

Has your makeup been hurting the planet?

SHANUM SARKAR

We continue to unknowingly harm the planet when we don't take into account the effects of the beauty industry. With its consumers often in the dark about its consequences under the radar, the beauty industry is not far behind.

The term "fast beauty" results in confusion in almost all people, despite the term and consequences being similar to fast fashion. The lack of awareness may be partly to blame.

As of 2021, the beauty industry was estimated to be valued at over 500 billion dollars. By 2025, it is expected to grow to 800 billion. Due to massive hikes in recent years, brands are required to stay on top of the latest trends. New products are churned out at breakneck speed.

Despite growing figures, the average consumer owns a lot more products than they use on a daily basis. The rest of the beauty items collect space until they are ultimately thrown out.

Besides the amount of unsold and/or unused goods itself being a major issue, many of these beauty products are still made with unsustainable materials like microbeads, microplastics, and

palm oil. These significantly contribute to plastic pollution and deforestation.

Part of the beauty industry's waste problem also lies in its love for unnecessary, complex packaging. The beauty industry currently produces 120 billion units of packaging every year. A majority of those products are made with unrecyclable plastic.

Uniquely shaped containers, mirrors, glitter, pumps, PR packages and tiny confetti sequins make products all the more appealing. All the more difficult to recycle.

Good news, however, comes in the form of consumers who are now harnessing the power of social media to hold brands accountable for

unsustainable practices.

The growing use of social media has placed everything, from excessive plastic packaging, to unethical ingredients on the stand, under scrutiny. We are yet to see this issue acknowledged by Bangladeshi social media influencers, but in awareness lies hope.

Beyond favouring environmentally conscious and ethically sound brands in your makeup kit, what can you do about the challenges posed by fast beauty?

For starters, it helps to put our individual consumption patterns under the scanner. In everyday life, this translates into prizing quality over quantity by dialling back purchases that aren't absolutely vital to your regimen.

The issue isn't solely about what you buy. The bigger problem lies in how much you buy.

So, the next time you're toying with the idea of adding yet another glitter eyeshadow palette or purple eyeliner to your unused pile of makeup products, think about how often you'll wear it before it reaches its expiry date. And where you see it a year down the line.

If floating in the ocean poses a likely scenario, it might be a better idea to reconsider. Show the planet a little more love and pop it right where it's better off: back on the shelf.

Shanum closely resembles a raccoon, send her reasons to cut down on caffeine at shanumsarkar18@gmail.com

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

How to read a nutrition label (without being tricked)

HIYA ISLAM

A nutrition label includes details about the product but consumers most often get distracted by the flashy packaging.

Research has shown that people find products with such health claims to be healthier than those without. When in fact, these labels are usually misleading and serve as marketing gimmicks to lure people into buying. Only a careful observation of the nutrition label, placed at the back/side of the item, will reveal the actuality of the content inside.

For an average person, the label does seem baffling on first sight. A good guide is to start with the ingredients list that mentions all the constituents in the packaged food. An ingredient list longer than two or three lines suggests a highly processed food.

Ingredients are listed in descending order of weight. So, the bulk of the food is made up of the top three in this list. If these ingredients are, for example, hydrogenated oils, some type of sugar or refined grains, then the product is unhealthy to eat.

To understand if the food is loaded with sugar, sugar does not necessarily have to appear at the top. Sugar is known by many names (beet/brown/buttered/invert/date/confectioner's sugar etc.) and can also come from added syrups (honey, nectar, malt/maple/golden syrup etc.). Lesser-known sources are dextran, ethyl maltol, maltodextrin, maltose, lactose, fructose, glucose,

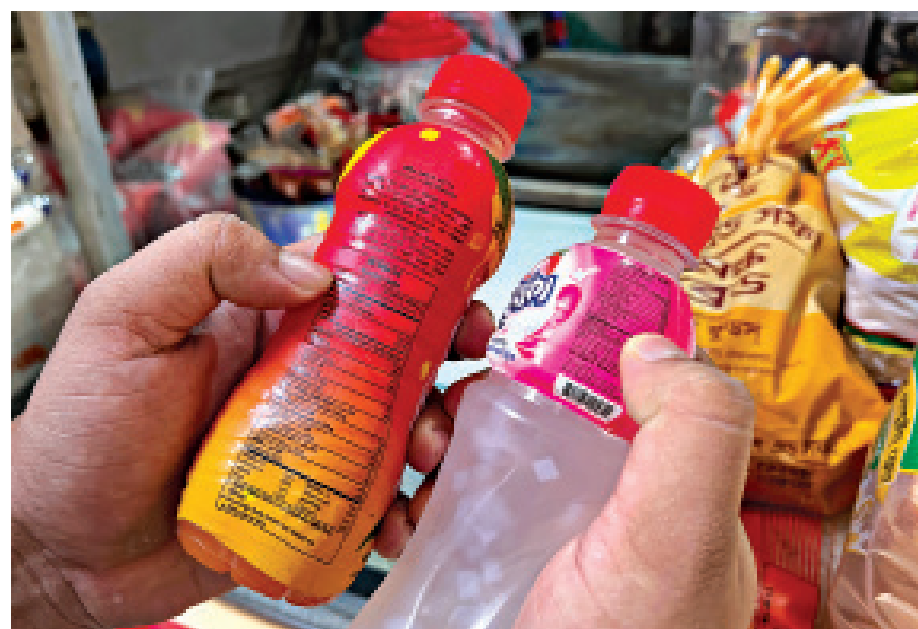


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

molasses and may appear farther down the list.

Serving sizes are another aspect most people don't understand well. The amount frequently mismatches with what people generally eat in one sitting. Therefore, the calorie intake per size is likely to be miscalculated. For a container that is actually one serving, the label may mention a total serving of four. It is important to look at how

much each serving amounts to in grams. The total calories in the packaged food equals to total servings times calories in each serving. Manufacturers opt to present information in this way to deceive customers into thinking they are eating less.

Moving on to the nutrients list that follows, scan for terms like "fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates". As a rule of thumb, 5% or less of Daily Value (DV) of a nutrient

per serving is considered low, whereas 20% or more is said to be high in content. These figures measure how much a component contributes to a 2000 calories diet, which may or may not apply to everyone.

Try to choose foods high in dietary fibre and unsaturated fats, low in saturated fats, sodium, and added sugars. Watch out for trans-fat. Manufacturers are allowed to label a nutrient as 0g if it weighs less than 0.5g in a serving. But it does serve a clue to look deeper in the ingredient list which would likely to contain partially hydrogenated oils as a source of trans-fat.

The section with vitamins and minerals is of the least concern. The efficient way to incorporate these into your diet is through a daily intake of fruits and vegetables.

There are other buzzwords that consumers fall prey to. Low-fat or non-fat products are not always good. Manufacturers replace this satiating ingredient with loads of sugar, salt or artificial flavours. Likewise, sugar-free does not necessarily mean unsweetened; many items contain a non-nutritive sweetener instead.

So, the next time you're headed to the supermarket, try spending a few minutes reading the underappreciated label at the back and you'd be surprised at how you fuel your body oh-so carelessly.

Hiya loves food that you hate by norm – broccoli, pineapple pizza and Bounty bars. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com