



La Ashley

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Skin

Background Report

2024

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For centuries, beauty standards have been changing and evolving; however, one thing that stays the same is the desire to have clear and beautiful skin. The types of skincare may change but the goal remains the same. It is a common goal among many to achieve the best looking skin. This is why we have seen all types of methods and techniques used to achieve this goal. These techniques may vary by geographic location, age, traditions, economic factors, exposure, skin types, skin textures, and even beliefs, but they all help towards building one's confidence. Beauty, confidence, and skincare go hand in hand, and this is why skincare is very important to many.

Skincare techniques have evolved and transformed over the years. Skincare and cosmetics date back to ancient Egypt. According to some, ancient Egypt has played a major role in today's beauty rituals. According to an article published by American Ostrich Farms, Ancient Egyptians introduced skincare practices that are known today, such as exfoliation. Back then they used sea salts to exfoliate their skin. They also used milk baths to moisturize their skin. This is known as Queen Cleopatra's secret to beautiful skin. To add on, they also used oils to further soften their skin and reduce inflammation.

Moreover, according to the American Ostrich Farms article, Greco-Roman archaeological research found that societies in this era would make beauty creams from animal fat, starch, frankincense (a hardened gummy material that is extracted from Boswellia tree trunks), vinegar, olive oil, and almond oil. However, these were mainly used by the rich, and those who could not afford these ingredients would use animal urine for their skincare rituals. Furthermore, women in the Renaissance had the sole goal of not only achieving blemish free skin but also a pale complexion, which at the time symbolized wealth and social status.

Later, skincare products such as vaseline and baby powder were invented in the 1800 and 1900 after the industrial revolution. According to Harpers Bazaar, this is when the skincare industry really began to take off. This rapid

growth and high demand led to the introduction of harmful skincare ingredients and this was a call for action. As a result, the introduction of the FDA (Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act) was put in place in 1938 and this was used to protect consumers from harmful products. Today, the skincare industry continues to grow rapidly with the growth and introduction of technology and ever changing beauty standards . According to an article written by Neha Mittal and published by Allied Market Research, the global skincare market was said to be valued at USD \$146.7 billion in 2021 and is projected to increase by 6.7% between 2021 to 2031 and reaching USD \$273.3 billion by the year 2031.

In recent times, the skincare industry has advanced tremendously with the rise in health consciousness in the information age. With new scientific advancements, consumers are more aware of what they are putting on their skin and the long term impacts of these ingredients. According to American Ostrich Farms, this has pushed skincare companies to change the ingredients they put in their products as consumers are now interested in products that not only give them clear skin but also have long term positive benefits. Skincare regimens have become much more complex in recent years with some even having ten step skincare routines. However, the desire to have natural based skincare is still a necessity for many today, and ancient skincare rituals are still being used today.

One ritual that is still richly relevant today especially in the black and brown communities is the use of a spice called turmeric. This spice has many benefits but one of the most well known benefits is beautiful skin. According to Aavrani, Turmeric is a spice used as an ancient ritual in Indian at marriage celebrations, it is used to bless the marriage. Turmeric is also used in the Indian communities to promote blemish free skin. It is known to clear dark marks, brighten skin, lighten hyperpigmentation, even out skin tone, reduce aging spots and more.

With this discovery came the birth of LaAshley Skin, this is Black-owned Zimbabwean based skincare company that was founded by a young entrepreneur named Ashely Guwu. She was inspired by her own skin concerns. Unfortunately most skin care products on the market in Zimbabwe are targeted towards those who wish to whiten their skin. After a long and winding search for a skin care product that would help with her skincare concerns, she finally decided to do her own research and made the ultimate decision to formulate her own skincare products that would target her skin concerns and protect her melanin. In her kitchen she started her own handmade products using turmeric, After finally gaining all the knowledge she needed using research and online courses about how to make skincare products, Ashley was able to make herself skincare products that worked for her. Miss Guwu says “it did not start off as a business idea but as a personal quest for glowing skin”. (A.Guwu 2024). However after the personal success she began getting many questions about her skin and began formulating her turmeric products for friends and family. Word quickly spread and before she knew it, LaAshley Skin was born in the year 2020. As of today LaAshley now has a wide range of products including the original turmeric set, goat milk set, Moroccan set, bath salts and even vitamin supplements. Consumers are attracted to the authenticity of the brand. The use of natural ingredients that do not whiten the skin or cause long term negative impacts is very attractive to customers. Furthermore, the prices of these products are also not outrageous yet the products are highly effective. Also, the story of how LaAshley was created is very enticing and enduring to many.

The main feature of LaAshley is the emphasis on creating natural skincare products that are simple to use but yet highly effective especially for black and brown skin. Their simplicity and attention to customer needs that led to the expansion of their product range is what makes the company special especially in an environment where there are not a lot of companies like this in the country. LaAshley is so confident in their products that they promise customers that if they do not see results within the first five weeks, customers will get their money back.

Customers are also regularly checked up on and even get a food guide that helps them create a diet that benefits their skincare journey.

After LaAshley was created, there were other similar companies that emerged however, not many were able to survive in the pandemic. However, one company that able to survive the pandemic and offer similar products LaAshley is another Black-owned, Zimbabwean owned company called Ndanaka. Ndanaka is a company that also focuses on creating products that clear hyperpigmentation, brighten skin, and clear pigmentation using natural ingredients and they also target black and brown skin. This company was founded by an aesthetician named Carol Nyazika who is also a young Zimbabwean entrepreneur. It is not clear when Ndanaka was founded however the business trended the most in 2021 with the help of big Zimbabwean influencers endorsing the products. Ndanaka also has about 4000 more Instagram followers than LaAshley which means that their outreach is significantly higher. which is a major strength for Ndanaka, however, engagement with followers is higher on the LaAshley page than the Ndanaka page with LaAshely Skin being more responsive in their comment section whereas Ndanaka barely responds to comments. Another strength that Ndanaka has is that in 2023 they introduced an online store where international customers can buy their products. LaAshley only has a physical store in Harare Zimbabwe but they do offer shipping nationwide. Ndanaka offers one skincare set that includes a honey and black soap face wash, a radiance citrus oil, and arbutin serum. Furthermore, according to their instagram page, they will be introducing natural avocado infused haircare products. LaAshley has not expanded to haircare but they do have more skincare products and ranges. Though both companies target the same consumers, they do not use the same strategies and product types with Ndanaka being heavily endorsed by Zimbabwean influence and LaAshley not having any endorsements but just customer reviews and interaction.

The story of LaAshley Skin is a story of frustration that turned into a highly productive business. It is a story of how one young lady's pursuit for beautiful skin satisfied many other people's pursuits as well. As mentioned earlier, the beauty industry has evolved tremendously. However, LaAshley Skin proved that sometimes the ancient methods of beauty were the most effective, with more knowledge about what is harmless and harmful, LaAshley Skin was able to use ancient beauty methods and elevated them to make them safe but still effective.

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