

Actives in Colour Cosmetics

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Introduction

As far back in time as the ancient Egyptians people have wanted to look their best. That particular advanced civilisation had an amazing array of beauty tools to enhance their natural looks, including products to get rid of stretch marks, minimise wrinkles and promote hair growth, as well as the powders and paints they used to create the very stylised make-up they wore. Later, the Greeks and Romans also prized their appearance and, in the absence of ready-made cosmetics, created their own beauty-enhancing formulations, such as sheep fat mixed with blood for nail polish⁽¹⁾.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Elizabethan and Georgian eras the desire to look good and keep up with trends continued. Unfortunately, the methods adopted to maintain beauty ideals were often rather unpleasant. These included whitening the skin with lead, which unfortunately was absorbed by the skin and caused many nasty side effects; with prolonged use it could even result in death (one possible cause of death given for Elizabeth I is blood poisoning). Then there was the desire for fair hair, thus the fad for bleaching it with lye came about. Alas, this caused it to fall out, so a trend for wigs was perpetuated. These were so elaborate that they were greased with lard in order to keep them in place, with the unwelcome side-effect of attracting lice⁽²⁾.

The attitude towards cosmetics changed with the most prudish of our ancestors - the Victorians. The ideal feminine beauty at this time had luxuriant fair hair, a lily-white complexion, rosy cheeks and a youthful appearance. Using cosmetics to emulate this look was considered scandalous - only actresses and prostitutes wore make-up. However, advancing years were enough to prompt the most staid of middle aged ladies to drastic action and many flocked to Madame Rachel - a Bond Street beautician who practiced the dubious art of 'enamelling' - filling in wrinkles with an arsenic and white lead paste⁽³⁾.

Thankfully, attitudes as well as science have moved on since then. The beauty industry grew throughout the 20th Century to become the multi-billion pound industry sector it is today.

Previously, the market was split into distinct and separate sectors: colour, skin, sun, body and hair care. However, more recently, the lines between these have become increasingly blurred; a trend which will undoubtedly continue. The colour cosmetics sector was traditionally driven solely by seasonal changes, with brands launching new colour palettes in the spring and autumn. Whilst this is still the case, we are seeing more and more skin care claims filtering through into colour cosmetic products. An outline of recent launches which highlight this trend are detailed in this article.

Product Types

Foundations

For several years now, foundations which exhibit anti-ageing properties have been available and today most new launches have some kind of skin benefit. Some more diverse claims are explored below and some examples of which materials can achieve similar claims are also discussed.

No7's Beautifully Matte Foundation balances oil production, reduces shine and minimises the appearance of blemishes and pores. Reduction in pore size is often achieved using astringent materials such as witch hazel. Blemish control can include the use of AHAs (alpha hydroxy acids) and BHAs (beta hydroxyl acids) to increase cell turnover and prevent pores clogging, a potential cause of comedones, while antimicrobial materials such as triclosan are often employed to prevent infection and formation of spots. P-Refinyl® is used in the formulation. This natural active, derived from lentils, targets enlarged pores and uneven skin grain. *In vivo* testing proved triple action effects: significant reduction in sebum production on cheeks and forehead; restoring normal keratinisation process resulting in less pore dilation; and significantly reducing pore area for a tighter and finer skin grain. Unlike most pore-refining treatments, this active is not astringent and is therefore less irritating, so it can be used in leave-on formulations.

Clarins' Extra Firming Foundation is aimed at women over the age of 40. Its triple action formula targets three major areas of concern for ageing skin: it smoothes the complexion, minimises