

2020, Controlling the Claims Narrative

Theresa Callaghan PhD, Callaghan Consulting International, Hamburg, Germany



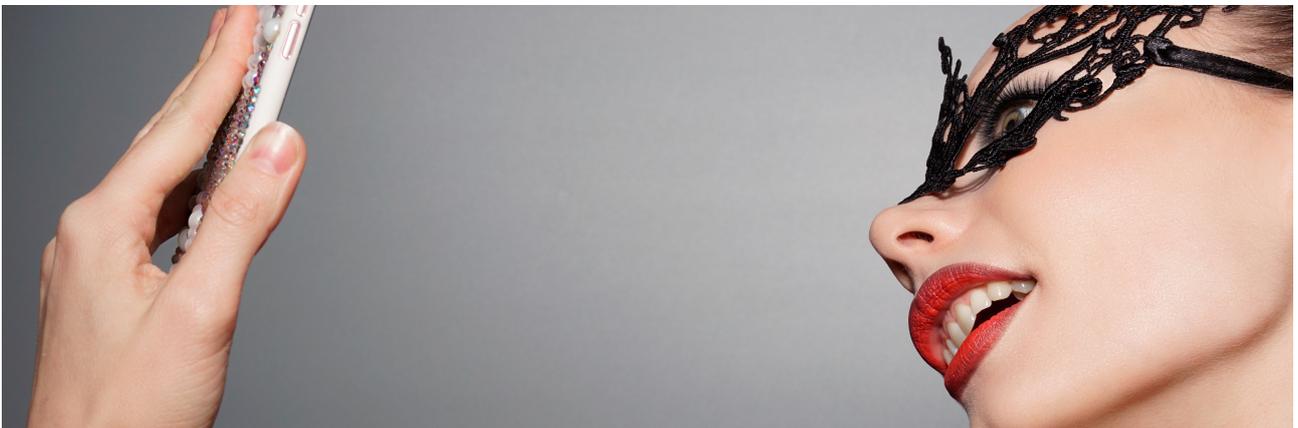
As we enter a yet another new year, the cosmetic industry has much to reflect on the past decade whilst looking forward into the next one. As someone who works in claims development it is clear the consumer will continue to drive for the end of ‘fairy stories’ from marketing, and ‘speed demons’ from risk takers when it comes to the claims narrative. To be honest, all consumers will be pushing for further transparency right across the board — we will have our work cut out for us!

If we, as an industry, are to counter consumer ‘toxicologists’ and consumer ‘skin experts’ surrounding our products, well-thought out pro-activeness as a collective rather than as an industry full of competitors, is the key route for success. Analogous to beaches covered in plastic waste, industry fragmentation became so severe during the 2010s, that it gave birth to a tsunami of misinformation, and ‘drowned-out’ common sense. We owe it to ourselves and the continued betterment and evolution of the industry, to put the consumer, press, and social media, straight, once and for all. ‘Sense-about-science’ needs to be a champion for 2020 and the decade ahead. As an industry we focus on the average consumer, yet those consumers who are not-so-average are making a noise. Perhaps it is time to address them too in order to avoid the continued growth of the ‘pseudo-toxicologist’ and similar ‘experts’?

Whether we are on board or not, product trends for 2020 will continue to centre around sustainability — not necessarily through natural and organic products — despite anticipated growth, but also in terms of ethics, resources, people, and obvious overt consumerism. Will we see a reduction in consumption or in consumer waste? Whatever the marketing ‘trend’ sustainability will encompass all aspects of cosmetics. With a focus on sustainability the numbers of new ingredients is likely to be less, but with an increase in research and development into what we already have on offer. Furthermore, consumers may well search for products with locally produced ingredients, and demand transparency in terms of, e.g., ‘how many tons of CO₂ produced this lipstick,’ written on the packaging. All of these claims will require legislative compliance. I am also of the belief that consumers will move away from products feeding their vanity and focus on their individual

real skin needs in order to cut down on waste. The fashion industry is moving in this direction driven by the consumer — we will not be immune.

In terms of ethical trends, those who own an effective but honest and truthful narrative, when it comes to product claims (i.e., fully complaint), will be the winners. In claims development, whatever the trends of 2020, if the industry cannot be in control of the narrative in a transparent and informative honest manner, we may come to the point where regulatory control will no longer be in our hands. Either it will be in the hands of law makers, or it will be in the hands of consumers and their social media accounts. The latter doesn't bear thinking about!



Since 2013 we have consistently failed to effectively control the consumers narrative, especially when it comes to correcting 'fake' news. In my view, this is primarily due to those brands who will not, or do not comply with cosmetic claims legislation. Also, those brands who themselves make up negative stories about ingredients due to ignorance, lack of proper consumer insight, and failure (out of fear?) to challenge the consumer with correct facts. They then perpetuate these 'stories', because that's what the industry is good at. Me-too-products and me-too-claims go hand-in-hand.

These brands fail to understand that non-compliance with just one out of six EU Claims Criteria means they are non-compliant with all of them since they are inextricably linked. This lays waste, for example, to any so-called 'ethical' claim they may have attached to their product. Like speeding cars on a motorway, they think that because everyone else is doing it, they can do so themselves, and they hide amongst those around them — especially in the internet jungle. With only so many police to control them, it will be either the consumer or industry insiders waiting at the motorway exit with the speedometer. Drive safely in 2020!