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VIVANESS: Elfriede Dambacher column

On beginnings and endings

More than any other year before, 2020 served as a catalyst to prompt a lot of industries to take a closer look at their strengths and weaknesses. Over the course of the year, I was astonished to see that many cosmetics brands weren't adapting their marketing messages but instead were putting out the same old platitudes. I was particularly interested in what was happening in the natural and organic cosmetics sector. Although all over the world, people were being forced to adapt to the unprecedented situation and deal with remote working, home schooling and lockdowns, scarcely anything changed in advertising.

People who want to spoil themselves at home are looking for quality, and this benefited the brands that consumers trusted. Natural and organic cosmetics brands also reaped the rewards of this to an even greater extent, particularly those that understood the need to convey a distinctive message in these exceptional times. I was therefore even more surprised that a lot of brands did not adjust their advertising messages. Instead, I saw advertisements that often simply rolled out the same old product claims. For example, a recommendation to "spoil your skin occasionally" or tips on achieving that "glamorous look for the New Year's Eve party" that couldn't even take place. What I would have liked to have seen over the last year is a more explicit communication of the immediate benefits of natural and organic cosmetics.

In addition, both the conventional and natural and organic cosmetics sectors were making a lot of donations, producing hand sanitisers, and providing a lot of support, but there was little mention of this commitment among the flood of news stories. What a pity. I think that the natural and organic cosmetics sector could blow its own trumpet a bit more in this respect. Because according to the experts, purchasing decisions are increasingly based on a brand's "purpose", and in this conjunction natural and organic cosmetics certainly do have a lot to offer. I agree with the view that the closer brands and retailers are to "real life" the more successful they will be.

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That is why I am also looking forward to the BIOFACH/VIVANESS 2021 eSPECIAL in February, because it will allow me to get as realistic a perspective as possible about what is currently going on in the natural and organic cosmetics segment.

And naturally my hope for 2021 is not just that we get the pandemic under control, but that brands and retailers will draw the right conclusions when they analyse their performance in 2020. There's no going back to the pre-COVID-19 era. We need to get rid of what is not viable for the future, start coming up with new ideas and tackle them boldly.

Elfriede Dambacher, owner of naturkosmetik konzepte, is an international industry expert and author.

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