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PR In The News

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Jaclyn Hill and Morphe Cosmetics

Morphe is a cosmetics company known for being an affordable makeup brand along with my many collaborations they have done with well-known beauty influencers. Among those collaborations, Morphe has worked with Jeffree Star, Manny MUA, James Charles, and, one of their most successful partners, Jaclyn Hill. The initial Morphe x Hill collaboration, Jaclyn Hill Vol. 1, was a 35-pan color palette that was originally released in June of 2017 and the palettes were sold for \$39/unit and marketed as vegan and cruelty-free. Between the initial launch date and December 31, 2017, over one million palettes had been sold (Simmons 2017).

This palette was so well received that many consumers would go on to repurchase the palette after finishing the first, including a well-known YouTuber who goes by the screen name “Jen Luvs Reviews”. Jen is a popular vlogger, often posting reviews about new beauty products, including the Jaclyn Hill Vol. 1 palette. After repurchasing the Vol. 1 palette Jen noticed a significant difference in performance between her former palette (one from the initial 2017 release) and the newly purchased one (a palette from 2019 restock), so she chose to contact the Morphe customer service team regarding her concerns. The customer service team responded, insisting that there was no change in the formula; however, Jen was unconvinced and took to the Morphe webpage to examine the ingredients list for the palette (Duribe 2020). She was surprised to find that, among other new ingredients, carmine was now listed as an ingredient. Carmine is a

red dye that is derived from crushed beetles, which, causes the product to no longer be vegan-friendly.

After finding this information Jen took to her social media to spread the information about the updated ingredients listing, causing both Hill and Morphe to come under public scrutiny. Many people were unsurprised that there was more drama surrounding a release from Hill considering her previous track record. The most well-known issues surrounding Hill are the problems with the Vault Collection release and Hill's own cosmetics line's lipstick launch. In 2018 Hill created her second collaboration with Morphe called the Vault Collection that was faulted for inconsistencies amongst palettes and distribution delays (Wang 2018). The second well-known launch failure was in May 2019 when Jaclyn Cosmetics released a line of lipsticks with mold, hair, metal, and other debris found in the products (Simeon). All of that considered, the public response was less than welcoming, with many people saying that this should be expected from Hill at this point and claiming there was no way she did not know of the ingredient change.

On March 1, 2020, Morphe issued a formal statement saying that Jaclyn had been informed of Morphe's intent to adjust the formula, but the collaborators had no control over how the formulas were adjusted nor what specific ingredients were changing. While the company did direct blame from Hill, Morphe also denied any guilt saying that, "While it is common in the beauty industry to make formula adjustments... to keep up with industry standards, it is not customary to announce them" (Morphe 2020). This part specifically had consumers up in arms because while it may not be "customary" to announce changes, a product changing from vegan to non-vegan is seen as a substantial difference from consumers' personal ethical perspectives.

Shortly after Morphe's statement, Hill released her own statement (March 2, 2020) corroborating Morphe's own statement that said she had no knowledge of the specific ingredient changes. She also goes on to say that while she herself is not vegan she can empathize and is sorry to the consumers who are vegan and can no longer use these products (Hill 2020). This statement felt disingenuous to most consumers who compared it to many of her apologies in the past, one person even going as far to retweet Hill's original post and added, "How tired is Jaclyn Hill of issuing apologies do you think?" (Duribe 2020).

This all matters because beauty companies have been under fire because of a lack of transparency with ingredients being used along with where the ingredients are sourced from. It relates back to corporate social responsibility and the impact that companies have on all aspects of society including social and moral. The concept itself is a broad concept, but in relation to the beauty industry, it specifically deals with transparency issues. Increased transparency has been shown to result in increased public image and creates an overall more positive relationship between consumers and corporations. At this step, Morphe could also benefit from social corporate responsibility and transparency due to the potential to establish goodwill among consumers and repair some of the company's tarnished reputations.

References

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