

THE POWER OF PAPERBOARD

In cosmetics packaging, sustainability is beautiful.

Consumer demand for eco-friendly options, higher recycle rates and an ever-increasing range of innovative choices are making paper-based solutions more attractive than ever in cosmetics packaging.

62%

of beauty product consumers see sustainability as more pivotal today than they did two years ago¹

The demand is there. The *need* is there. And, increasingly, the solutions are there. Sustainable packaging has become a creative force in cosmetics. And it's beautiful.

114B

units of cosmetics packaging go to landfills each year out of 120 billion produced—95% thrown away rather than recycled²

The cosmetics packaging market is huge and growing, expected to reach \$61.9 billion by 2030.³ Packaging types fall into three categories, led by bottles (45%), followed by tubes, and paper and paperboard. The dominant material used to package cosmetics today? You guessed it, plastic.

PLASTIC IS THE PROBLEM

According to the 2024 Cosmetics Packaging Report, 64.5% of all packaging produced for cosmetics products use plastic.⁵ And that, given plastic's environmental issues, is a problem.

It would be hard to find someone who has not seen images of the huge swaths of plastic waste floating in our oceans or the mountains of plastic in our landfills. It seems that pretty much everyone would agree that plastics waste is a major challenge for our environment.

The facts support the perception. More than 30 million pounds of plastics waste find their way to U.S. landfills each year.⁶ Just 14% of all plastics are sent for recycling, with a minuscule 9% actually being recycled.⁷ Compare this with paper and paperboard packaging's 81% recycle rate⁸ and we begin to see a path to solving the plastics problem.

Printed paperboard packages offer a perfect win-win for cosmetics makers and marketers—good for the environment *and* for sales.

SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING IS THE SOLUTION

Consumers want sustainable packaging while increasingly placing a high value on unique, visually appealing packaging.⁹ The global cosmetics industry has taken note, investing in innovative eco-friendly materials to replace plastic. They're also seeing the brand-building, sales-driving advantages of paper and paperboard packaging.

When it comes to replacing plastics in packaging, the human capacity for innovation is pretty amazing. For packaging types that don't lend themselves to traditional paper and paperboard packaging, packaging made from natural, recyclable materials are becoming valid options. One example is monomaterial packaging, made from a single recyclable material, which simplifies the recycling process by eliminating the need to separate different material types.¹⁰ Unilever is one major producer that's investing in this approach.

And there's biofabricated packaging made from natural materials like seaweed, algae or mushrooms that rapidly regenerate to address resource depletion, offering high biodegradability.¹¹

Another area of innovation is bioplastics. One example is polylactic acid (PLA), a compostable, biodegradable polymer derived from natural raw materials like corn, bamboo and other plant starches.¹² Coca-Cola, Nestle and Unilever are among the major consumer packaged goods companies exploring bioplastics for their product packaging.¹³

Still another approach, called bio-designed packaging, is breaking new ground using fermentation and microbial processes to create packaging that can be consumed or composted after use.¹⁴ These innovative materials, combined with paper and paperboard packaging, create a fully environmentally safe packaging solution.

PAPER AND PAPERBOARD: FOLDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO BRANDING

The inherent sustainability of paper and paperboard—from trees, a renewable resource grown in certified, sustainably managed forests; fully recyclable with high recycle rates—combines with the brand-building power of high-quality printed folding cartons to offer an earth-friendly way to drive growth for cosmetics companies.

Research makes a compelling case. A recent Memjet study showed that brands using printed boxes reported up to a 30% increase in sales due to enhanced brand visibility and consumer engagement.¹⁵ The same study indicated a significant contribution to improved consumer perception of premium quality and a 20% increase in repeat purchases.¹⁶



Other research has shown that high-quality graphics and print embellishments on boxes can contribute to a 15% increase in brand recognition¹⁷ and, in a surprising benefit to brands and sales, encourage customers to share their unboxing experience on social media, increasing organic reach by 25%.¹⁸

The conclusion? Because of growing consumer awareness and demand, sustainable packaging—including printed boxes—represents a very real opportunity for cosmetics brands to grow sales and market share. All while contributing to our planet's health and beauty!

— Source 1, 5: "Cosmetics Packaging Market Report 2024," ResearchAndMarkets, December 12, 2024

— Source 2: "Billions of Beauty Packages Go Unrecycled Every Year," The IndustryBeauty, 2024

— Source 3: "Cosmetics Packaging Market—Materials, Products and Applications," ResearchAndMarkets, 2025

— Source 4: "ResearchAndMarkets Estimates Cosmetics Packaging to Reach \$61.9 Billion by 2023," Beauty Packaging Magazine, April 25, 2025

— Source 6: EPA.gov

— Source 7: British Beauty Council, 2025

— Source 8: recyclingpartnership.org

— Source 9: "Trends in Sustainable Beauty 2023," NielsenIQ

— Source 10: "Monomaterial Packaging Market Trends," Grand View Research, 2025

— Source 11: "Biotechnology in Food Packaging Using Bacterial Cellulose," MDPI, October 20, 2024

— Source 12, 13: "6 Types of Plant-Based Packaging for Your Business Needs," Meyers, December 18, 2023

— Source 14: "Bio-Based Food Packaging Materials: A Sustainable and Holistic Approach for a Cleaner Environment," ScienceDirect, 2023

— Source 15, 16: "Corrugated Packaging: From Shipping Container to Marketing Vehicle," Memjet/Napco Research

— Source 17, 18: "What Makes Printed Boxes Stand Out at Retail?" The Boxery Blog



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