeup'. However, there are no laws yet that require ethical sourcing of ingredients, making companies "cruel" towards their employees or the environment. Through this research, the level of awareness of Indian Consumers about 'cruelty-free', 'ethical', 'vegan' cosmetics and their likeliness to shift towards newer, 'ethical' cosmetic brands was aimed to be established.

After studying 309 respondents, it was found that 52.4% of the respondents had no clue that the brands they currently used tested on animals and/or were unethical. This proved that an average Indian Consumer has little to zero level of awareness about the dark secrets of the cosmetic industry. However, not everything is disheartening as 67% of the respondents strongly believed they would shift towards ethical cosmetics while 12.6% were neutral about it.

Keywords: Cruelty-free, Cosmetics, Vegan, Ethical, Awareness, Indian Consumer, Consumer Behaviour

1. Introduction:

1.1 Understanding cosmetic-related terms

"Cosmetic" means any article intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled or sprayed on, or introduced into, or otherwise applicated to, the human body or any part thereof for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance, and includes any article intended for use as a component of cosmetic. (The Drug and Costemtics Act and Rules, 1964).

In 2014, India banned the import of cosmetics that had been tested on animals by amending the Drugs and Cosmetics (Fifth Amendment) Rules 2014, through the insertion of a new provision as rule 135-B. (Zeldin, 2014). This was months after banning the practice of testing on animals in India. This amendment banned any company that has tested on animals or has paid other organisations to test on animals for its ingredients, from

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selling in the Indian Market. This meant that from now on the Indian cosmetic market would be open only to "Cruelty-free" products.

Cruelty-free products simply guarantee that the products have not been tested on animals for a particular market. However, a lot of companies find loopholes in the system. For example, large cosmetic brands such as M.A.C, Maybelline and Estee Lauder that are cosmetic brand leaders in that marketplace still test on animals when it is required by law.

A company that either signs PETA's statement of assurance or provides a statement verifying that they do not conduct or commission any animal tests on ingredients, formulations, or finished products and that they pledge not to do so in the future is certified as "cruelty-free" by PETA. As of 2020, there is no legal provision for what can be deemed as "cruelty-free" and thus, a PETA logo is the best way of being assured that a particular brand does not test on animals.

"Vegan" products are those that do not contain any animal products or animal-derived ingredients while "100% Vegetarian" products do not contain ingredients that were part of an animal but they may contain ingredients that were made by an animal such as honey, beeswax, egg whites (albumen), milk substance, etc.

"Ethical" products on the other hand means the community, which includes its customers and employees as well as partners that develop, manufacture, and supply products are ethically and fairly treated.

These terms are often used inter-changeably and hence, the claims of brands are questionable.

1.2 The Cruel Practices:

An animal test is any form of a scientific experiment that is carried out on a living animal that can cause harm, distress or pain to the animals being tested on. These tests are conducted in laboratories that intentionally hurt the animal. In an effort to test certain products, animals are oftentimes infected with diseases, poisoned for toxicity testing, skin burned, maimed, left with brain damage, blinded, along with many other invasive procedures. Some tests include restraining the animal with a device or immobilizing certain parts of the animal's body such as the head, neck, legs, and pelvis. For example, there was a test in which mice and rats were prevented from moving by being placed in tubes, shocked at their feet, hung from their tails, and forced to swim so they did not drown. (Alejandra Villalobos, 2014)

Although the E.U. banned animal testing in 2013 shortly followed by countries such as India, Norway, Argentina, Canada, Taiwan and many more, China still sees it as the only method of testing cosmetic products. Cosmetic companies chose to move to the Chinese market because it is the second largest cosmetic industry with America being the largest. (Park, 2018) Large Cosmetic brands such as M.A.C., Unilever, Estee Lauder, still test on animals to earn a market share in the Chinese market and have a large consumer base in India. Thus, it is important for the Indian consumer to be aware about the practices carried on by their preferred cosmetic brand.

Unethical cosmetic companies on the other hand, may or may not test on animals, however, they illegally source their resources or do not maintain proper, human conditions or wages for their employees. Child labour is forbidden as defined by ILO and United Nations Conventions and/or by applicable law. Any forms of exploitation of children are forbidden. Working conditions resembling slavery or harmful to children's health are forbidden. (Albert ten Kate, 2016)

However, India witnesses one of the largest forms of child labour in its booming Mica industry. In 2016 India officially produced 19,000 tonnes of mica but exported 140,000 tonnes. This imbalance is a clear indication of the magnitude of illegal mica mining occurring in India. About 62% of India's mica is exported to China where some is channelled to European and US cosmetic giants. 70% of production is from illegal mines in protected forested areas and abandoned mines. Most illegal mines continue to use child labour and exploit adult labour. (Bliss, 2017) Children as young as five years of age climb down narrow, crumbling mine shafts at the risk and

peril of being trapped underground in case of collapse, and cut mica with hammer and chisel for 7-8 hours a day. They are paid £0.2/0.25€ per hour. There are an estimated 5000 children working in these Mica mines of India. L'Oréal, the world's biggest cosmetics company, and 11 others cannot exclude that the mineral mica in their products comes from child labour in illegal Indian mines. (Lendal, 2018)

Thus, it is important for the Indian consumers to be aware about such unethical practices as these brands form a large part of the Indian cosmetic market and informed decisions may force these companies to amend their practices.

2. Literature Review:

Blackwell had defined consumer behaviour as, 'Consumer behaviour is the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services. (Blackwell, 2006)

Schiffman, Kanuk, and Hansen further went on to establish that this includes 'when they buy it, how they buy it, why they buy it where they buy it and how they evaluate it after purchase. It also assesses the impact of such evaluations on future purchases. (Schiffman, 2012)

Gangai and Agrawal said that 'personality is one of the most critical factors that will impact consumer's behaviour.' What a consumer buys and when or how they purchase an item is influenced by the personality they have. (Nath Gangai, 2016)

In 2012 Pervin, Ranchhod, and Wilman conducted a questionnaire in the UK and Bangladesh. This questionnaire was about how customers felt about 'green environment and animal welfare issues affect their purchase decisions when buying cosmetics products'. They discovered that nearly 60% of the young British females did not feel comfortable buying cosmetic products that tested on animals because they knew it was ethically and morally wrong and that alternative methods should be used. (Pervin, 2014)

A study by Sonali and Shashikant suggests several alternatives to animal testing to overcome the drawbacks associated with animal experiments and avoid the unethical procedures. This includes cell and tissue culture, computer models, use of lower vertebrates, micro-organisms etc. (Sonali K. Doke, 2013)

According to (Mone, 2014) 'In-vitro and Insilco testing will play a much larger part in how we assess chemical in the future.' Mone is showing here that with the help of in-vitro testing animals will no longer need to be tested on with harsh life threating chemicals. In-vitro would show a full body reaction to the chemicals, that the methods like tissue culture or computer modelling would not.

Yet an article published in 2016 stated that according to PETA, 250 cosmetic brands still test on an estimate of 27,000 animals each year. (Chitrakorn, 2016)

As there are no legal standards to define what brands are cruelty-free, many consumers prefer products that are verified by PETA. A survey done by (Close-up, 2018) found that 24% of the women use PETA's website to gather information on cruelty-free make-up brands along with the fact that 43% of women reporting that they would be happy to stop using cosmetic products that are tested on animals. The research conducted also found that the younger generation is actively taking testing on animals into consideration and brands that test on animals should consider this if they want to meet their consumer's demands.

(Cahill, 2018) found that 52.53% of the respondents did not know if their favourite cosmetics are tested on animals and 42.48% of participants stated that if they were to find out that a cosmetic brand they use tests their

products on animals, they would stop using that brand. The study also found that 65% of participants would go back to using cosmetic brands if they stopped testing their products on animals. Brand loyalty is essential to a brand, but consumer loyalty can be lost negatively impacting that brand after realising the kind of practices the brand supports.

After an extensive research done by (Salo, Consumer behavior towards green skin care cosmetic products in Finland, 2014) where 177 female respondents were interviewed, it was found that 72.7% of the women from the younger age group, and for 69.5% of the women from the older age group it is fairly to very important that the skin care product is not tested on animals. The study also tried understanding the importance of "green cosmetics" to the consumers and found that 67.2% of the people who reported to be fairly to very interested in cosmetics and taking care of their beauty assume natural products to be better than synthetics.

A lot of cosmetics like lipsticks and blush use Carmine dye and cochineal extract, red colorants derived from the dried, gravid bodies of the *Dactylopius cocus costa* and are FDA approved and simply labelled as "colour added" on labels. If ingested, it causes allergic reactions and asthma when inhaled. (Matthew J. Greenhawt, 2009)

This brings about a revolution of cruelty-free, vegan cosmetics. Forbes and The Economist magazine has named 2019 as "The year of Vegan" and vegan cosmetics is considered as the next spotlight in the vegan trend movement. (Le, 2017).

It is observed that the majority of women who choose vegan and green products do so because they do not want harmful chemicals and allergens to enter their body via their skin and women. (Marie-Cécile Cervellon M.-J. R.-S., 2011). Several earlier had studies found that women are more concerned by green issues than men and are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours. (Zelezny L.C., 2000)

2.1 Research Gap:

The first thought after hearing the word "cosmetic" is make-up and that is a major reason why most of the research papers focus on female consumers. However, a cosmetic is defined as "articles intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed on or introduced into, or otherwise applied to the human body or any part thereof for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance". (Manish Ruhela, 2017). Thus, it includes soaps, shampoos, deodorants, and other grooming products that are used by all genders. Thus, it is important that all genders must be given equal importance while studying consumer behaviour with respect to cosmetic purchasing decisions.

Animal testing and illegal mining are a cause of environmental problems, humanitarian crisis, and animal endangerment. Animal testing further leads on to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. (Jain, 2015). There are no research articles which aim to study the level of awareness and perception of words like "vegan", "cruelty-free" and "ethical" in association with cosmetics when it comes to the Indian Population.

3. Objectives:

- To cover the cruel animal testing practices that are followed by the cosmetic brands and to shed light on the illegal mica mining that occurs in Indian
- To study the level of awareness about cosmetics and its labels amongst the Indian adult population with an equal focus on females and males.
- To study the current purchasing choices of the sample and check whether they are aware about the better, ethical cosmetic brands available in the market
- To understand the reasons for not shifting towards ethical products that are available in the market.

- By imparting basic knowledge about cosmetics and its label, studying the likeliness to shift towards safer, ethical brands, i.e., to see if people are willing to change their purchasing habits after knowing the whole truth about their preferred brands.

4. Research Methodology:

4.1 Introduction:

A basic, primary research was undertaken to understand the level of awareness of the Indian cosmetic buying population about "cruelty-free", "ethical" and "vegan" cosmetics and their likeliness to shift towards ethical, home-grown brands.

A Structured, Closed Questionnaire was circulated through social media platforms to get the responses across the Indian cities, to add value to the study. The online surveys for this research paper took a maximum 3 minutes to complete and were anonymous to give security for participants. The questions moved from general, respondent profiling questions like age, gender, educational qualification, income level etc. to more specific questions used to determine their knowledge about the current cosmetic market and to study their behaviour after realizing that certain brands they use are unethical and/or tested on animals.

This method was chosen as it is faster, free from the bias of the interviewer, and cost effective than other methods and suited this study well. There was also no cost in conducting or creating the online surveys as it was created using Google forms.

4.2 Sampling Considerations:

The sampling frame was described as "Citizens (18-55) of major Indian cities who are literate and put into consideration some thought while making purchasing decisions for cosmetics for household or personal use, and who were willing to be a part of this study." They include those who are actively involved in the cosmetic purchasing process.

It was essential to have a broad sample age wise to really discover just how much these perspectives and loyalties were changed as an older person may have more loyalties to a cosmetic brand than a younger person who has been wearing makeup only one or two years who yet doesn't have any loyalties to a cosmetic brand.

A total of 315 responses were received, however, only 309 responses were considered for the purpose of the study as the remaining 6 were of respondents below the age of 18. Thus, the sample size of this research is 309.

The research was based on a sample derived from Non-Probability Sampling. It used Convenience Sampling and Snowball Sampling. Certain people who were willing to participate in the research were found and then they were asked to forward the questionnaire further, creating a snowball effect.

4.3 Data Interpretation and Analysis:

A general profiling of the respondents will be done by understanding their educational qualification, profession, and income level.

This shall be followed by a cross-tabulation between the educational qualification and level of awareness about what constitutes as cosmetics and what are the various labels present in the cosmetic industry. This is to understand whether educational qualification leads to better, informed decisions in the cosmetic industry.

A study by (Pervin, 2014) had concluded that British women between the age of 22-29 and 30-33 showed strong indication they wouldn't buy cosmetics from a brand that had tested on animals. In 2012, they discovered

that nearly 60% of the young British females did not feel comfortable buying cosmetic products that tested on animals because they knew it was ethically and morally wrong and that alternative methods should be used. Therefore, a cross tabulation between age and likeliness to shift towards ethical companies would also be done.

After certain cross-tabulations, hypothesis testing shall be carried out and the research shall be concluded on the basis of acceptance/rejection of the hypothesis.

5. Data Interpretation and Analysis

5.1 General Profiling of the Respondents: Section 1

The first section of the Questionnaire aimed to understand the social strata the respondents belonged to and their general level of awareness about the definition of certain cosmetic related terms. Each respondent was presented with the following information at the beginning of this section, to help them make well-informed, honest choices during the questionnaire:

"A lot of cosmetics brands call themselves "cruelty-free" meaning they do not test the final product or any ingredient used during the process on animals neither is it tested on animals by the suppliers of the raw material. However, many companies sell in Mainland China where animal testing is compulsory, use unethical ingredients sourced from companies employing child labour, and also use animal extracts (carmine, oils, etc.) in their products. This makes us re-think the definition of "cruelty"."

5.1.1 Gender: Table 1

Gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	168	54.4
	Male	131	42.4
	Others	10	3.2
	Total	309	100.0

54.4% of the respondents were females, forming the majority of the sample. However, the Male respondents were close to the female sample by forming 42.4% of the research sample. This means that an equal representation of two genders is maintained throughout the study. 10 respondents chose 'Others' and didn't specify their gender, forming 3.2% of the study.

5.1.2 Age Group: Table 2

Age Group

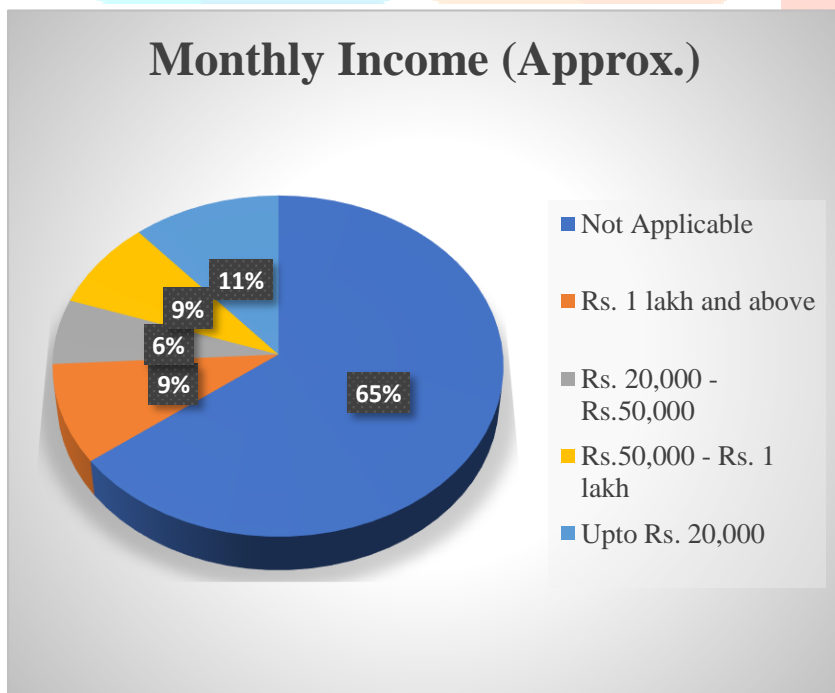|		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-25	199	64.4
	26-40	76	24.6
	41-55	34	11.0
	Total	309	100.0

Most of the respondents (64.4%) were young adults, between the age of 18-25. The cumulative percentage of the other two sub-categories would come up to 35.6% giving us a small chance to see the difference between the cosmetic brand choices of young adults versus older adults.

5.1.3 Educational Qualification: Cross Tabulation between Age group and Educational Qualification

Age Group * Educational Qualification Crosstabulation

			Educational Qualification			
			Graduate/Pursuing Graduation	Intermediate	Post Graduation and Above	Total
Age Group	18-25	Count	159	30	10	199
		% within Educational Qualification	76.4%	90.9%	14.7%	64.4%
	26-40	Count	36	2	38	76
		% within Educational Qualification	17.3%	6.1%	55.9%	24.6%
	41-55	Count	13	1	20	34
		% within Educational Qualification	6.3%	3.0%	29.4%	11.0%
Total		Count	208	33	68	309
		% within Educational Qualification	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3

67.3% of the respondents were graduates or pursuing graduation while only 22% had completed their post-graduate degree. More than half of our graduates (76.4%) were in the age group of 18-25, indicating that they are fresh graduates. The highest number of postgraduates were found in age group of 26-40.

Monthly Income (Approx.)
- Not Applicable — 65%
- Rs. 1 lakh and above — 9%
- Rs. 20,000 - Rs.50,000 — 6%
- Rs.50,000 - Rs. 1 lakh — 9%
- Upto Rs. 20,000 — 11%

This also links to the fact that majority of respondents chose the income group as "Not Applicable" as majority of them were in the age group 18-25 who were dependent on their parents for money.

Another category who chose "Not Applicable" as their monthly income were those who had written "Housewife" and "Unemployed" as their profession.

5.1.4   Knowledge about Definition of cosmetics: Table 4

Did you know that cosmetics include soaps, shampoos, conditioners, perfumes, etc?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	I knew a few of those labels were considered cosmetics	78	25.2
	No, I always thought only make-up is considered as a Cosmetic	41	13.3
	Yes, I was aware about this	190	61.5
	Total	309	100.0

It was interesting to note that 61.5% of the respondents were aware that cosmetics includes soaps, shampoos, perfumes etc. Understanding what constitutes as a cosmetic is the starting step towards making better brand choices.

The researcher also found that there were no variations in the knowledge about definition of cosmetics based on age/gender/educational qualification.

5.1.5 Knowledge about Cosmetic Labels: Table 5

Were you aware of the terms Cruelty-free, Vegan, and Ethical with regards to cosmetics?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not at all	35	11.3
	Had a vague idea of some	31	10.0
	Had a vague idea of ALL	74	23.9
	Knew some	74	23.9
	Yes, knew all	95	30.7
	Total	309	100.0

It was observed that more than half of the respondents had a vague idea or had a clear picture about the various labels present in the cosmetic industry. This shows that an average Indian consumer does have basic knowledge about "Cruelty-free", "ethical", "vegan" cosmetics. This also translates to them being aware of the cruel practices that prevail in the industry and have given rise to these safer labels.

78.5% of the respondents claimed that they knew at least one of the labels well. Thus, the average Indian consumer is aware about the labels that exist in the market. This marks the first step of understanding if an average Indian consumer is contributing towards unethical companies. Knowledge about the existence of better, safer labels is the first step towards supporting brands that produce such cosmetics, consequentially leading to abandoning cruel, ethical brands.

5.2 Cosmetic Products Respondents have used: Section 2

The second section of the Questionnaire consisted of questions that would determine which cosmetic companies have the respondents been buying from within the last one year. It was aimed to understand the most famous cosmetic brands amongst the following categories: **Make-up, shampoos, soaps/handwashes, toothpastes and perfumes.** Each question had 3-5 options of brands they had used at least once; all of the offered brands were allegedly selling in Mainland China and thus, tested on animals. Some brands like Maybelline, Rimmel London, L'Oréal, also used animal parts or by-products in their products.

The respondents were not told that these brands followed animal testing and non-vegan practices to obtain true responses from them.

They were provided with the following instruction before this section:

"Vegan Cosmetics: it means that a product does not contain any animal products or animal-derived ingredients. Ethical Cosmetics: the community, which includes its customers and employees as well as partners that develop, manufacture, and supply products are ethically and fairly treated. Which of these brands have you used within **the past one year***?"*

Shampoos

- Head & Shoulders
- L'Oréal
- Clinic Plus
- Sunsilk
- Garnier
- Others
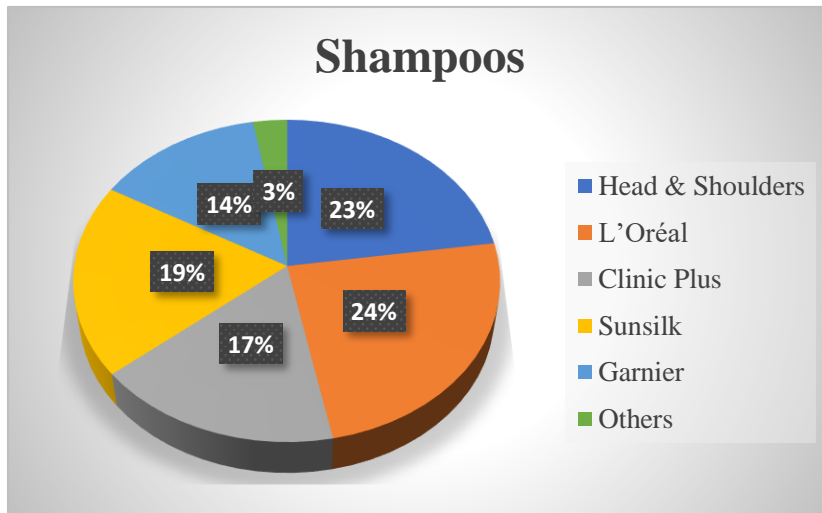
L'Oréal and Head & Shoulders are the most used Shampoos by the respondents. 3% of the respondents chose 'Others' meaning they could be using other cruel brands or might have shifted to cruelty-free, ethical brands.

Chart 2

Make-Up Brands

- Maybelline
- Rimmel London
- M.A.C
- Lakme
- Clinique
- Not Applicable
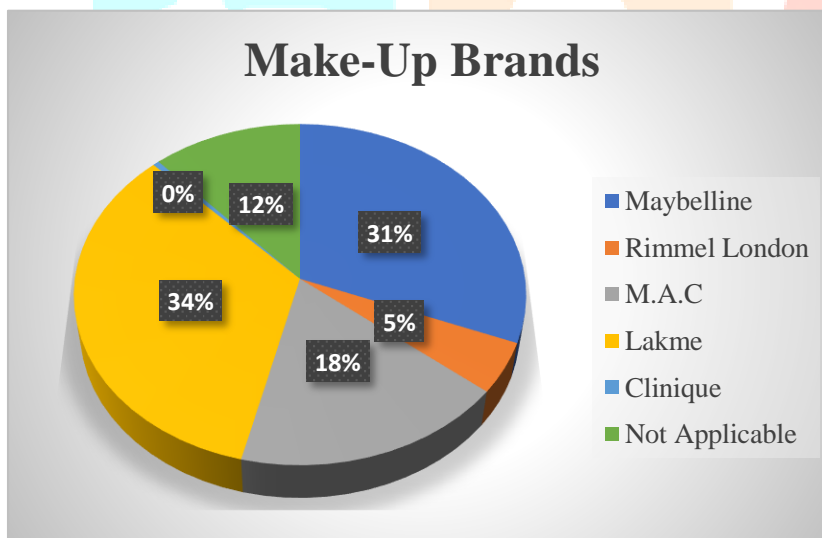
Most of the respondents seem to be using Maybelline and Lakme make-up products. The 12% responses that chose not applicable were all male respondents.

Perfumes

Axe 37%
Chanel 23%
Davidoff 23%
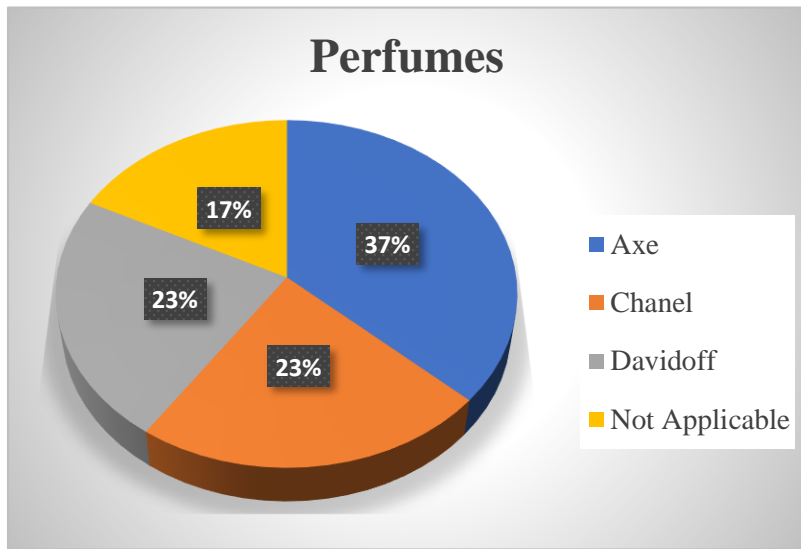**Not Applicable** 17%

Chart 3

Axe is the most used Perfume amongst the Indian respondents. 17% respondents chose Not Applicable as their choice, this can either mean they do not use these brands or that they do not use perfumes at all.

Were you aware that all the brands in the previous section tested on animals?

- I knew SOME tested on animals — 41%
- No, I had no clue — 52%
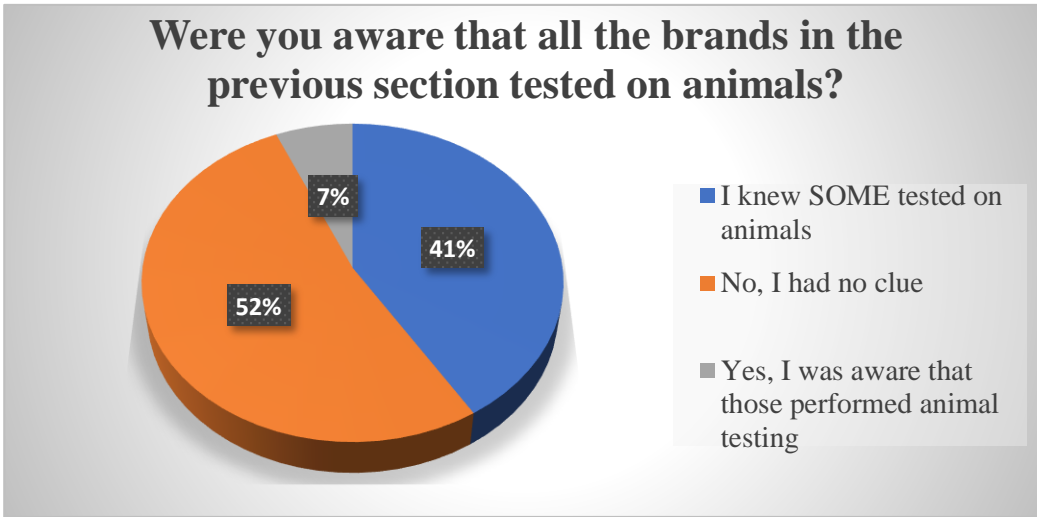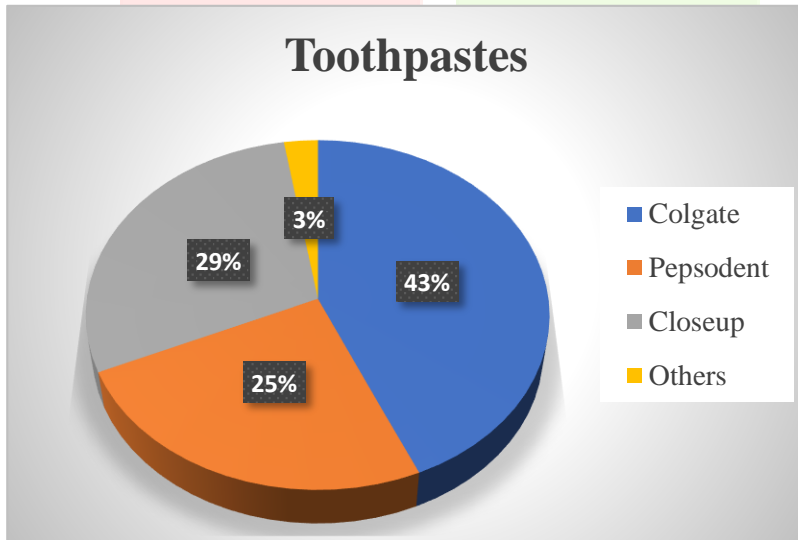- Yes, I was aware that those performed animal testing — 7%

Chart 4

Colgate is the most preferred toothpaste brand with 43% of the respondents using it. Pepsodent and Closeup have almost equal number of users. The remaining 3% could probably be users of cruelty-free toothpastes.

Toothpastes

- Colgate — 43%
- Pepsodent — 25%
- Closeup — 29%
- Others — 3%

Chart 5

Dettol seems to be the most preferred brand, especially as the pandemic hit. Almost 40% of the respondents have used Dettol in the past one year.

Soaps/Handwashes

- Lux — 27%
- LifeBuoy — 30%
- Dettol — 39%
- Others — 4%

Chart 6

As it is clear, almost all of the respondents have used one or the other brand that tests on animals or is non-vegan in the past one year. The respondents were then asked an important question with the above-given brand choices they had just selected.

The respondents were asked: **Were you aware that all the brands mentioned in the previous section tested on animals?**

Half of the respondents (52.4%) had no clue that their preferred, daily use brands performed tests on animals, in spite of the fact that 78.5% (Table 5) of the respondents were somewhat aware about all the cosmetic labels, terms and cruel practices followed by companies.

Table 6

Chart 7

5.3 Awareness about Cruelty-free, vegan and Ethical Brands present in the Indian market

Were you aware that all the brands mentioned in the previous section tested on animals?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	I knew SOME tested on animals	127	41.1
	No, I had no clue	162	52.4
	Yes, I was aware that those performed animal testing	20	6.5
	Total	309	100.0

The respondents were shown nine cruelty-free, vegan, ethical brands that were verified by PETA and had a presence in the Indian Market. These brands were – Wet n wild, Medimix, Plum, The Body Shop, Earth Rhythm, Vicco Ayurvedic, Dabur and Forrest Essentials.

It was mentioned that these brands were cruelty-free and ethical as a way to impart awareness among those filling in the responses, to aid the process of shifting towards safer brands in the future. This was the researcher's way of helping the consumers realize the presence of better brands that they could chose from and help animals and the environment.

A cross tabulation between the awareness and usage of these brands gave the following insights about an average Indian consumers knowledge and buying patterns from cruelty-free, ethical brands:

How many of the following brands have you HEARD about before? * How many of the above-mentioned brands have you used? Crosstabulation

Count

		How many of the above-mentioned brands have you used?			
		All of them	None of them	Some of them	Total
How many of the following brands have you HEARD about before?	All of them	26	4	114	144
	None of them	0	1	0	1
	Some of them	1	6	157	164
Total		27	11	271	309

Table 7

Almost all of the respondents had HEARD about the above-mentioned brands and were aware about their presence in the Indian market. Only 11 respondents had never USED any of the mentioned brands. This paints a positive picture of the Indian consumer as 144 respondents had heard about all the brands and around 271 respondents had even used some of them.

This table where we can see that 102 respondents use other cruelty-free products and check the labels as well, and have used most of the products from the list given by the researcher shows a positive movement towards safer, ethical brands.

The 191 respondents, that have not checked the labels, form a majority, however, most of them (185 out of 191) have unknowingly been using the cruelty-free, ethical products from the researcher's questionnaire.

*This can be used as an important point by upcoming or existing cruelty-free, vegan, ethical brands. They must teach their consumers the meaning of each symbol/certification mentioned on their products and why they are different from the mainstream, big cosmetic giants. This can form an important part of their marketing strategy.

6.4 Likeliness to shift completely towards Ethical, Cruelty-free, Vegan Brands
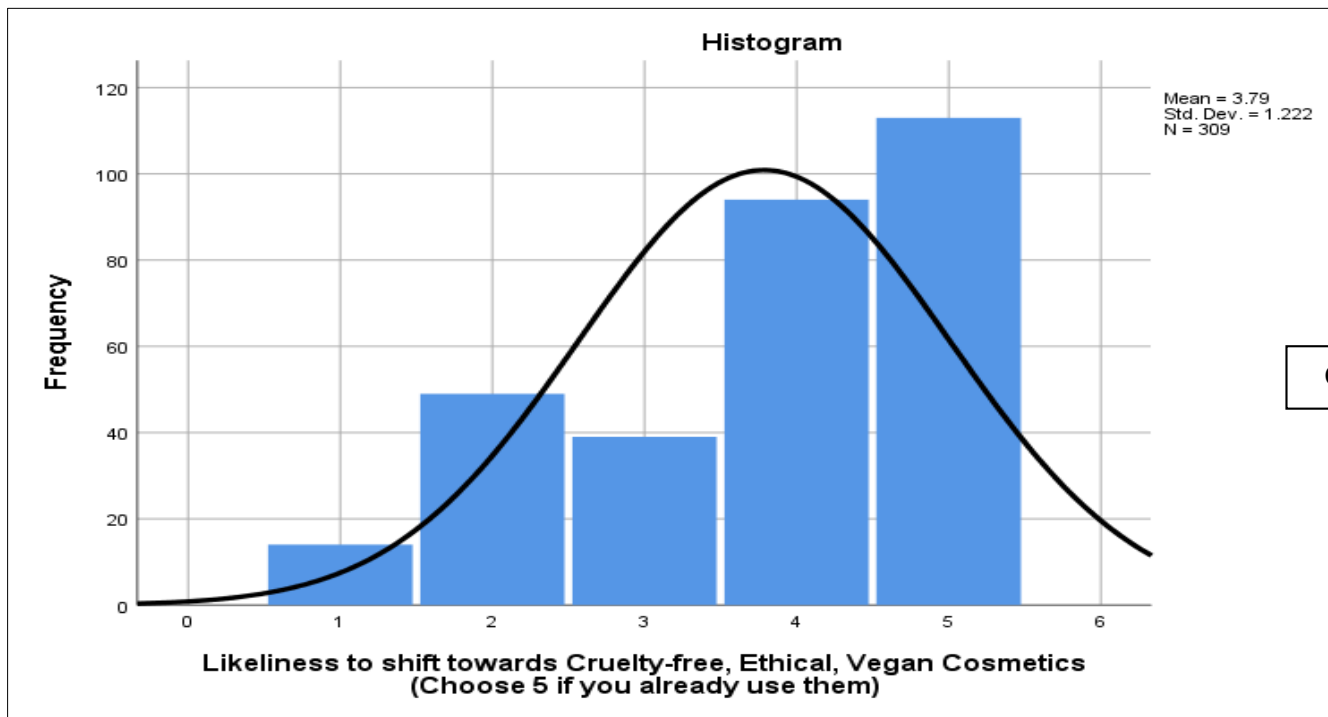

Chart 8

It is clearly visible that most of the respondents chose 5 on a scale of 1-5 to indicate their likeliness to shift towards cruelty-free, ethical, vegan cosmetics. A mean of 3.8 indicates a strong preference to shift towards safer brands permanently.

The final question that was to the respondents was: *"Most Preferred reason for not having shifted to the above-mentioned or any other cruelty-free, vegan brand completely yet?"*

Likeliness to shift towards Cruelty-free, Ethical, Vegan Make-up (Choose 5 if you already use them) * Most Preferred reason for not shifting towards the above-mentioned or any other cruelty-free, vegan brand completely? Crosstabulation

Count

		Most Preferred reason for not shifting towards the above-mentioned or any other cruelty-free, vegan brand completely?						
		I already use Cruelty-free, ethical products	I am loyal towards my existing products	I feel they are very expensive/ not reasonably priced	I was aware about cruelty-free products but did not try checking labels	I was not aware of these brands	They are not easily accessible in stores near me	Total
Likeliness to shift towards Cruelty-free, Ethical, Vegan Make-up (Choose 5 if you already use them)	1	0	13	0	0	1	0	14
	2	0	5	12	0	5	27	49
	3	0	0	1	7	31	0	39
	4	0	0	0	70	24	0	94
	5	62	0	14	0	15	22	113
Total		62	18	27	77	76	49	309

Table 8

The following are the important observations drawn from the above cross tabulation:

- Out of the 63 respondents who were the least likely to shift towards ethical, cruelty-free brands, only 18 chose to not shift because they were loyal to their current brand.

- Only 62 respondents (20%) currently use cruelty-free products. Leaving the 18 loyal consumers, the remaining respondents chose other reasons for not wanting or being able to shift. This shows that brand loyalty is not a huge factor driving consumers to stick with brands that test on animals or are unethical.
- The most important factor for not having shifted yet was the lack of awareness about the labels that can be checked and the brands that provide better, animal-friendly products. Brands with their USP as cruelty-free, vegan, and ethically sourced products should use this data to understand the importance of imparting knowledge amongst their potential consumers and in the market.
- A lot of cruelty-free, ethical brands are not available in local stores or small locality markets which makes them inaccessible for many. Having key presence in small shops will also increase the chances of consumers noticing these smaller, better brands.
- Only 22 respondents perceived these brands as "too expensive" or unreasonably priced. Indian brands like Dabur, Vicco Ayurvedic, Medimix are cheaper and better alternatives that are abundantly available in any average, Indian store. The importance of their products towards animals, the environment and their employees must be used as a tool to expand their consumer base.

Do you use any other cruelty-free brands? * How many of the above-mentioned brands have you used? Crosstabulation

Count

| | | How many of the above-mentioned brands have you used? | | | |
		All of them	None of them	Some of them	Total
Do you use any other cruelty-free brands?	Never checked the labels	11	6	174	191
	No	0	3	13	16
	Yes, I have checked the labels too	16	2	84	102
Total		27	11	271	309

Table 9

6.5 Correlation between 'were respondents aware about brands testing on animals in Section 2' and Likeliness to Shift towards Ethical, Vegan, Cruelty-free brands Permanently

The main motive of the research was to identify if a cosmetic consumer was contributing towards the unethical and cruel cosmetic firms that had a presence in the Indian market. This could be determined by understanding the Relationship between Level of awareness about the brands that tested on animals and sold in Mainland China (Chart 2 to Chart 6) and Likeliness to shift towards "Cruelty-free", "ethical", "vegan" cosmetic brands permanently.

A person who is aware about the cruel practices carried on by the big companies yet is least likely to shift toward ethical, safer companies, is knowingly contributing towards the cruel practices carried on by the cosmetic giants.

It was assumed that with the increase in awareness about the dark secrets of firms like Maybelline, Unilever, Lakme, L'Oréal etc, the consumers would be more likely to shift towards ethical, vegan companies.

To find out the relation between these two variables, their correlation was tested as can be seen in Table 10:

Correlations

		Likeliness to shift towards Cruelty-free, Ethical, Vegan Make-up (Choose 5 if you already use them)	AwarenessAboutTheBrands
Likeliness to shift towards Cruelty-free, Ethical, Vegan Make-up (Choose 5 if you already use them)	Pearson Correlation	1	.214**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	309	309
AwarenessAboutTheBrands	Pearson Correlation	.214**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	309	309

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was 0.214 which shows that there is a positive but weak correlation between these two variables. Positive correlation means that with an increase in awareness about the practices of these brands, the likeliness to shift towards ethical companies would increase.

6. Conclusion

This research was aimed at understanding and testing the level of awareness an average Indian consumer has about the cosmetic industry. It was found that the consumer believes he/she knows quite a lot about the cosmetic industry with 61.5% (Table 4) of the respondents stating they were aware about the constituents of cosmetics and a whopping 78.5% (Table 5) respondents believing they aware about the various labels like "cruelty-free", "Vegan", "ethical" cosmetics and knowing their definitions.

Their conceptions about their knowledge were tested in Section 2 when they were asked whether they had used certain make-up, soap, shampoo, and perfume brands at least once in the past one year. It was not surprising that ALL of the respondents had used at least one brand from the given 4 lists. This went on to prove that the consumer presently is still heavily purchasing from companies that are unethical and cruel. The companies that were given as choices were verified as either selling in Mainland China, Cruel, Non-vegan or unethical through various sources by the researcher prior to the research.

The fact that 52.4% (Table 6) of the respondents had absolutely no clue that the brands given as an option in Section 2 were unethical and/or carried animal testing. This proves that an average Indian consumer is NOT aware about the dark secrets of the cosmetic giants.

However, not everything is negative about the Indian consumer and the cosmetic industry. Almost all of the respondents had heard about the ethical, vegan, cruelty-free brands mentioned in Section 3 (Table 7) and 87.7% of the respondents had used some of the brands. When asked if they used any other cruelty-free, ethical brands, 33% of the respondents said they did and had checked the labels too. However, almost 62% of the respondents were not sure if they did as they had never checked labels (Table 8). This shows that the Indian consumer is not habitual in checking labels for signs of animal testing or vegan ingredients when it comes to cosmetics.

The cosmetic brands who are trying to carve a space into this booming industry of vegan, ethical make-up must spend time educating their target market about:

- The kind of cruel, unethical, and toxic practices carried on by some of the existing market players
- How to differentiate between labels and what each label stands for
- What marking standards or logos the consumer must search for on the packaging and what logo can be trusted (Peta, Leaping Bunny etc.)

The researcher recognizes and supports this awareness related marketing campaign because of the results achieved in the final section of the paper. The respondents on a journey from basic questions like what cosmetics were to educating them about the ill-practices and companies carrying those out, through the instructions all throughout the questionnaire. Finally, when asked how likely the respondents were to shift to vegan, ethical, cruelty-free cosmetics, they showed a strong preference to shift with a mean of 3.9. (Chart 8) 67% strongly believed they would shift towards ethical cosmetics while 12.6% were neutral about it.

7. Suggestions for further research

The research covers the consumer preferences of two genders who belonged majorly to the age group 18-25. The other age and income groups could not be studied in detail during this research. This research also focusses on the urban population, living in major cities of the countries and does not study the rural and small-town population.

This can be used as a base to study other age groups, especially 26 and above as they are the major section of the population that earn a stable income and form an integral part of the cosmetic purchasing population.

The differences in purchasing decisions across rural and urban areas of India should also be studied. A lot of these big companies, like Unilever have a major consumer base in the rural and semi-rural area. It is also important to test the level of awareness of the rural consumer population in regard to the cosmetic industry and the various labels under it. The current purchasing choices and the evolution in their purchasing choices should also be studied.

Another way to test consumer perception after gaining knowledge through the survey could have been tested if the question "Were you aware about the terms 'cruelty-free', 'ethical' and 'vegan' cosmetics?" that was present in the first section was also present in the last section. This way a pre and post analysis of change in behaviour and attitude could have been better studied.

Further, a qualitative study of the today's social media influencers could also be done to understand what cosmetics they choose to endorse could be studied as they currently influence a lot of people in purchasing newer, smaller brands.

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