



TOWARDS AN EVOLUTION TOWARDS SOLIDS

“Solids”, as in solid wash pieces, are by far the best option we currently have on the road to completely plastic-free cosmetics. However, they still only represent a niche market compared to their liquid counterparts. What is behind the consumer motivation and what potential remains untapped?



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Waterless processes have great potential for consumers and the environment.

Sales of sustainable cosmetic products have long enjoyed an upward trend but, despite their growing popularity, solid cosmetics still only occupy a very small proportion of the market compared to their liquid counterparts: in the leading pharmacy and grocery stores, they only take up a comparatively small area of shelf space. Solids are anhydrous solid detergents: they contain no water. They should not be confused with soaps or moulded solid products that contain measurable amounts of water. Waterless processes have great potential for consumers and the environment, so it is worth analysing purchasing behaviour and anhydrous product benefits.

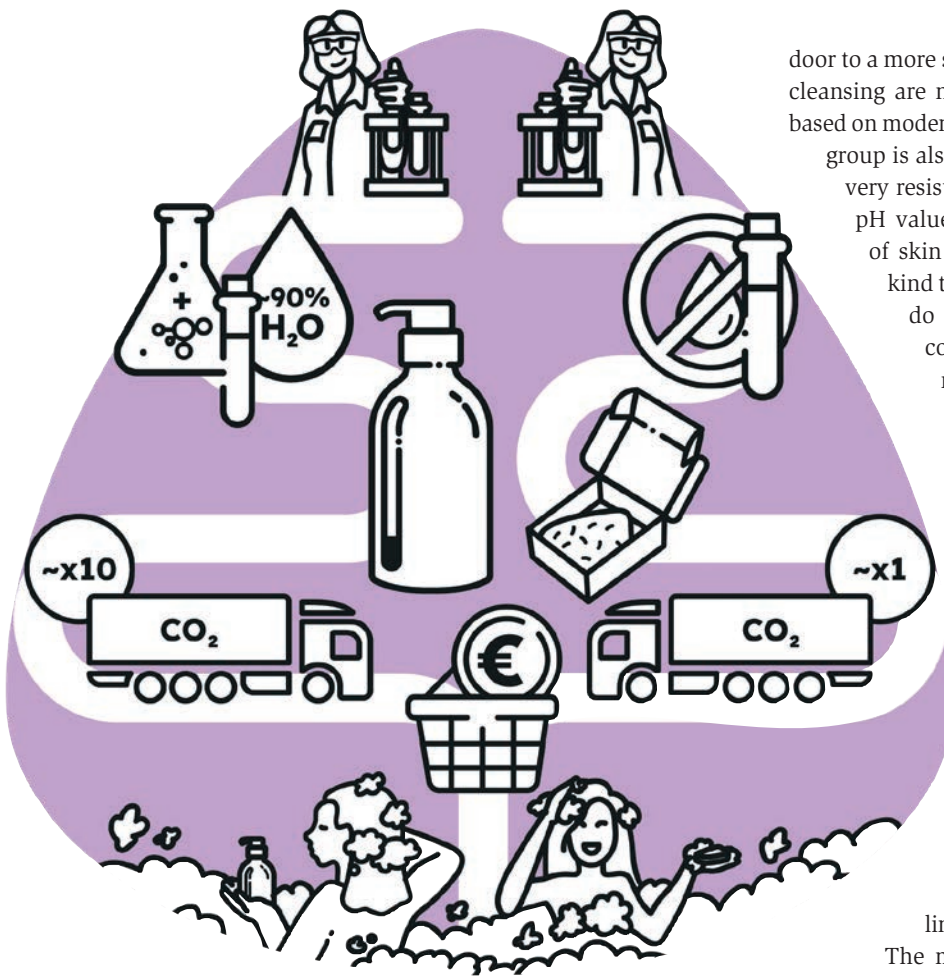
CONSUMER RELUCTANCE

There are many reasons for the current restraint on the part of consumers: some are reluctant to switch to solid products because they are unfamiliar with them or have concerns about the comparable effects. In addition, the higher purchase price, often due to high-quality ingredients and sustainable packaging, can be a barrier for price-conscious consumers. Even the significant presence of liquid

shampoos, conditioners and shower gels in leading pharmacies and supermarkets is still overwhelmingly superior when compared to solids. Similarly, there are very few – if any – specialised applications such as anti-dandruff or bleached haircare in solid in the current range of the stores. This low availability and obviously reduced variety in everyday life is also a hurdle to the general acceptance and uptake of solid cosmetics.

WE LOVE HABITS!

The power of habit is proverbial. We all love our routines, they are familiar, they give us security and they are very difficult to change. A study by Harvard University shows, among other things, that changes in behaviour often go hand in hand with a change in context; major changes are triggered, for example, by crises such as divorce, job changes or illness that directly affect someone personally. The change in context needed for us to make the switch to plastic-free, water-free solids is absolutely upon us since we are currently facing the very real existential crisis of saving the planet. The consequences of climate change



Life cycle of solid products compared to liquid products.

and environmental pollution, especially plastic waste, are well-known and are currently of concern to politicians and society.

SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT?

Plastic production has increased 267-fold since the 1950s to almost 400 million tonnes today. Plastic now accounts for around 75 per cent of all marine debris. If we do not change our habits, it is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans. Since consumers assume that they are not (yet) directly affected in their everyday lives (even though microplastics can already be found in cow's milk), many see little reason to change their behaviour or are unaware of the extent to which their choices matter. A small change in consumer habits can have a significant positive impact on plastic waste reduction.

JUST SOAP?

The majority of consumers traditionally associate a solid bar with conventional soap. This common misconception urgently needs to be rectified so that we can open the

door to a more sustainable future. Solids for hair and body cleansing are not soap. Instead, their cleansing effect is based on modern gentle cleansing surfactants. This product group is also known as syndets. These surfactants are very resistant to limescale from city water and their pH value can be adjusted very well to the needs of skin and hair. They are therefore particularly kind to the skin. Furthermore, unlike soaps, they do not produce poorly soluble comedogenic compounds when mixed with water, which means they are much more environmentally friendly in their chemical composition.

LIQUIDS VS. SOLIDS

What many consumers do not realise when it comes to quality is that the same raw materials and active ingredients are used in the production of solid cosmetics as in liquid cosmetics. Solid shampoos, for example, lather at least just as well as liquid versions. Furthermore, consumers often confuse solid shampoos with conventional hair soap, which feels different, does not lather up in the same way and can be problematic with lime water.

The main difference between solids and their liquid counterparts is that solids are generally produced without water. The ingredients are not diluted, but compressed and pressed into a specific shape.

This in turn has some very significant advantages: solid cosmetics save around 90 per cent in volume. Instead of the ten lorries needed for liquid shampoos and shower gels, only one is needed for solids. Once in the bathroom, they are also much more economical: according to Öko-Test, one bar of shampoo replaces an average of two bottles of liquid shampoo with a volume of around 200 millilitres, so the slightly higher purchase price is deceptive and is actually comparatively cheaper.

As most bacteria and fungi need moisture to thrive, the absence of water in the manufacturing process means no preservatives are needed. So not only are solids soap-free, they are also free of preservatives, silicones, parabens - and plastic.

NO MORE PLASTIC!

Plastic not only poses a significant global waste problem, it is also a pernicious presence in your home. New research has highlighted the danger posed by personal care products, including soaps and haircare items, that are stored in plastic bottles. Concerning levels of phthalates, which are highly toxic endocrine disruptors, have been found in children that use personal care products stored in plastic bottles. Phthalates are either in the personal care product itself or 'leak' into it from the plastic bottle over time.

graphic: ideapro

Phthalates have been linked to altered hormone production and reproductive, immune system and metabolic diseases and are believed to have a negative impact on behaviour and learning outcomes. Switching to solids would immediately and permanently eradicate the danger posed by soaps and haircare items stored in plastic bottles.

USE IT RIGHT

Another issue that often causes consumers to hesitate is whether it is hygienic enough to share a wash piece in the bathroom. However, studies have shown that solid wash pieces are no more unhygienic than liquid products, as potential germs are not transferred but rinsed away with the foam, according to the Germbars of soapan Consulting Center for Infection prevention and Control (BZH).

The only important thing is to handle the solids properly: allow them to dry well after use, for example by hanging them on the wall in our purpose-made small bag or storing them in a perforated tray for use at home or when travelling.

CONCLUSION

With the necessary knowledge of the benefits of solid cosmetics and how to use them correctly, solid cosmetics are

the ideal and already proven option. We could be already enjoying the qualitative advantages of not using preservatives and reducing plastic waste and carbon dioxide emissions on a large scale. All we need is a little support from the industry along the way. Consider the impact of brand owners consistently switching their portfolios from liquid to solid. Imagine sales organisations clearly communicating the benefits of solid cosmetics and actively encouraging consumers to change their bathroom routine a little to have a great impact on the planet.

New products conquering the market show that it can even be fun: solid toothpaste, solid perfume, solid shampoos, conditioners and sprinkly shower pieces or solids that come in new shapes and sizes. With no water and therefore no preservatives, no soap, no silicones and no parabens, solid solutions are the way forward for more sustainable cosmetics, helping to fight the war on plastic.



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