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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perspectives and Purchase Decisions of Women in their 20s towards Cosmetic Products with "Animal Cruelty-Free" Label

Febe Alicia[1*], Jahidi Idi[2]

[1] Faculty of Creativepreneurship, Bina Nusantara Bandung University

[2] Entrepreneurship Department, BINUS Business School Undergraduate Program

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The size of the beauty industry, especially cosmetics, cannot be separated from animal testing in its operations, where animals are treated inhumanely for the sake of product development. Many cosmetic companies worldwide still engage in animal testing, which undoubtedly has negative effects on the surrounding environment, both in the short and long term. This study aims to analyze consumer perspectives on cosmetic products labeled "animal cruelty-free" and whether this label influences purchasing decisions, as well as to raise awareness among Indonesian consumers and cosmetic companies not to conduct animal testing in product development. Although all respondents are aware of and feel responsible for the ethical issues surrounding animal testing in cosmetic development, not all interviewees prioritize the "animal cruelty-free" label in their purchasing decisions. This means that some still prioritize product quality over the ethical efforts behind it. This research uses a qualitative method where the data is collected through interviews with young adult women in their 20s who have been using cosmetic products for at least 1 year and have an interest in ethical consumption issues.

INTRODUCTION

"Animal cruelty-free" is a label used by various beauty products, including cosmetics, to inform consumers that the products are not tested on animals, a process that often harms or even kills certain animals. Many cosmetic brands conduct animal testing during product development. According to Cruelty Free International (an organization dedicated to animal protection), cosmetic brands that continue to engage in animal cruelty during testing apply chemical samples to the animals' eyes, shave their fur, and rub the product on their bare skin. Ultimately, the animals are killed after the testing is completed. This practice not only negatively impacts the animals but also the environment. Waste disposal, including animal bodies, syringes, and other testing equipment, contributes to air pollution, as well as the release of dangerous, toxic chemicals. Air pollution is further generated by burning toxic materials in laboratories and the emissions from decomposing animal carcasses

The term "cruelty-free" informs consumers that the product was not tested on animals. However, the precise legal definition varies widely depending on the country and the product category (Cadete, 2021).Despite this, the key focus should be on how a brand communicates a clear message and builds a strong brand image around its non-participation in animal testing, ensuring consumers understand and appreciate the values the brand stands for. In this context, consumer perspectives and purchasing decisions play a crucial role in the sales of products from brands that do not carry the "animal cruelty-free" label. Therefore, this study aims to explore consumer perspectives on cruelty-

free labeled cosmetics and whether this label influences their purchasing decisions (Drahansky, 2011)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Animal cruelty-free

Animal testing in the cosmetics industry has always been a controversial topic, often sparking deep discussions, as it is considered a serious violation of animal rights. "Animal cruelty-free" refers to a perspective that advocates for the protection of all animals during product testing, particularly in the beauty industry, ensuring that the physical and mental well-being of animals are not threatened. This is directly related to animal welfare, which pertains to the life and death conditions of animals. Welfare is defined as the state of an individual that can be measured and relates to its surrounding environment (Broom, 1991). The presence of numerous chemicals in cosmetic products is the primary reason for animal testing in product development, where this testing is done to ensure the product is safe and hypoallergenic for future users (Sreedhar et al., 2020).Ultimately, even though the aim of this testing technique is to ensure the safety of products for humans, it still conflicts with the principles of animal welfare, leading to significant ethical debates in the cosmetics industry.

Consumer perspective

In market research, understanding consumer perspectives and attitudes is crucial for providing appropriate solutions (Miguel et al., 2021).There are several components involved in how consumers view a product. The first is product quality, which is defined as the ability of a product to perform its function across various factors (Kotler & Amstrong, 2008).Price is also a key component in how consumers view a product, and in this case, consumers tend to have a more complex perspective. Consumers highly value the credibility of a brand's "cruelty-free" claims. Brands that care about the environment and follow ethical production processes are appreciated by many consumers more than other considerations when making a purchase. Consumers are more likely to buy cruelty-free labeled products if they trust and believe the brand is ethical and transparent in its operations (Bonifacio et al., 2024).This indicates that today's modern consumers are fully aware of ethical consumption issues, paying attention not only to the quality of a product but also to how it was made and its environmental impact. This should serve as a guiding principle for companies to be more transparent and responsible in conducting their business.

Cosmetics industry

The cosmetics industry is a dynamic and rapidly evolving field, largely driven by changing consumer preferences and continuous advancements in beauty industry (Ferdinand & Ciptono, 2022). Cosmetics are defined as substances or mixtures intended to come into direct contact with the external parts of the human body, according to the European Commission. In this context, it is crucial for cosmetic companies to meet consumer expectations, as more consumers are gradually shifting their perspectives toward seeking environmentally friendly products (Bom et al., 2019).With the growing awareness among consumers about these issues, they are pressuring the cosmetics industry to avoid animal testing in product development and to seek more sustainable alternatives (Magano et al., 2022).The demands from consumers are pushing the cosmetics industry to invest more in finding alternatives to product development that do not involve animals. Companies that can adapt to these demands will gain consumer trust and loyalty.

Purchase decision

Consumer purchasing decisions are a critical aspect of the business world. A purchase decision is defined as the process of selecting between two or more product or service options (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). In this context, consumer perspectives significantly influence purchasing decisions, as they reflect how consumers perceive the product. Consumers who are fully aware of the impact caused by cosmetic products that still use animal testing in their development, will consider how the product affects both themselves and the environment. On the other hand, there are also consumers who are more concerned about animal welfare, and this concern has a greater impact on their purchasing decisions than environmental issues (Miguel et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

A semi-structured interview and observation will be used in this qualitative research approach to obtain detailed information regarding consumers' perspectives on cosmetic products with a "cruelty-free" label. This type of interview combines individual elements with behavior-based questions for the respondents (Hesselbjerg Isaksen et al., 2013)The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they can provide in-depth information about the respondents' experiences, opinions, and feelings, which can be utilized for the purposes of this research. Sampling will be conducted using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. This technique involves selecting participants based on specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2013).This sampling method helps identify respondents who are suitable to participate in this topic(Sibona, C., Walczak, S., & White Baker, 2020), namely regular cosmetic users for at least one year, with an interest in ethical consumption. This strategy helps ensure that all collected information is comprehensive and relevant to the research objectives.

The participants in this study are young adults, specifically women in their 20s with Indonesian nationality. The selected participants are women who have been using or are familiar with cosmetic products for at least one year. The choice of this age group and gender is due to the influence of social media and technology, which play a significant role in shaping preferences for cosmetics among this demographic. Based on general societal stigma, many Gen Z consumers tend to have a positive inclination toward the importance of sustainable products (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

Interviews are conducted either face-to-face or via video conference, depending on the availability of the respondents. The audio from the interviews is recorded with the respondents' consent to ensure accurate data collection, which is later analyzed. The questions posed to the respondents are open-ended and designed to elicit detailed responses about their perspectives on cruelty-free labeled cosmetic products, their reasons for choosing to buy or not buy such products, and their views on animal testing conducted during product development.

Data triangulation is performed after the interviews and observations are completed to enhance the validity and reliability of the collected data. Data triangulation is a technique that combines different data collection methods and sources (Sugiyono, 2013).This is done to verify the accuracy of the collected data from various perspectives and times. Finally, after comparing the data, the collected information is organized, analyzed, and generalized (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULTS

Understanding of animal cruelty-free products

The majority of interviewees understand that cosmetic products labeled as animal cruelty-free are those that do not undergo animal testing during development and production. Several interviewees emphasized that this label represents a more ethical and responsible process towards living beings.

Importance of the animal cruelty-free label

On a scale of 1-10, the average score given by the interviewees was 8.88, indicating that this label is considered highly important in cosmetic purchasing decisions. Most respondents rated the importance of this label as 8 or higher, with only one respondent giving a score of 5, showing a lower level of concern regarding ethical consumption and animal testing issues.

Impact of the label on purchasing decisions

Most interviewees admitted that the presence of an animal cruelty-free label influences their decision when purchasing cosmetics. Only one interviewee stated that the label was not a primary concern, focusing more on product quality.

Willingness to pay more for cruelty-free labeled products

Some interviewees mentioned that they are willing to pay more for products committed to the cruelty-free label because they care about animal welfare. They perceive the label as a sign of a brand's ethical commitment. However, one interviewee considered price and quality as the main factors, although cruelty-free labeling remains a bonus.

Personal reasons for paying attention to the animal cruelty-free label

Several key reasons highlighted by the interviewees include:

a. Concern for animal welfare

Many interviewees felt that animals should not be used for experimentation in cosmetic development.

b. Ethics and responsibility

Interviewees believed that choosing products that do not do their testing on animals is a more ethical and socially responsible decision.

Interest in trying new brands with animal cruelty-free labels

Most interviewees expressed interest in trying new cosmetic brands labeled as cruelty-free, even if they already use similar products without the label. Other considerations include the desire to support more ethical product development processes and ensure animal welfare.

Expectations for more brands to transition to animal cruelty-free

Nearly all interviewees hoped that more cosmetic brands would transition to products that do not involve animal testing during the development process. They believe that alternative testing methods that do not harm animals are available and should be adopted by more companies.

DISCUSSION

Increasing ethical awareness

The interview results clearly show that most female cosmetic users have a high level of awareness regarding ethical practices in cosmetic production, especially concerning animal testing. This demonstrates a growing consumer behavior that is more concerned with animal welfare and indicates that the animal cruelty-free label has a significant influence on their choice of cosmetic products. Products labeled as animal cruelty-free are seen as a commitment to ethical values.

Price and quality factors

Although the majority of interviewees stated they are willing to pay more for products that do not involve animal testing, there remains a small segment that continues to focus on product quality and price. This suggests that while the animal cruelty-free label is important, other factors like price and quality still play a significant role in purchasing decisions. For producers (brands), the main challenge is ensuring that cruelty-free cosmetic products can also compete in terms of quality in order to attract a broader range of consumers.

Consumer interest and future expectations

This study provides new insights, revealing that there is great potential for new cosmetic brands with an animal cruelty-free label to capture consumer attention. Even though many consumers already use similar cosmetic products, they remain open to trying new brands that offer this ethical commitment, provided the products are of high quality. The interview results also indicate that most interviewees hope more cosmetic brands will transition to cruelty-free practices. They believe that there are better and more humane alternatives for product testing and development that can be utilized, in line with technological advancements.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the animal cruelty-free label has a significant impact on the perspectives and purchasing decisions of cosmetic consumers, particularly women in their 20s who have been using cosmetics for at least one year and have an interest in ethical consumption issues. The majority of respondents recognize that cruelty-free labeled products are more ethical because they do not involve animal testing, and this label is considered important when choosing cosmetic products.

Most respondents expressed a willingness to pay more for products committed to animal welfare, although some still prioritize quality and price as their primary considerations. This indicates that

while ethical awareness is growing, product quality remains a critical factor that cosmetic companies cannot overlook.

The research also highlights that consumers expect more cosmetic brands to transition to cruelty-free products, especially given the availability of more ethical and environmentally friendly testing technologies and alternatives. Therefore, cosmetic companies that can adapt to these demands while maintaining product quality will have a greater chance of gaining consumer trust and loyalty.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of transparency and ethical commitment in the cosmetic industry, as well as the potential for cruelty-free cosmetic brands to compete in a market that is increasingly concerned with ethical and environmental issues.

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