

# Introduction

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Over the last thirty years, the personal care market has undergone many trends, embraced many fads and responded to many consumer demands. Some trends were a flash in the pan; others have come and gone many times without becoming firmly established. After all, our business is in many ways the convergence of technology and fashion. The consumer has the final say as to the direction of our market.

Some market trends become so entrenched that they become a permanent part of our industry. In past times these trends have been established by regulations and product safety. Products have ceased to be used in particular applications or have been banned in one or more applications based upon safety. A good example of this type of change in our industry is preservatives. In the 1970s, formaldehyde was an accepted, commonly used preservative. Today it is absolutely forbidden. David Steinberg; long-time expert in cosmetic preservation has often stated, “Booze and formaldehyde are the only two preservatives that nature produces!” This change in our industry is a permanent one. There is no chance that we will revert to formaldehyde as a preservative.

The move toward green, sustainable, natural products is a trend that has been growing over the years. The permanence of a particular idea or concept can only be established over a long period of time, but it is fair to say this movement will be with us for a long time.

Malcolm Gladwell, in his now classic book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* describes tipping points as points in time when “the levels at which the momentum for

change becomes unstoppable.”<sup>1</sup> I believe we are at a tipping point relative to green chemistry. This does not mean that the concept will not evolve.

As one looks at this compilation, several things become apparent:

***The concept is evolving.*** The older articles in this compilation show that the concepts of what is green was both new and not terribly clear. Even the newer articles do not show uniformity of concept.

***The definitions are developing.*** Many competing terms have been used to describe the products of interest. They include the terms “green”, “sustainable”, “renewable”, “natural”, “non-petro” and many others. What they mean, how they are used, what products can be classified in that way and by whom are topics that continue to be debated and defined.

***The target is changing.*** Is green a process or a place? In other words, do we treat green as a process of continual rethinking and re-formulation to make our product with the best green profile consistent with consumer expectations, or is there one final target that makes the product acceptable, independent of the consumer? What about cost, how much is a consumer willing to pay for the added benefit of improved greenness? How does one measure green? Will research and development actively search out and develop green products?

The consumer will ultimately determine what is successful. All these questions will be determined by the consumer and what sells in the market. Will the woman at the fashion show in Paris or New York wash her hair with soap, even if it is natural? Clearly, the product needs to meet the consumer demand, not merely be green.

Finally, it is suggested that you keep an open but skeptical mind. By that I mean question the most basic assumption. Everything needs to pass the reality test of “does it make sense?” And “will the consumer buy it?”

In a speech in Cape Town, South Africa, on June, 7 1966, Robert F. Kennedy said, “There is a Chinese curse which says, ‘May we live in interesting times’. Like it or not, we live in interesting times...” There has been some debate as to where this saying originated, but there is no debate of its accuracy. The corollary of this is “embrace interesting times, become part of them.”

**Tony O’Lenick**

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## **References**

1. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Little Brown (2000)