Educating and Empowering Women through Gaining Knowledge of the U.S. Cosmetics Industry

Sara Pagliante
12/03/2014
The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at http://iwl.rutgers.edu.
Why I Chose to Research Cosmetics

- Markup
- Interest
- Social pressures
- Affects everyone
- Environment concerns
- Ingredient safety concerns
Did You Know?

The average person uses from eight to fifteen cosmetic products per day. The FDA claims all current cosmetic ingredients are safe in small doses. Over time, will these incremental amounts of potentially harmful ingredients catch up with us years down the road?
In the Mind

It is important for women to know *WHY* they feel they should wear makeup so as to identify if their personal motivations are healthy or based off societal pressures.
Ultimately...

Media influence affects our consumption and emotional well-being.

It’s impossible to not use cosmetics, yet they are loosely regulated, could pose a risk to human health and the social and political environment needed to elicit change is not in place.
What it Boils Down to

We have a plethora of consumer products that have a long history behind them...

● a basis of social manipulation through advertising
● a lack of regulation by the government
● an absence of consumer push-back
What is the Problem?

The Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the FDA, are responsible for cosmetic regulation but serves as a very weak power.

Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act of 1938 (FD&CA) and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act of 1967 (FPLA) are the most significant pieces of legislation that regulate cosmetics yet do not require pre-market approval or provide a set of predefined terms for cosmetic companies to use safely.
What is the Problem?

Since the Industrial Revolution, advertisers sought the help of psychologists to market products so consumers’ psyche would be affected.
NERVE AND BRAIN

TABLETS

FOR THE TREATMENT AND CURE OF MEN'S SPECIAL DISEASES AND ALL DISTURBANCES OF THE ENTIRE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

PRICE ONE DOLLAR

SEROCCO CHEMICAL LABORATORIES.
CHICAGO, ILL.
This is the manufacturer's version of the effect of this aniline eyelash dye.

Total blindness was its actual effect in at least one instance.

Before

After
How are These Issues Being Addressed?

- FDA loosely regulates products
  - CIR compiles ingredient testing—difficult to understand, pass on and verify
- Media keeps encouraging women to use
- Blogs pass on questionable information
Overview of Project

An interactive website that will:

- provide information and places to find the least biased research on cosmetic ingredients
- give a background check to major players
- compile listings of the most reputable and current articles on regulation in the industry
- collect the top 25 most helpful beauty blogs into one blogroll
- amass DIY recipes for at-home use
- find the best, most affordable and safest cosmetics
- hold a forum for discussion, expression and reflection
- list when products should be discarded
How My Website Will Facilitate Change

My website will educate women on the discourse surrounding cosmetics safety and then in turn empower them to make educated decisions.
What Can We Do?

Learn
Share
Act
Research is tough but someone’s got to do it &

I can help myself through helping others
Image Sources

In order of appearance:

- http://oldadsarefunny.blogspot.com/2013/10/1800s-ad_31.html
- http://greatfashionitems4u.com/cosmetics.html
Bibliography