TRUST: FINDING THE VALUE IN GREEN CONSUMER PRODUCTS

A CASE STUDY COMPARING GREEN CLEANING AND PERSONAL CARE BRANDS

This study examined green consumer product value by comparing 30 top selling green cleaning and personal care brands amongst mainstream, acquired, and niche green companies. Green claims were compared using information found on the package and website. Over the last decade, it was found that niche green companies increased sales and market share more quickly than both traditional and mainstream green brands, despite economic turmoil. The study determined that niche green products inspired greater trust by increasing transparency surrounding: petroleum-free and safe fragrances, inherent biodegradability, animal testing, and 3rd party certifications. In order to make sustainable progress, chemical-based commodities such as surfactants were important elements to improve. Ingredient innovation happened to be one convincing way niche green products pushed market change through better design and sourcing. Overall, the green consumer product market is expanding, niche green companies inspire trust and mainstream green brands could learn from trust- inciting attributes. Thoughtful change in the design of green consumer products will create a more sustainable market for consumers and lessen environmental impacts of consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Niche greens generate a sense of trust through a variety of means including research and development, ingredient selection, 3rd party certifications, and community development work. A strong sustainable image is developed by niche green companies by creating a sense of trust. During the last decade, niche green’s substantially increased market share, even though niche green marketing budgets and distribution channels were not as extensive as traditional public companies; yet, these small companies have been growing at rates of anywhere from 20-200% a year. Mainstream companies attempted to imitate transparency through quality claims in the launch of their new ‘green’ brands. Mainstream companies also spent large sums of money on market studies targeting green products to the typical consumer.

METHODS

Selected 30 top selling green cleaning and personal care product brands among 24 top selling companies to study packaging, web information, marketing, and overall revenues over time to discern brand value. Green brands were included from mainstream traditional companies, niche green’s acquired by traditional companies, and niche green companies. Claims and attributes included in the study appeared on the website or package as obvious to the average consumer. Green claims were compared; however no assessment was conducted as to the validity of claims. For the purposes of this data comparison, growth over time was considered to be more important than sales values in order to determine change over time between mass-market companies and niche greens.

WORKS CITED


DISCUSSION: GREENER PRODUCT

- **Health:** Niche greens made more extensive claims with specifics like hypoallergenic, natural fragrance, and 100% essential oils.
- **Non-ingredients:** Mainstream claimed no phosphates, perfumes, dyes, other specific harmful chemicals or synthetics. Above mainstream claims, niche greens reported triclosan free and petroleum free.
- **Biodegradable:** More mainstream products made biodegradability claims; however, niche greens most often used 100% natural ingredients. Biotechnological advances used plant-based sources to create natural surfactants which will reduce oil dependence. [5]
- **3rd Party Certification:** More niche greens certify personal care products. *Non-animal testing* was largest issue among environmental & social concerns, especially in regard to animal safety/vegetarian.[4]
- **Packaging:** More mainstream products made packaging claims about industry standard level recycled content and recyclability. Niche greens were more innovative, using 100% recycled content & plant-based ink.

CONCLUSION

- Each stakeholder should demand a higher standard of ingredients, production, and design: such as renewable plant-based surfactants.
- Niche green companies could do a better job with operational transparency so that lessons learned might help other companies become more sustainable.
- Mainstream brands should work to build green consumer trust through expressing more thought-provoking product stories, valuing ingredient transparency, certifying products, and facilitating health related education.