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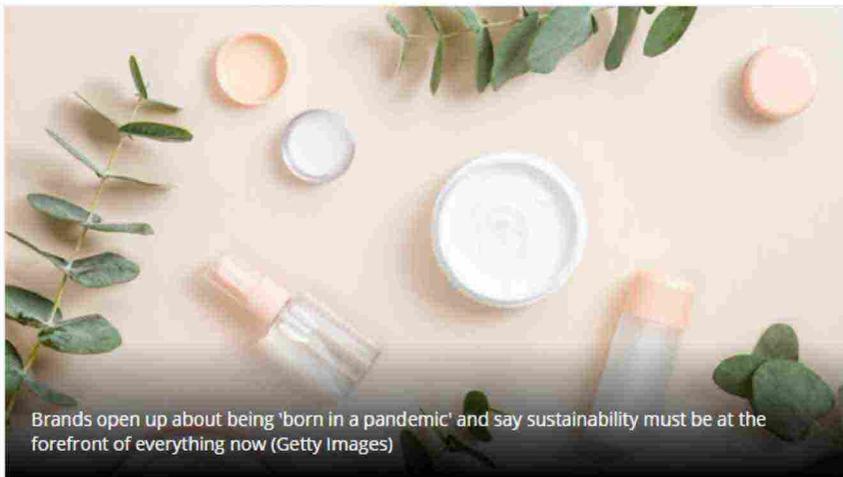
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'This industry is not dying': COVID-19 beauty innovation just needs to be sustainable

By Kacey Culliney

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Brands open up about being 'born in a pandemic' and say sustainability must be at the forefront of everything now (Getty Images)

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Beauty innovation during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic should continue, but it must be centred on sustainability because the health of people and planet is now front of mind, say brand owners.

The ongoing novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has halted life as we know it, with beauty hit especially hard and forced to reassess how it can remain relevant. But some brands have continued with product development and launches – prepared to be born in a pandemic.

At the beginning of June, CosmeticsDesign-Europe partnered with Cosmoprof Bologna Worldwide to present a live webinar looking at how and why some beauty brands had continued to innovate in the face of COVID-19.

In the webinar, we spoke to three panellists – Alvarro Torres, CEO and director of Khiron Lifesciences; Carlotta Del Canale, technical marketing manager of Davines Group; and Zaffrin O'Sullivan, founder of Five Dot Botanics – all of whom had continued product development, launches and expansion plans during the crisis.

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Whilst there had been an immediate, short-term 'pause' for each company when COVID-19 initially struck, Khiron Lifesciences continued the global expansion of its CBD skin care line Kuida; Five Dot Botanics launched a cleansing balm; and the Davines Group was still primed to launch a new regenerative skin care range next month.

Sustainability first - 'profit will come if you're concerned about your role in the world'

"The challenge is that you have to look ahead now and look at the trends: sustainability, safety, self-consciousness and self-care at home," said Alvarro Torres, CEO and director of Khiron Lifesciences.

"Those are the types of things consumers are going to come out of this [crisis] thinking," Torres said.

Beauty brands now had to consider ingredients and supply chains more carefully, he said, ensuring everything used and produced was more sustainable because consumers during COVID-19 were more concerned about planetary impact.

"It's not just about looking good but having a good impact (...) Certainly, we have to change the way we do things - it's no longer big parties and launches, that's a thing of the past. It's now about making that connection."

"...We have to adjust to the reality and, in particular we're talking about the brand and how consumers identify with brands. I think now it's about doing good and something that is beside profit. Profit will come if you're concerned about your role in the world," Torres said.



From top left, clockwise: Zaffrin O'Sullivan, founder of Five Dot Botanics, Carlotta Del Canale, technical marketing manager of Davines Group, Alvarro Torres, CEO and director of Khiron Lifesciences, and Kacey Culliney, editor of CosmeticsDesign-Europe

Zaffrin O'Sullivan, founder of Five Dot Botanics, agreed and said sustainability had to be central to every beauty business now.

"I don't believe any brands that don't have sustainability at their hearts will really survive in the next five to ten years. I think it's kind of almost impossible now," O'Sullivan said.

"...COVID has only accelerated what was already inevitable. Those that aren't thinking about 'what is my environmental impact'; 'what is my social impact'; 'how do I fit into society' - they almost seem archaic to think of those brands existing in five years just doesn't feel that could possibly be true. I may be wrong, but I feel that sustainability is the new norm," she said.

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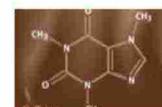
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For Five Dot Botanics, she said the crisis had forced the company to look more closely at the "enormity of the entire supply chain" and question sourcing and structure. Whilst the company was already committed to British manufacturing and sourced many of its ingredients from the UK, she said there would be likely more of a local focus in the future.

"What I think we will see in our road map is a further examination on more home-sourced products, which is great."

Carlotta Del Canale, technical marketing manager of Davines Group, also agreed beauty innovation during the pandemic had to be centred on sustainability and noted provenance had certainly risen in importance.

Del Canale said consumers were increasingly asking how Davines selected and cultivated ingredients used in beauty products, but they were also asking more about provenance in quite some detail – wanting to know what farmers the company worked with and the relationship Davines had with each of them.

"[Consumers] are asking for efficacy but asking also for something which doesn't impact our environment," she said.

Davines Group's upcoming skin care launch aligned perfectly with these demands and needs, she said, as the company had worked hard to improve the sustainability criteria of the formulations.

'This industry is not dying' – launches can and must continue

Torres said now was the time to be launching new beauty products and thinking about new brands.

"There's two ways to look at this: you can bury your head in the sand and think 'let's hope it passes by' or you can start thinking about what those trends are going to be. I know it's hard and everything looks really bleak, but this industry is not dying, and I think it's going to continue to grow."

Whilst there would be an immediate dip in the market, he said business would pick up; it would just be centred around "a different type of connection" with consumers in the future.

"There's an opportunity for us to rebrand ourselves and know that every impact that we have is going to be positive. I think people are looking to that now."

O'Sullivan said consumers were "ready to shop again", it was just important beauty brands continued to listen to their needs.

Check out the full webinar below to hear more about the rising importance of sustainable beauty during the COVID-19 pandemic; how businesses needed to develop and restructure; and how they can plan and improve digital presence and consumer engagement.



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