

Relationship of Sustainable Development Goals with the Usage of Cosmetic Skin Care Products – A Study

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals is nothing but making addressing the conflicts worldwide and giving better lives for people in the globe. The main aim is to tackle the challenges along with others to make the globe more sustainable for future generations. There are seventeen goals defined in SDGs which are focused on sustainable development. They are exclusively designed for eradication of poverty, protection of the environment, and the promotion of our well-being. In the context of the beauty and personal care industry, cosmetic skincare products play a significant role in influencing several of these goals. Positively, the industry supports economic growth by creating jobs and encouraging innovation through research and development of new formulations. Companies adopting eco-friendly packaging and sustainable sourcing practices contribute to responsible consumption and production and climate action. Moreover, initiatives promoting gender equality are often supported by empowering women in the workforce and encouraging body positivity. However, there are also negative impacts. The overuse of plastics in packaging and harmful chemicals in products contribute to environmental degradation, affecting life below water and life on land. Unethical labor practices and greenwashing are also concerns that undermine progress toward the SDGs. Thus, while the skincare industry has the potential to align with the SDGs, responsible practices and greater awareness are essential to maximize its positive impact and reduce harm. Sustainable Development Goals is nothing but making addressing the conflicts worldwide and giving better lives for people in the globe.

Keywords: Sustainable development goals (SDGs), cosmetic skincare industry, environmental impact, ethical sourcing, responsible consumption

INTRODUCTION

The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), set by the United Nations, are a global roadmap to make the world fairer, healthier, and more sustainable by 2030. These goals touch on everything from ending poverty and ensuring clean water, to promoting gender equality and fighting climate change. While they may seem broad, every industry has a part to play including the cosmetic and skincare industry [1].

Today, skincare and cosmetic products are part of many people's daily routines. From sunscreen and moisturizers to makeup and serums, these items have become essentials. But behind their glossy packaging and appealing benefits, there are real concerns about how their production, use, and disposal affect people and the planet [2].

One major issue is environmental impact. The cosmetic industry relies on natural resources some of which are overharvested and energy-intensive

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processes that contribute to carbon emissions. Packaging, often made of plastic, adds to the growing waste problem. Many products also contain ingredients, like microplastics or synthetic chemicals, which can pollute waterways and harm marine life [3].

Health is another important factor. Some skincare and cosmetic products contain harmful ingredients that may pose risks to users and factory workers alike. As more people become aware of what they put on their skin, there's a growing demand for transparency and safer, non-toxic alternatives [4].

Then there's the human side of the supply chain. Ingredients, like mica and palm oil, commonly used in beauty products, are often sourced from regions where labor rights are weak and exploitation can occur. This brings up issues of fair wages, safe working conditions, and child labor raising serious ethical concerns.

The cosmetic and skincare industry also has a unique opportunity to promote social change. By creating inclusive products for all skin tones and types, supporting women entrepreneurs, and ensuring fair trade practices, it can contribute to reducing inequality and empowering communities [5].

To truly support the SDGs, the industry needs to rethink how it operates from using eco-friendly packaging and responsibly sourced ingredients to educating consumers about sustainable choices. As awareness grows, so does the potential for the beauty sector to be not just part of the problem, but a key player in the solution. Making beauty sustainable isn't just a trend it's a responsibility [6].

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE COSMETIC SKIN CARE INDUSTRY

Good Health and Well-Being

The cosmetic skincare industry is closely connected to health and well-being. Many products promise benefits, like healthier skin, increased self-confidence, and protection from environmental damage. While they can enhance quality of life and support mental well-being, their impact isn't always positive. Some formulations contain harmful chemicals that may lead to skin irritation, hormonal disruptions, or long-term health concerns. Additionally, the production and disposal of these products can affect environmental and community health. Therefore, it's essential to ensure that skincare products are safe, ethically produced, and environmentally friendly to truly support holistic well-being [7].

Positive Impact

More skincare brands today are making a conscious shift toward safer, non-toxic ingredients that truly support skin health. By avoiding harmful substances, like parabens, sulfates, and phthalates, these ethical brands are helping reduce the risk of skin irritation, allergies, and long-term health issues. This approach also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal, which focuses on ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all. Choosing natural or organic skincare not only benefits individual health but also reflects a growing awareness around what we put on our bodies. It's a move toward cleaner beauty that puts people's well-being first.

Negative Impact

On the flip side, many skincare products filled with harsh chemicals have been linked to skin allergies, hormonal imbalances, and even long-term health concerns. Some of these ingredients can also harm the environment, polluting water systems and affecting wildlife. Beyond physical health, the overuse and marketing of beauty products can fuel unrealistic beauty standards, leading to anxiety, low self-esteem, and body image issues. This pressure to look a certain way can negatively affect mental well-being, especially among young people. Together, these impacts show the importance of mindful consumption and choosing skincare that supports both personal and environmental health.

GENDER EQUALITY

The cosmetic industry often targets women as its primary consumer base, with products marketed to enhance beauty, skin health, and self-esteem. While this offers opportunities for empowerment, there are complexities regarding gender equality.

- *Positive Impact:* Some cosmetic brands promote diversity and inclusivity by offering products suited to all skin tones, types, and genders. Brands that support gender equality in their marketing and production contribute to SDG 5 by promoting positive representation and challenging traditional beauty standards.
- *Negative Impact:* The beauty industry has often reinforced narrow beauty ideals, primarily focusing on unattainable, gendered beauty standards. This can perpetuate unrealistic body image expectations, especially for women, contributing to social pressure and affecting mental well-being [8].

Decent Work and Economic Growth

The cosmetic skin care industry is a significant part of the global economy, providing jobs across multiple sectors, from raw material sourcing to manufacturing, marketing, and retail.

- *Positive Impact:* Many companies in the industry have begun to focus on ethical production, supporting fair labor practices, fair wages, and safe working conditions. Sustainable brands often adopt transparent supply chains and promote economic growth in the communities where their ingredients are sourced.
- *Negative Impact:* On the other hand, unethical sourcing practices, such as exploitation of workers in developing countries or reliance on non-renewable resources, can contribute to economic inequality and violate workers' rights [9].

Responsible Consumption and Production

The beauty industry faces significant scrutiny in terms of its contribution to environmental degradation, particularly related to waste production, plastic packaging, and unsustainable resource consumption.

- *Positive Impact:* Many companies have embraced sustainability by developing eco-friendly packaging, eliminating harmful chemicals, and sourcing raw materials from renewable or fair trade-certified sources. Practices, like refillable containers, biodegradable products, and cruelty-free testing, contribute to responsible consumption and production, aligning with SDG.
- *Negative Impact:* The mass production of skincare products often leads to a large amount of plastic waste and environmental pollution. Many products come with excessive packaging – bottles, boxes, and wrappers – that are rarely recyclable and frequently end up in landfills or oceans. Additionally, some products contain non-biodegradable ingredients, like microplastics, which pollute waterways and harm marine life. These practices contribute to a throwaway culture and unsustainable consumption patterns. As the beauty industry continues to grow, so does its environmental footprint, making it crucial for brands and consumers alike to push for more sustainable, eco-friendly alternatives in both product design and packaging [10].

CLIMATE ACTION

The production of cosmetic skin care products contributes to climate change in various ways, including energy consumption, transportation emissions, and the unsustainable sourcing of raw materials.

- *Positive Impact:* Many beauty brands are now embracing sustainability by committing to carbon-neutral production, switching to renewable energy sources, and actively working to lower their carbon emissions. These efforts reflect a growing awareness of industry's environmental impact and a desire to be part of the solution. By adopting greener practices from energy-efficient manufacturing to eco-friendly supply chains these companies are supporting Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG Climate Action. This shift not only helps combat climate change but also encourages consumers to make more responsible choices, showing that beauty and sustainability can go hand in hand.
- *Negative Impact:* However, the production and transportation of products often contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Ingredients, such as palm oil, if not sustainably sourced, can also contribute to deforestation, which has long-term effects on climate stability.

Life Below Water

Microplastics, commonly found in many exfoliating skin care products, are small particles that can enter water systems, harming aquatic life.

- *Positive Impact:* Many brands have begun removing microplastics from their formulations, opting for biodegradable alternatives that do not contribute to water pollution. Eco-friendly brands prioritize safe disposal and responsible ingredient sourcing to reduce harm to aquatic life [11].
- *Negative Impact:* Despite these efforts, many mass-produced beauty products still contain microplastics, which eventually find their way into oceans, affecting marine life and potentially entering the food chain.

Life on Land

The sourcing of raw materials for skin care products, particularly palm oil, has significant implications for biodiversity and ecosystems.

- *Positive Impact:* By sourcing ingredients, brands, such as palm oil from certified sustainable sources or opting for organic, eco-friendly ingredients, can contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and protect land-based ecosystems.
- *Negative Impact:* The cosmetics industry's demand for certain raw materials (e.g., palm oil, shea butter, and certain plant-based oils) can lead to deforestation and destruction of natural habitats if sourced irresponsibly [12].

CONCLUSIONS

The cosmetic skin care industry has a dual role in contributing to or hindering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. On one hand, the industry can positively influence SDGs by adopting sustainable production practices, promoting ethical sourcing, and offering products that support health and well-being. On the other hand, it faces significant challenges related to resource consumption, environmental degradation, and social inequality.

The usage of cosmetic skin care products intersects with several SDGs, both positively and negatively. While the industry can contribute to sustainable development by adopting eco-friendly practices, supporting gender equality, and improving consumer well-being, it also poses challenges in terms of resource consumption, environmental impact, and ethical concerns. Additionally, continued advocacy for industry-wide standards, greater transparency, and corporate accountability will be critical in ensuring that cosmetic products align more closely with the SDGs.

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