



Coloring the Cosmetic World

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Introduction

The use of color additives in cosmetic products to change, enhance or improve personal appearance can be traced back to antiquity. The most notable use of this technique can be found in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians used several naturally occurring colorants to produce color cosmetics, such as Red Ochre (iron), Malachite (copper) and Galena (lead). Some of these materials would cause much consternation today because of their toxic nature. Fortunately, the colorants used in today's decorative cosmetic products must meet strict criteria for use in all major world markets. This book will concentrate on the selection of colorants for cosmetic products in today's marketplace, based on a much better scientific understanding of the safety impact of chemicals on human physiology.

The selection of color additives for use in cosmetic products can be divided into four distinct criteria, each building upon its predecessor. The first is regulations. In order for a color additive to be acceptable for use in a cosmetic product, it must meet the regulatory requirements of the country where the product will be sold. No matter how "good" it is, a color additive is useless if it is not permitted by a country's regulations.

Once it is determined that a colorant meets the regulatory requirements of a particular country, the next area to consider is stability, both chemical and physical. In order to be useful, a colorant must not interact negatively with the other chemicals in the formula, the conditions of manufacture, the finished goods package or the environment to which the final cosmetic product will be exposed. Some of the parameters to be considered with regard to stability are other chemicals, packaging materials, heat, light, pH and humidity.

Third, once the regulatory and stability aspects are satisfied, color selection based on the desired color esthetics can be considered. This is where the cosmetic chemist can use his or her creativity to create unique color shades dictated by current fashion trends and demands. The fourth criterion relates to the third one and is economics. In today's very competitive market, there is always pressure on formulators to develop formulas in the most economical way and the selection of colorants used can have a dramatic impact on the overall cost of the formula.

Chapters 2 through 5 are each devoted, respectively, to taking a deeper look at each of these criteria. The subsequent chapters deal with other aspects of color usage, along with discussions about effect and specialty pigments.

There are dozens of colorants approved for use in cosmetic and toiletry products in the United States and in other major world markets. They come in all shapes and sizes; some are organic, some inorganic. Some natural and some synthetic. However, as a practical matter, only a small number of them are actually used on a regular basis. Regulatory restrictions, stability issues, color performance and economics narrow the field of those used considerably. In order to focus attention on the color additives that are most frequently used, the topics covered in the chapters of this book will focus specifically on those colorants.