Waterless beauty

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Brands are reducing the water content of their products, driven both by sustainability concerns and by consumer demand for more concentrated, effective products. Last year Mintel’s key beauty trends for 2025 included water as “the new luxury,” suggesting brands need to limit dependence on it. “Being able to manufacture without water is going to become an increasing concern,” Anna-Marie Solowij, cofounder of BeautyMart, tells JWT Intelligence.

![Love Beauty and Planet](image)

L’Oréal has committed to reduce 60% of water consumption per finished product by 2020, compared to the amounts it used in 2005, and is already making efforts to reduce water consumption in its plants. Unilever has launched a water-smart initiative which aims to develop products across its brands that reduces its water footprint. The brand’s new Love Beauty and Planet collection, launched in 2018 in the United States, incorporates “fast-rinse technology” in hair conditioners so less water will be used.

One US-based startup is making waterless beauty its entire mission. Linda Treska aimed to create a brand with a meaningful purpose when she founded Pinch of Colour. Born and raised in Albania, Treska has experienced first-hand the difficulty of living with water scarcity and contamination. “One third of the world, if not more, is touched by this problem,” Treska tells JWT Intelligence. “Marrying philanthropy and passion with my beauty experience, Pinch of Colour was created. It’s the first waterless beauty brand in the market. We don’t have a competitor yet, but I do see more and more people aware.”
Pinch of Colour launched two years ago at the Indie Beauty Expo and was met with immense support by industry experts, spurring Treska to expand her collection from lipsticks to balms and tints. This September she will be launching a skin therapy waterless elixir, which is a natural face oil designed to hydrate and moisturize the skin. “There’s no need for us in this [beauty] industry to use water,” explains Treska. “It does become difficult and challenging because water is in a lot of products, but it’s not impossible.”

Water or aqua is usually the first ingredient listed on beauty products and makes up approximately 70% of lotions and creams, according to a March 2018 Telegraph article. This suggests that water is a vital ingredient, but in fact, says Treska, “the only thing water really does is add volume to the formula. It’s an
inexpensive ingredient.” In addition, bacteria can breed in water, which is one of the reasons why beauty products that contain water also contain preservatives to extend shelf life and help them perform effectively in microbial challenge testing (the study of what happens when consumers “challenge” the product by using it in non-sterile conditions).

As consumers increasingly turn to natural and clean ingredients in personal care, the addition of preservatives is being questioned. “By removing water we don’t have to use any preservatives,” explains Treska. “We are paraben free and preservative free, which is a big issue people have been talking about, as parabens are connected to a lot of sicknesses and problems.” The resulting product? “Better ingredients at a functional level and more hydrating,” says Treska.
While waterless beauty is an environmental cause for some companies, for others it’s about practicality. “We’re all travelling a lot more than we used to and it’s been 10 years since the ban was imposed on carrying more than 100 milliliters of liquid in your hand luggage,” says Solowij. “We’re only just starting to see manufacturers come up with formats that aren’t liquid. This includes more solid beauty products such as solid deodorants, moisturizers and oils.”
Milk Makeup launched its Watermelon Brightening Serum in a stick format in spring 2018, following its other solid formulas, which include Matcha Toner and Hydrating Oil sticks. In April 2018, Supergoop released its SPF 50 Glow Stick Sunscreen, which brightens skin. In June, Lush launched Slap Stick, a solid foundation available in 40 shades. “The whole stick phenomenon isn’t just a phenomenon,” says Solowij, “it’s something that has a very practical use.”
Korean beauty brands have been experimenting with waterless skincare and cosmetics for some years. Whamisa’s collection of natural, waterless and fermented products includes toners, mists, and lotions, while Frudia’s waterless products are made from organic fruit-derived extracts and the range covers moisturizers, serums and sheet masks. In April 2017, CVS Pharmacy in the US started stocking more Korean beauty brands, including Frudia’s skincare range, making aqua-free products more accessible.
The solid beauty wave was first reported in our “Future 100: 2016” edition and has since turned into part of a larger environmental concern. The World Wildlife Fund projects that two-thirds of the world’s population may face water shortages by 2025. “I think if we all, as businesses, could create processes in the manufacturing world that can recycle water or lower the usage of water, we can save a lot,” says Treska. “We can make an impact on the environment.”

For more on how brands across industries are making an effort to help the environment, look out for our upcoming Sustainability Report, launching this fall.
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