

Consumer Confusion: Understanding The Green Market of Makeup

Marbella Moreno

Environmental Studies Department

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

Advisors: Dr. Derek Larson and Ms. Diane Veale-Jones

Introduction

In 2009, sales of “natural” cosmetics had grown by 8% and in the next five years the United States alone is predicted to gain \$5.8 billion of revenue in this market. In an effort to gain new consumers, cosmetic companies engage in “greenwashing” for makeup products. Consumers must understand terms used by companies as well as current governmental standards and choose makeup that is certified by credible programs.



Advertisement for Physicians Formula's organic mascara, which is certified by the eco-certification program. The United States Department of Agriculture organic seal can also be used to identify certified cosmetics.

	Mascara			Lipstick		
	Wal-Mart	Target	Macy's	Wal-Mart	Target	Macy's
Supplier:	Physicians formula	Physicians formula	Estee Lauder	Yes to carrots	Boots Botanics	Sephora
Name of product available:	Organic Wear 100% Natural Origin Jumbo Lash Mascara	Organic wear 100% Natural Origin Mascara	Origins Beyond the Fringe Mascara	C me blush Lip tint	Botanics Lipcolour	Nvey Eco Lipstick
Color:	Ultra Black Organics	Ultra Black Organics	Black	Ready Red	hazelnut	Red Orange
Price:	\$8.74	\$8.74	\$18.50	\$4.47	\$7.99	\$28.00
Certifications	Eco-Cert 	Eco-Cert 	None	NPA 	None	(Company's own seal) 

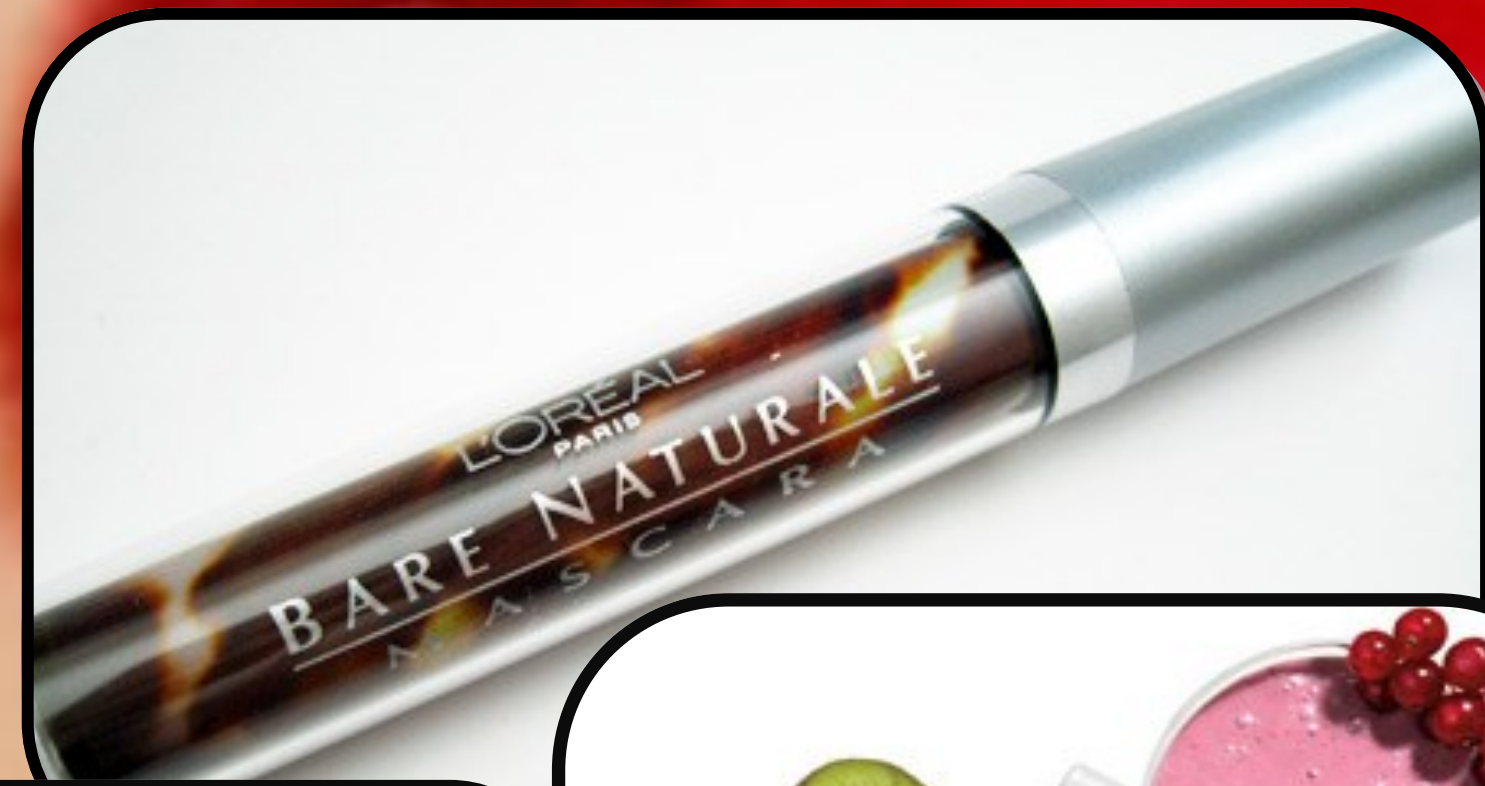
Evaluations of available natural or organic lipstick and mascara in three different stores in Saint Cloud, MN. Wal-Mart is the best place to find certified mascara and Lip Tint. Target would be a second option, with the same available mascara but a poor selection of lipstick. Macy's fell short because of its high prices and also vague description for its products. There is a larger selection of certified products available online but are more expensive than traditional makeup.

Methods

Only lipstick and mascara were analyzed because of their popularity and number of health concerns associated with them. L'Oreal and Estee Lauder are the dominant distributors of makeup, which is why their products were selected for review. Research was completed on preexisting literature as well as review of advertising and marketing techniques of a product in order to evaluate green claims. Comparison between products in terms of cost, advertising, and availability was done at Macy's, Target, and Wal-Mart. After compiling information, a consumer's guide was created that would help the purchaser of makeup determine the environmental and safety concerns for a certain product.

Conclusion

There is a lack of regulation from the United States' government in labeling as well as chemicals content in makeup. As a result, except a product claiming to be organic, there is no definition for products using terms such “natural” or “green” and thereby making these labels meaningless. Alternative makeup solutions are understanding the current regulation from environmental makeup, being able to interpret product labels, buying certified organic when possible, and limiting the amount of exposure to lipstick and mascara when possible.



Natural makeup currently advertised by L'Oreal and Estee Lauder (Clinique brand). Images display a common method of greenwashing, which is the use of earthly colors and fruits to give the illusion of health and naturalness.