

Nürnberg, Germany 12.– 15.2.2020

VIVANESS2020

into natural beauty



VIVANESS: Elfriede Dambacher column

Hot topic: innovative packaging

The 5 Rs sum it up nicely: *Reduce, Renew, Replace, Reuse, and Recycle*. Sounds simple, doesn't it? But it seems that it's that easy, going by the presentations by experts and interesting discussion on sustainable packaging for natural cosmetics at this year's Natural Cosmetics Conference. Consumers agree: Natural cosmetics shouldn't just convince by reason of their ingredients, but also through sustainable packaging concepts. The discussion panel showed how complex the issue is. Okay, nothing can beat natural cosmetics in respect of ingredients. They contain no harmful pollutants or solid or liquid micro-plastics. That's all off-limits. But when it comes to the packaging it appears to be more complicated. Why? Because many manufacturers need to resort to standard solutions for tubes and bottles, as individual companies cannot finance a switch to innovative forms of packaging on their own. So I particularly liked the suggestion made by Dr Carolina Schweig, a luminary in the field of sustainable packaging. She proposed that an industry-wide solution for natural cosmetics was needed. This would offer an opportunity to confront those cosmetics manufacturers that are currently very loudly touting their products in 100% recycling plastics or bioplastic bottles, and in doing so are cleverly deflecting attention away from their contents, which can contain any amount of liquid or solid micro-plastics.

I was left a little perplexed. There is no industry-wide solution in sight and you find few creative packaging approaches to be found when buying natural cosmetics. It is simply not so easy to buy cosmetic products unpackaged like nuts and muesli. This is because the statutory regulations on cosmetics kick in to ensure that the products are not contaminated by bacteria. And I get this, because one of the distinguishing features of natural cosmetics is that they don't contain synthetic preservatives, which would also survive being decanted into the customer's own non-sterile containers. After all, I want a product that I can use till it is finished and not have to throw away only half-used after a week. So all I can do is collect my teeth cleaning tablets and unpackaged soap and hope that there will soon be more refill systems available for cosmetic creams.

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I would then set my sights on doing more of the 5 Rs, because after all, I know all about how to recycle packaging. The leaflet and cardboard box go into the paper recycling bin, the empty shampoo bottle and cream jar go into the plastics recycling bin. But I am not satisfied with that.

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