

Identifying Consumer Attitudes and Market Trends in Vegan Cosmetics in Thessaloniki

Executive Summary

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Introduction

[Veganism](#) prioritizes personal health, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability by avoiding animal-derived materials and restricting animal involvement in manufacturing and testing processes (*Definition of Veganism*, 2022). Vegan cosmetics are beauty care products that align with the ideals of veganism. Perceptions of vegan cosmetics vary due to factors like product accessibility, social norms, and the availability of educational content (Le, 2019). Each of these variables contribute to consumer understanding of veganism.

Benefits of the vegan lifestyle, such as its ethical, environmental, and health factors, appeal to consumers. Younger generations have begun seeking out more ethical and sustainable alternatives to products, creating a demand for vegan and cruelty-free products (Raptou et al., 2024). With growing interest in sustainability, companies have used labelling to communicate with consumers who look for sustainable and eco-friendly products. Some companies, however, take advantage of sustainable interests to manipulate consumer perception of products through green marketing strategies (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Dishonesty in green marketing leads to consumer mistrust. Third-party certifications, such as the V-Label by the European Vegetarian Union (EVU), help to address this issue by providing clear, enforceable criteria that allows consumers to identify genuine vegan products.

The [Hellenic Vegetarian Association \(HellasVeg\)](#) is a non-governmental association that advocates for sustainable practices and educates consumers about veganism (Toufexis, 2025a). They work with the EVU to advocate for plant-based initiatives and support policies that improve nutrition, sustainability, and environmental issues across Europe. Due to the growth of veganism and the vegan cosmetic market, the Hellenic Vegetarian Association wanted to conduct studies in Thessaloniki to understand local consumer and professional knowledge on the topic.

Methods

The goal of this project was to assess consumer awareness of vegan cosmetics in Thessaloniki, identify challenges impacting the vegan cosmetics market, and improve consumer perception and public acceptance of vegan cosmetics products. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were proposed:

1. Document consumer awareness and understanding of vegan cosmetics.
2. Compare the perspectives of professionals in the cosmetics industry.
3. Catalogue the availability of vegan cosmetics in facilities carrying cosmetics in Thessaloniki.
4. Develop educational opportunities to improve consumer awareness of vegan cosmetics.

The first objective was completed by conducting surveys with 122 local shoppers in Thessaloniki. These surveys were conducted at department and specialty beauty shops. The survey data provided quantitative measures of awareness on topics such as the inconsistent definition of vegan cosmetics, perceptions of benefits of vegan cosmetics, and barriers to purchasing vegan cosmetics.

For the second objective, seven structured interviews were conducted with industry professionals from four fields: dermatologists, podologists, retailers and manufacturers. These expert interviews provided context on how vegan cosmetics are understood and promoted from an industry perspective, and helped identify any misconceptions or marketing challenges encountered by professionals.

To complete the third objective, a cataloging study was conducted at a department store to document the availability of products labeled vegan and the consistency of third-party certifications. This inventory analysis helped quantify the amount of certified vegan labels, identify instances of green branding, and observe market trends involving misconceptions of vegan cosmetics.

For the fourth and final objective, educational infographics were developed using Canva as the design software. These infographics display the main findings from this research to educate the public on misconceptions about vegan cosmetics.

Results

Key findings were identified using data analysis to examine the data compiled from the survey, interview, and cataloging methods outlined previously. These findings were extracted from responses to select survey and interview questions that provided the most significant results considering consumer and professional perceptions of vegan cosmetics.

Survey Findings:

- Only 26% of the 122 survey participants were able to correctly define veganism.
- Consumers are motivated to purchase vegan cosmetics due to ethical, environmental, and health advantages.
- Limited product availability and product pricing are purchasing barriers of vegan cosmetics.
- Survey participants could not confidently identify common animal-derived ingredients used in cosmetic products.

Interview Findings:

- A common misconception of vegan cosmetics is that they are less effective than non-vegan alternatives.
- Long-term, vegan cosmetics are priced higher, but they provide improved health benefits due to their healthier ingredients.

Cataloging Findings:

- Marketing professionals lack education on how to identify vegan products.
- Inconsistent vegan labeling on cosmetic products makes it difficult to identify animal-derived ingredients and differentiate between vegan, natural, and organic cosmetics.

Based on these findings, it became clear that consumers lack education on concepts associated with vegan cosmetics. A series of educational infographics were subsequently developed to improve consumer and professional awareness of vegan cosmetics. Sample infographics were designed to illustrate the definition of veganism, recognize common animal-derived ingredients, identify greenwashing tactics, and clarify the importance of third-party certifications.

Recommendations

Recommendations were developed to help HellasVeg improve consumer and professional knowledge of vegan cosmetics. These recommendations are categorized as immediate or long-term recommendations.

Immediate Recommendations

1. HellasVeg should publish this report on their website.

Sharing this report presents an opportunity for consumers to gain insights from key findings and for HellasVeg to repurpose the findings in infographics to improve consumer awareness.

2. HellasVeg should post educational infographics on their website and on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook.

The marketing team at HellasVeg should update and maintain infographics on their website and on popular social media platforms to educate a wider audience on vegan cosmetics and on common misconceptions in the vegan cosmetic industry.

3. HellasVeg should compare the survey data collected from this research study with the data presented in other European vegan cosmetics studies.

Since HellasVeg has access to other European vegan cosmetics studies, they should compare the survey results of this research to that of external case studies to identify findings consistent and unique to Thessaloniki.

Long-Term Recommendations

4. HellasVeg should continue collecting data on specific gender and age demographics to compile comprehensive survey data in Thessaloniki.

Survey results raise a concern that more information should be collected on participants of different demographics: men and participants above the age of 30. Collecting this data will benefit HellasVeg in their mission to improve consumer knowledge and understanding of cosmetic consumers in Thessaloniki.

5. HellasVeg should create an online training course that contains informational content relevant to the vegan cosmetic industry.

HellasVeg should create an online training course that includes short videos, presentations, and data from this study to address the key findings presented by this research. Developing this training and distributing it to retail professionals will help alleviate misconceptions that negatively impact the vegan cosmetics industry.

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