



## GREEN MARKETING INITIATIVES IN INDIA'S PERSONAL CARE INDUSTRY: A REVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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### ABSTRACT

The Indian personal care industry is undergoing a tremendous shift towards sustainability mainly driven by growing environmental awareness, health consciousness, and consumer demand for eco-friendly products. This study reviews the key green marketing initiatives adopted by personal care brands operating in India. A qualitative descriptive approach is being used and it is based on secondary data like sustainability reports, company disclosures, academic literature, and industry publications. The study primarily identifies eight major themes of green marketing: eco-friendly product formulation, sustainable packaging, carbon footprint reduction, circular economy practices, ethical sourcing, sustainable product alternatives, green branding, and digital awareness campaigns. From the study, it is found that leading brands increasingly incorporate sustainability across the product life cycle through natural formulations, recyclable packaging, waste upcycling, renewable energy adoption, and community-based sourcing. Green marketing has evolved beyond promotional communication into a strategic business approach that strengthens brand trust, enhances competitiveness, and contributes to environmental sustainability. The study highlights the growing role of sustainability-oriented innovation in shaping the future of India's personal care sector.

**KEYWORDS :** Green Marketing, Sustainability, Personal Care Products, Circular Economy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a vital element of contemporary business strategy, influencing product development, manufacturing, and marketing decisions across industries. The COVID-19 pandemic also brought a lot of changes in our mindsets with respect to our health and general well-being by bringing us closer towards more sustainable lifestyles. In the personal care sector, rising consumer awareness regarding environmental degradation and health concerns has accelerated demand for products that are natural, ethical, and environmentally responsible. Consumers increasingly prefer products that minimize ecological impact through sustainable ingredients, recyclable packaging, and responsible sourcing practices. In a growing awareness and concern level of consumers, the green personal care industry is also becoming more sustainable to cater to their needs. According to the Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009, a cosmetic product is defined as "any substance or mixture intended to be placed in contact with the external parts of the human body (epidermis, hair, nails, lips and external genital organs) or with the teeth and the mucous membranes of the oral cavity, with a view exclusively or mainly to cleaning them, perfuming them, changing their appearance, protecting them, keeping them in good condition or correcting body odours" (European Parliament 2009).

Under green personal care products, hygiene and grooming items such as soaps, shampoos, toothpaste, lotions, and body-care products made from plant-based, organic, or sustainably sourced ingredients. These products do not use harmful synthetic chemicals such as parabens, sulphates, and artificial fragrances as it emphasizes on biodegradability and environmental safety.

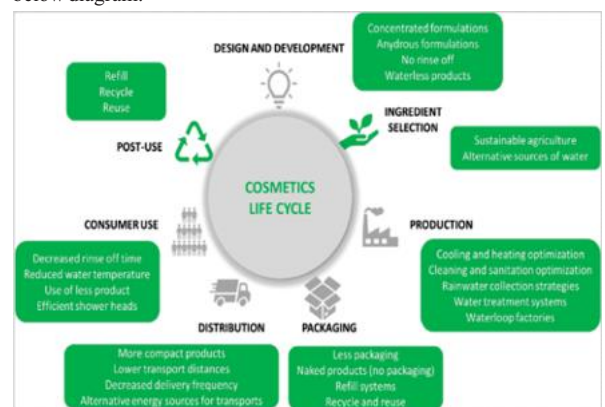
The Indian market has undergone rapid growth in green personal care products, triggered by increasing consumer preference for natural and Ayurvedic products. As a result, companies are adopting comprehensive sustainability initiatives throughout the product life cycle, supply chains, and marketing communications.

### 2. Literature Review

Recent literature suggests that sustainability has become a prime importance in the global personal care and cosmetics industry. Sustainability initiatives are increasingly integrated across the product life cycle, from sourcing of raw material and product development to packaging, distribution, consumer usage, and post-consumer usage waste management.

Martins and Marto (2023) emphasized that sustainable production encompasses the adoption of green chemistry, responsible sourcing, recyclable packaging, water conservation, and practising circular economy. Their study highlighted that effective sustainability efforts comprise of efforts beyond marketing communication and must be

present throughout the value chain. This is clearly explained by the below diagram.



**Fig1. Main Phases of the Life Cycle of a Cosmetic Product**

Luthra et al. (2025) identified major barriers affecting consumer adoption such as limited product availability, inadequate eco-labelling standards, poor product performance perceptions, and lack of regulatory support. The authors concluded without proper certification systems and regulatory frameworks it is difficult to increase consumer confidence and hence market penetration.

Research has also highlighted the importance of sustainable packaging in shaping consumer perceptions. Perret et al. (2025) found that environmentally friendly packaging significantly influences sustainability perceptions and consumers' willingness to purchase green cosmetic products. Packaging materials, refill systems, and eco-labels serve as important signals of environmental responsibility.

Consumer behaviour studies often reveal an attitude-behaviour gap in green consumption. Although consumers often express positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly products, actual purchasing decisions have barriers like price, availability, and perceived effectiveness. Singhal and Malik (2018) and Kazançoğlu et al. (2024) observed that environmental concern, social influence, health consciousness, and product performance positively influence green purchase intentions, while skepticism and high prices affect negatively.

Therefore, existing literature demonstrates that successful green marketing is a combination of genuine sustainability practices, effective communication, and consumer trust-building mechanisms. However, there is very limited research on green marketing initiatives adopted by personal care brands operating in India. This study attempts

to address this gap by reviewing the major green marketing initiatives prevalent in the Indian personal care sector.

### 3. Objective of the Study

To examine the major green marketing initiatives adopted by personal care brands in India and assess their contribution to environmental sustainability.

### 4. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and qualitative research design. Secondary data were collected from sustainability reports, company websites, annual reports, academic journals, industry publications, and government reports. Purposive sampling was used to select brands which has high sustainability commitments within the Indian personal care industry. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, the themes were identified from various academic journals. Green marketing initiatives were classified into eight themes and is explained in the below table.

**Table 1. Themes Identified for Green Marketing Initiatives**

Green Marketing Initiative	Supporting Literature
Eco-friendly formulation	Martins & Marto, 2023; Rocca et al., 2022
Sustainable packaging	Perret et al., 2025; Kaestner et al., 2023
Carbon reduction initiatives	Martins & Marto, 2023
Circular economy practices	Mondello et al., 2024
Ethical sourcing	Martins & Marto, 2023
Sustainable alternatives	Mendonça et al., 2023
Green branding/communication	Rocca et al., 2022
Digital awareness and social media marketing	Qing & Jin, 2023

### 5. Analysis and Findings

Based on the above identified themes, secondary data collected from various Indian companies in the green personal care sector and is briefly tabulated below.

**Table 2. Major Green Marketing Initiatives in India's Personal Care Industry**

Initiatives	Key Practices	Representative Brands
Eco-friendly formulation	Natural, herbal, toxin-free, vegan products	Himalaya, Biotique, Mamaearth, Arata
Sustainable packaging	Recyclable, refillable, biodegradable packaging	HUL, Arata, Nat Habit, Beco
Carbon reduction	Renewable energy, tree plantation, plastic neutrality	Mamaearth, Forest Essentials
Circular economy	Waste upcycling, recycled plastic, refill systems	mCaffeine, Bare Necessities, Mamaearth
Ethical sourcing	Fair trade, local sourcing, rural employment	Forest Essentials, Kama Ayurveda
Sustainable alternatives	Shampoo bars, bamboo products, refill packs	Earth Rhythm, Bare Necessities
Green branding	Sustainability-focused communication	Mamaearth, Plum, Forest Essentials
Digital awareness	Social media campaigns and sustainability education	Mamaearth, Plum, The Body Shop

#### 5.1 Eco-Friendly Product Formulation

The use of natural, Ayurvedic, organic, and toxin-free ingredients is the most visible green marketing initiative. Brands increasingly promote products free from parabens, sulfates, silicones, and mineral oils. Common ingredients include neem, aloe vera, turmeric, amla, tea tree oil, and coconut oil, which are renewable, biodegradable, and often locally sourced. Brands such as Himalaya Wellness, Biotique, Mamaearth, Juicy Chemistry, Arata, and Khadi Natural position themselves around eco-friendly formulations.

#### 5.2 Sustainable Packaging

Sustainable Packaging is of prime importance because of increasing concerns regarding plastic pollution. Initiatives like recyclable packaging, refill systems, reduced plastic consumption, and the use of recycled materials come under its purview. Hindustan Unilever's Smart Fill stations encourage container reuse, while Arata uses recycled and recyclable plastic packaging. Nat Habit has focussed on substantial post-consumer recycled content, and Beco is famous for plastic-free packaging. These initiatives reduce waste generation and helps in strengthening their environmentally responsible brand identities.

#### 5.3 Carbon Footprint and Environmental Programs

Several companies have expanded sustainability efforts beyond product attributes. Forest Essentials promotes solar-powered manufacturing, rainwater harvesting, and local sourcing. Mamaearth combines tree plantation initiatives with plastic-positive commitments, while Plum and The Body Shop emphasize responsible sourcing and sustainable operations. Such initiatives address in reducing carbon foot print, resource conservation, and environmental stewardship simultaneously.

#### 5.4 Circular Economy and Waste Upcycling

The circular economy is about maximizing resource efficiency by practicing reuse, recycling, and waste valorization. Indian brands have newly introduced innovative products utilizing coffee grounds, fruit-processing residues, rice bran, coconut waste, and recycled plastics. Refillable systems and packaging recovery programs further reduce dependence on natural resources. These practices help in transforming environmental challenges into business opportunities through sustainable innovation.

#### 5.5 Ethical Sourcing and Community Empowerment

Green marketing in India increasingly incorporates social sustainability. Companies such as Forest Essentials and Kama Ayurveda in collaboration with local artisans, farmers and rural communities ensure sustainable sourcing while generating livelihood opportunities for them. Community-based sourcing has multiple benefits for the rural economic development. It also helps to build supply-chain resilience and preserves traditional knowledge

#### 5.6 Sustainable Alternatives to Conventional Products

Many firms have already started replacing plastic-intensive products with environmentally friendly alternatives. Shampoo bars, conditioner bars, bamboo toothbrushes, reusable sanitary products, and refillable systems are widely available these days. These products reduce packaging waste and encourage responsible consumption patterns. Brands such as Earth Rhythm, Bare Necessities, Ecoo, and The Switch Fix are good examples of this transition towards low-waste personal care solutions.

#### 5.7 Green Branding and Communication

After branding, green branding has emerged as the next powerful competitive strategy. Mamaearth's "Goodness Inside" positioning, the sustainable luxury image of Forest Essentials, the vegan and cruelty-free messages of Plum and the certification-based communication of Juicy Chemistry demonstrate how sustainability can be mixed into brand identity. Eco-labels, transparency initiatives, and cause-related marketing strengthen consumer trust and brand differentiation.

#### 5.8 Digital Consumer Awareness

Digital platforms are a popular medium in educating consumers about sustainable lifestyles. Through social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and sustainability storytelling, brands can promote responsible purchasing behaviour and greater awareness of environmental issues. Such initiatives can lead to consumer engagement while reinforcing brand credibility.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Green marketing has become a crucial part of India's personal care industry. Companies are increasingly embedding sustainability into product formulation, packaging, sourcing, manufacturing, branding, and consumer engagement. The adoption of natural ingredients, recyclable packaging, circular economy practices, ethical sourcing, and environmental initiatives reflects a broader vision and a major transition towards sustainable business models. Beyond environmental benefits, these initiatives strengthen brand reputation and image, build consumer trust, and create competitive advantage over traditional companies. With the increase in environmental awareness among Indian consumers, green marketing is expected to play an even more bigger role in shaping the future development of the personal care sector.

#### 7. Managerial Implications

The findings indicate that successful green marketing requires integration of sustainability throughout the value chain rather than relying solely on promotional claims. Personal care companies should invest in eco-friendly product innovation, expand refill and recycling infrastructure, strengthen transparent sustainability reporting, adopt ethical sourcing partnerships with local communities, use digital platforms for sustainability education. develop credible certification

and eco-labeling systems to reduce consumer skepticism. These measures can improve environmental performance along with enhancing consumer trust and long-term competitiveness.

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