

Be natural

An initial trickle, sometime around April last year, gradually went on to become something closer to a flood. Emails and texts promoting skin and hair care products, that were organic, customised and free of parabens as well as sulphates, have been registering a sharp rise in the post-pandemic world. These products use ingredients which, besides being good for you, are also good for the environment. The rise in supply was powered by concern and desire among users to safeguard ecology as an upshot to a realisation of the consequences of ignoring nature. On the demand side as well, one increasingly saw

social media influencers, friends and family subscribing to a way of life that was more sustainable and responsible.

The brands attest to the trend by the rise in sales that has been witnessed. Megha Asher, co-founder and coo of Juicy Chemistry — which offers skin, hair, body and personal care accessories as well as aromatherapy essential and carrier oils — says, “The brand began in August 2014. Last year, when the pandemic struck, demand dipped in the first quarter. Our supply chain also took a hit. However, from May onwards things began to look up and we experienced a 150

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'DAILY ESSENTIALS LIKE HAND WASHES, SHOWER GELS, SOAPS, SHAMPOOS AND HAND CREAMS WERE IN DEMAND. STAYING HOME ALSO MEANT MORE TIME BEING SPENT ON SELF-CARE WHICH TRANSLATED TO OUR SKIN CARE CATEGORY ALSO SHOWING STRONG GROWTH. OUR ANTI-BACTERIAL SKIN CARE RANGE OF 'TEA TREE' PRODUCTS, ESPECIALLY THE HAND WASH, HAS SEEN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN DEMAND. ABOUT 75 PER CENT OF OUR BUSINESS EARLIER CAME FROM SKIN CARE, BODY CARE AND HAIR CARE PRODUCTS WHICH HAVE GONE UP TO 85 PER CENT'

— ANTARA KUNDU, marketing head, The Body Shop

awareness around natural and clean products has definitely grown. “People understand how conscious living is a way for a longer and healthier life. They turned towards natural home remedies for preventing the virus and building strong immunity. They understand well how outer health is the reflection of what is inside. So Covid has surely taught a lesson for the need to be stronger from within. The beauty market has seen considerable growth post-pandemic outbreak,” she says.

Arshhya Chhabra co-founder and creative director, Alive & Well, feels that the switch is taking place because people realise the harmful effects on the planet as well as on the skin. “People are more aware and conscious today than ever before. They want to eat, use and wear products that are premium without harming the environment, which is the way to go after all this planet is what we leave behind for our future generations. So, every small act of consciousness goes a long way,” says Chhabra who has on offer a range of cold-pressed oils, serums including Vitamin C and retinol, a gold-enriched oil that moisturises skin and provides a base for makeup application besides cleansers, moisturisers and facial tools including rollers and Gua sha stones.

The use of natural products makes sense on a lot of counts. Parkar elaborates, “Manufacturing natural products reduces the waste which ends up in the ocean in a very large quantity. It also lessens the release of harmful chemicals into the canals



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sourcing ingredients to formulating the final product.” The site has classified 10 categories and 42 subcategories to focus on different skin concerns to make it easy for customers to choose products that suit them.

However, the packaging is a red flag that many outside the beauty industry have spoken about to highlight the harm caused by the excessive use of non-biodegradable plastic. Mahima Gupta, founder, Bhu Botanicals, says, “All our products, except the bathroom items (like the face and body cleansers) and on-the-go items (like sunscreen, lip balm and more), come in recyclable glass packaging. We use high-grade recyclable plastic bottles. We aim to provide sustainable, consumer-friendly packaging without harming the environment.” Bhu Botanicals products list that these are 100 per cent vegetarian, free of parabens, sulphates, TEA, MEA, DEA and comedogenic ingredients. The ingredients are organic and some have ECOCERT natural certificates.

Juicy Chemistry also tries to be sustainable with its packaging. “It depends on what the product is and what the ingredients are. We also look at packaging, shelf-life and ease of usage. Certain ingredients require amber glass bottles to prevent oxidation. Most products are packaged in glass bottles and tubs. We use biodegradable paper for our organic deodorants, dry shampoos, and dusting powders. Our liquid shampoos are packaged in recyclable PET bottles,” says Asher. Moreover, the brand has a take-back programme to incentivise recycling.

Kundu points out that since The Beauty Shop had environmental sustainability at the heart of business it addressed the plastic crisis by launching a Community Trade project with Plastics for Change, Bengaluru in 2019. “Through this, the virtues of Community Trade with a modern outlook at the plastic crisis is combined with using recycled plastic packaging. It uses existing plastic that is drowning the planet while