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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES OF THE L'ORÉAL PARIS PRODUCTS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the article is to assess the level of implementation of the sustainable development principles of the L'Oréal Paris cosmetic products in marketing communication in Europe. L'Oréal relies on two complementary dimensions: transforming the company towards an increasingly sustainable business model and contributing to solving social and environmental challenges. First, a detailed financial-economic situation of L'Oréal Paris was performed. This was followed by a content analysis of the communications available on the Polish, French and German brand websites and the company's Facebook, Instagram and YouTube profiles in order to assess seven stages of a cosmetic product's life cycle.. The article consists of a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part uses methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison and graphical presentation of data. The practical part uses quantitative and qualitative methods. The article outlines future research direction towards continuous and clear communication between L'Oréal Paris and consumers on the level of implementation of sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: sustainable development, life cycle product assessment, marketing communication, L'Oréal

Introduction

The cosmetics industry has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, with increasing emphasis on sustainability, transparency, and eco-friendliness (Hazra et al., 2024). Consumers want to be more environmentally conscious, which is reflected in their demands for a wide range of 'green' cosmetics products on the shops' shelves (Witek et al., 2024). The beauty industry is becoming more sustainable to address consumers' concerns. According to the Regulation (2009), a cosmetic product is defined as "any substance or mixture intended to be placed in contact with the external parts of the human body (epidermis, hair, nails, lips and external genital organs) or with the teeth and the mucous membranes of the oral cavity, with a view exclusively or mainly to cleaning them, perfuming them, changing (Martins & Marto, 2023). Some cosmetics are used to maintain hygiene and help prevent diseases, as with sunscreens, which help prevent skin cancer. Cosmetics are also used to enhance personal appearance and build positive self-esteem. Green cosmetics include products thoughtfully designed, whose ingredients are natural and environmentally friendly. In sustainable manufacturing, packaging and distribution, care is taken to ensure that the production process is cruelty-free and sourcing is ethical (Shivani et al. 2024). One of the driving forces behind the rise in popularity of green cosmetics is social media. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have become powerful tools for cosmetics companies to connect with consumers, share their sustainability initiatives and build brand loyalty (Cuenca-Octavio & Llorente-Barroso, 2023; Jiménez-Marín et al., 2022; Shmygol et al., 2021). In the year 2023, L'Oréal's market share in Europe was estimated to amount to about 20 percent, and consolidated sales in that region reached a value of over 13 billion euros (Statista, n.d.). Moreover, around 45% of L'Oréal's product portfolio is sustainable, to reach 60% by 2025, and 55% of consumers consider a brand's sustainability practices when making purchasing decisions (Souza, 2024).

Marketing communication, a key instrument of any company's marketing strategy, provides information about the company, its products, features, prices and places to buy, shapes customer needs, attitudes and behaviour, stimulating demand (Taranko, 2015). Marketing communication has an informational, persuasive and reminder function, reducing barriers to accessing the offer, building the buyer's experience with the product, driving consumer engagement and improving the company's competitive position (Wiktor, 2013).

The European cosmetics industry is using different sustainability approaches to address the environmental challenges, such as biodegradable ingredients, thermal renewable energy shares, emission reporting and sustainable procurement guidelines for non-renewables. To improve the communication of the European cosmetics industry, it is of high importance to increase transparency, the availability and quality of information, and to frame communication to its consumers around appropriate strategic business goals (European Chemicals Agency, 2022; Sahota, 2014).

Nowadays, the European cosmetics industry creates 2 million jobs, with a majority (80%) working indirectly in the value chain (Cosmetics Europe, 2020). Seven global players dominate the cosmetics market, managing 182 cosmetic brands worldwide. With increasing demand for sustainable products, cosmetic companies know they need to act and report on their sustainability activities. Furthermore, sustainability is increasingly perceived as a competitive advantage, bringing new business opportunities (Fischer, 2017).

An overview of the literature

In today's rapidly changing, overpopulated world, resources are being depleted, the climate is changing, and sustainability is being challenged. Nevertheless, concrete efforts are underway to ensure there is a return to equilibrium. In 2015, all member states of the UN adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which provides guidelines for the prosperity of people and the planet. This agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which acknowledge that sustainable development must balance environmental, social, and economic domains, and that action in one will affect the others (United Nations, 2015; Council of the European Union, n.d.). Relevant documents for the sustainability performance of the cosmetics industry in the EU are Directive 2014/95/EU (NFRD) on non-financial reporting and Directive 2022/2464/EU (CSRD) on corporate sustainability reporting.

Sustainable development is a challenge in solving environmental, economic and social problems requiring sustained and consistent changes in political, economic and technical orientations (Ejdys & Szpilko, 2022; Sukiennik et al., 2017). It is a consciously shaped process requiring reorganisation in institutional structures, behavioural patterns of producers, consumers and the behaviour of societies (Zielińska-Chmielewska, 2020). To emphasise Cosmetics Europe with its Commit for Our Planet programme, encourages all actors in the cosmetics industry, from small and medium-sized enterprises to large corporations, to take part in joint action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve packaging solutions and act for nature (Bielski et al., 2021). To this end, a dedicated Extranet has been set up, newsletters are being issued, and information meetings, webinars, conferences and other social media communication activities are being organised (Cosmetics Europe, 2020).

Companies are forced to simultaneously pursue sustainability in three aspects, i.e. economic, social and environmental (Jelonek & Walentek, 2022; Lavuri et al., 2021; Zielińska-Chmielewska, 2020). Jeurissen and Elington (2000) define sustainability as 'the principle of ensuring that our actions today do not limit the range of economic, social and environmental options available to future generations'. In contrast, Savitz and Weber (2006) believe that sustainability is the art of doing business in an interdependent world, and a sustainable corporation is one that generates profits for its shareholders while protecting the environment and improving the quality of life of those with whom it interacts. Haller et al. (2020) point out that 60% of consumers are willing to change the way they buy to reduce the environmental impact of their choices. Furthermore, 80% claimed that sustainability is important for them and were willing to pay more for sustainable and environmentally friendly brands. Moreover, consumers are willing to purchase safe and high-quality products that have a good impact on the environment as well as on human and animal well-being (Witek et al., 2024).

Taking environmental measures by a processing enterprise requires paying attention to such issues as (European Commission, 2022) a) if the costs of using environmental resources and services are not borne by those who generate these costs, then market prices convey false information to producers and consumers, b) preventing environmental damage is cheaper and more effective than restoring the environment to its pre-damage state after it has been destroyed, c) as much as 70% of the waste and harmful emissions produced by industry can be prevented at their very sources, d) around 20-25% reduction in emissions can be achieved without major financial outlays.

The authors found current, inspiring contributions to the issue of systematisation of the environmental efficiency of the cosmetics industry (Godawska, 2021; Witek et al., 2024; Withisuphakorn et al., 2019). Filipiak and Jasińska (2018) carried out a multi-faceted classification of the concept and measurement of effectiveness. The authors found a research gap in the form of various attempts (Kemp et al., 1998; Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989) to quantify the level of implementation of sustainable development principles in marketing communication in the cosmetics industry.

The scientific novelty is the presentation of the implementation of sustainable development principles based on seven stages of life cycle product assessment in marketing communication of the L'Oréal cosmetic products in Poland, France and Germany in 2024. The reason for taking under the analysis the L'Oréal company is the fact that it is No. 1 in beautyworldwide, 41.18 billion Euros in Sales, 8.14 billion Euros in operating profit, peresnt in more than 150 countries, including 37 global brands, 610 patent filed in 2023, hiring more than 90 000 employees (WWD, 2024) with 20% market share in Europe and increased share of sustainable products from 45% to 60% by 2025 (L'Oréal, 2023a). **The practical novelty** is the presentation of the level of implementation of the product environmental and social impact of the L'Oreal cosmetic product.

The article undertakes three research objectives: theoretical, empirical and applicative. **The theoretical goal is** to systematise knowledge of the concept, role and importance of sustainability in financial and non-financial data sets and messages in the cosmetics market.

The empirical goal is to select and present quantitative and qualitative measures for assessing environmental efficiency. **The applicative goal is** to formulate clear and comprehensible marketing communication of L'Oreal Paris to its consumers to improve the environmental and social impact of purchased cosmetic products.

In order to carry out the study, the following research question has been stated: What is the level of communication on the environmental and social impact of the L'Oréal Paris cosmetics products in Poland, France and Germany? On the basis of the theoretical analysis and empirical results of previous studies, a thesis (T_1) was accepted for verification: The higher the level of implementation of

sustainable development principles in L'Oréal, the more comprehensible, multivaried and multichanneled marketing communication should be.

Research methods

To assess a multifaced issue of the environmental efficiency, triangulation of methods and tools have been implemented. First, an overview of the financial-economic situation of the L'Oréal was undertaken. Second, quantitative methods, such as: research desk analysis, the content analysis on the implementation of sustainable life cycle principles of the cosmetic products of the L'Oréal Paris. As a result of the literature review the thesis has been stated. It is a specific cognitive form which fulfils theoretical functions by providing a particular image of reality and practical functions in conducting empirical research. The study met the criterion of representativeness because all available subject literature was analyzed. Primary data included all available financial, non-financial data sets available online by L'Oréal from 2013 to 2023.

The basic criterion for a research selection sample were: a) subject of conducted activity according to PKD 2007 [PKD – Polish Classification of Business Activities] – classes 20.41 Z, 20.42 Z, b) location in the EU, c) keeping financial statements between 2013 to 2023. The study compares the Polish market with the largest players in the market in 2023, which includes Germany 1st place (15.9 billion Euros) and France 2nd place (13.7 billion Euros), which is also the home of the L'Oréal brand (Polski Związek Przemysłu Kosmetycznego & WiseEuropa, 2024).

Financial analysis is the process of using financial information to assist in investment and financial decision making (Sektorowe wskaźniki finansowe, 2022). Financial analysis helps managers with efficiency analysis and identification of problem areas within the company (Zaleska, 2012).

Content analysis involves identifying and describing the linguistic features of texts in order to explain the non-linguistic properties of their authors, such as: attitudes, judgements and intentions (Carlson et al., 2013; Krippendorff, 2013; Coop Innovation Project, 2015). Although qualitative and quantitative research are equally valuable, the choice of content analysis when carrying out research of a non-measurable, unobservable and relatively new phenomena is the right choice (Escher, 2011; Maison, 2010) due to the fact that it has the greatest practical potential to take into account the 'context of discovery' (Konecki, 2000). The paper uses a proprietary method of brands' websites and social media profiles (Malinowska, 2020; Malinowska, 2024). In the first step, national websites of L'Oréal Paris in the Polish, French and German languages, according to a hierarchy and content category key, such as words and sentences related to the communication of the implementation of the cosmetic product life cycle principles, were searched. As the study showed the least brand communication activity on the Polish L'Oréal Paris website, the authors decided to deepen the search on the social networks: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube available for a Polish consumer. The official Polish L'Oréal Paris fanpage (Facebook) and YouTube are profiles run for Polish consumers, and L'Oréal Paris' Instagram is an international profile with a Polish translation of content. The study lasted between 1.07 to 31.08.2024, covered 7 websites and 831 posts, reels, short films and videos on the brands' profiles between 1.01 to 31.08.2024. The analysis allowed to collect of quantitative data, such as: number of posts, reels, shorts and films, likes, comments, shares, and views of reels published in the analysed period. These measures of internet users' engagement with the brand indicate their interest in a given post, likes, comments and shares. The content analysis assessed L'Oréal Paris' marketing activities and made it possible to estimate the engagement of message audiences. The study met the requirements of a full (representative) survey, as it covered all available public L'Oréal Paris websites operating in the three European countries and all available public Polish L'Oréal Paris social media. Analyses were conducted in spreadsheets, a survey report was produced, and findings were grouped.

Results of the research

L'Oréal S.A. is a holding company with its head office in France. It provides strategic coordination, particularly for brands, research, innovation and technical coordination for the L'Oréal Group throughout the world. It performed a sales activity to the companies L'Oréal France and L'Oréal International Distribution (L'Oréal, 2023a).

The cosmetics industry is one of the largest creative industries in the world (Jones, 2011). The economic and financial performance of L'Oréal SA testified to a good and secure economic situation. In 2023, L'Oréal generated a record net profit of more than 6,19 billion Euros, which was 52.2% higher than in 2013. In the period 2013-2023, net sales of all L'Oréal products have increased from 22,976 to 41,182 billion Euros, which means 44.3%. Current liabilities have risen from 6,594 billion Euros (2013) to 14,899 billion Euros (2023). Such a good financial performance suggests a skilful repayment of current liabilities (Table 1). In 2023 L'Oréal S.A. with more than 90,000 employees, a balanced geographical footprint and sales across all distribution networks (e-commerce, mass market, department stores, pharmacies, perfumeries, hair salons, branded and travel retail) generated sales amounting to 41,18 billion Euros. With 20 research centres across 11 countries around the world and a Research and Innovation team of 4,000 scientists and 6,400 Digital talents, L'Oréal is focused on inventing the future of beauty as a Beauty Tech powerhouse (L'Oreal Paris, n.d. b).

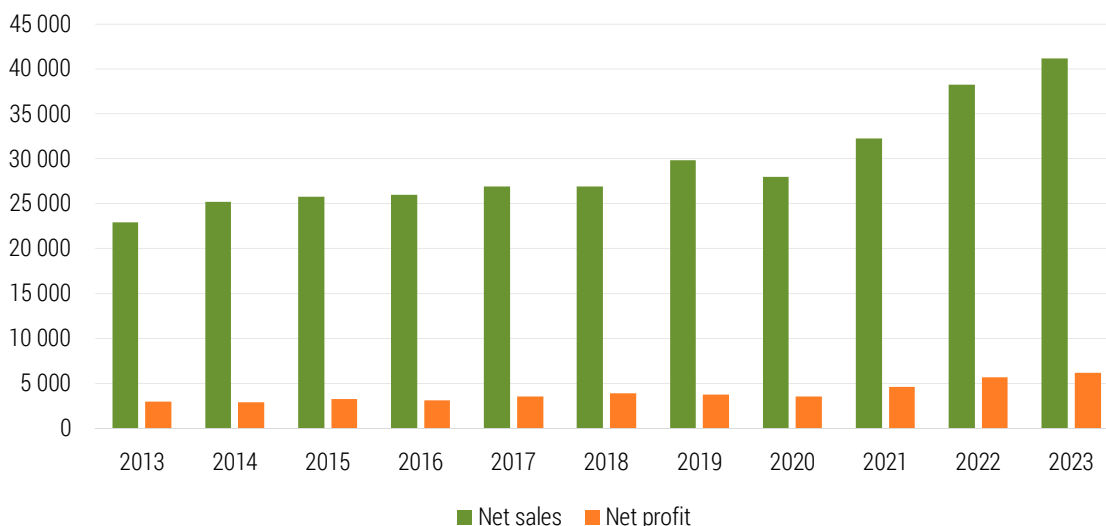


Figure 1. Values of net sales and net profit of L'Oréal worldwide in 2013-2023 (€ millions)

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Finance (n.d.) compared consolidated balance sheets between 2013-2023.

Research and development expenses contain a systematic activity of L'Oréal in order to discover solutions to new or existing problems to create or update goods and services. Especially companies in the industrial, technological, health care, and pharmaceutical sectors have the highest levels of research and development expenses (Investopedia, n.d.) (Figures 1, 2).

L'Oréal reinvests a significant portion of its profit back into research and development as a sustainable investment in its continued growth. In 2014, there was a drastic decrease in advertising and promotional spending related to the entry into force of mandatory reporting of environmental targets by cosmetics market companies (Figures 1, 2).

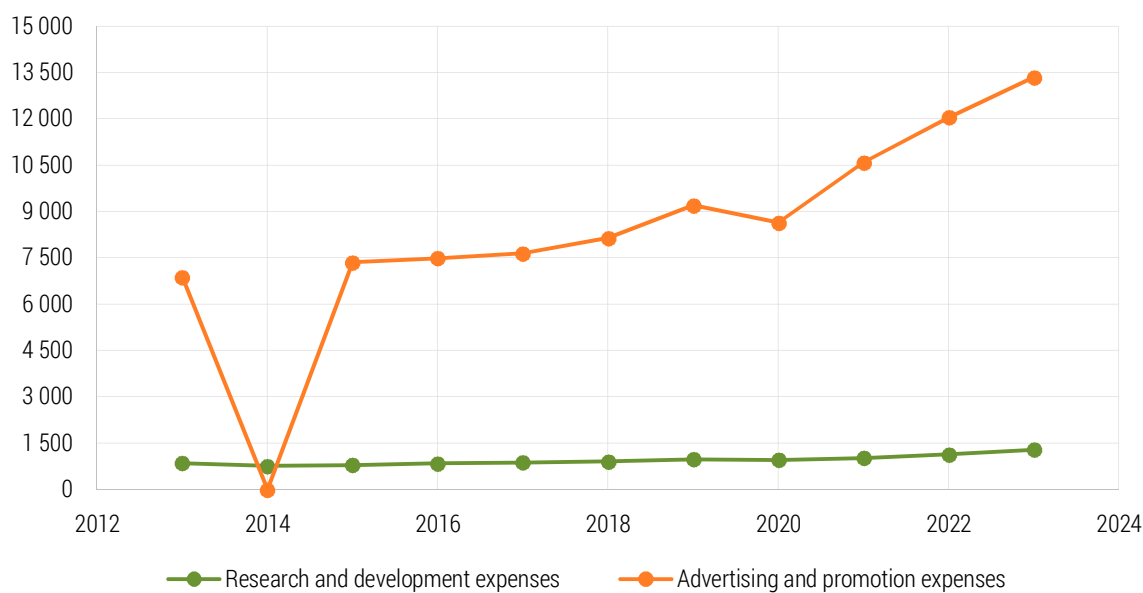


Figure 2. Values of the expenses on research and development and advertising and promotion in L'Oréal worldwide in 2013-2023 (€ millions)

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Finance (n.d.) compared consolidated balance sheets between 2013-2023.

Table 1. Key financial data of the L'Oréal Paris brand worldwide in 2013-2023 (€ millions)

No.	Specification	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1.	Net sales	22,976.6	22,532.0	25,257.4	25,837.1	26,023.7	26,927.4	29,873.6	27,992.1	32,287.6	38,260.6	41,182.5
2.	Cost of sales	6,601.8	6,500.7	7,277.4	7,341.7	7,359.2	7,331.6	8,064.7	7,532.3	8,433.3	10,577.4	10,767.0
3.	Gross profit	16,374.8	16,031.3	17,980.0	18,495.4	18,664.5	19,605.8	21,808.9	20,459.8	23,854.3	27,683.3	30,415.5
a)	Research and development	857.0	760.6	794.1	849.8	877.1	914.4	985.3	964.4	1,028.7	1,138.6	1,288.9
b)	Advertising and promotion	6,886.2	6,558.9	7,359.6	7,498.7	7,650.6	8,144.7	9,207.8	8,647.9	10,591.0	12,059.0	13,356.6
c)	Selling, general and administrative expenses	4,756.8	4,821.1	5,438.6	5,607.0	5,460.5	5,624.7	068.3	5,638.5	6,074.2	7,028.8	7,626.7
4.	Operating profit	3,874.8	3,890.7	4,387.7	4,539.9	4,676.3	4,922.0	5,547.5	5,209.0	6,160.3	7,456.9	8,143.3
5.	Operational profit	3,739.6	3,583.5	4,194.3	3,996.1	4,400.0	4,827.3	5,111.0	4,500.0	5,728.3	7,215.4	7,693.4
6.	Net profit	2,961.4	4,908.6	3,298.5	3,108.7	3,585.5	3,899.5	3,755.2	3,567.6	4,602.2	5,712.6	6,190.5
7.	Total assets	31,298.3	32,058.8	33,711.3	35,630.2	35,339.1	38,457.5	43,809.8	43,606.9	43,013.4	46,844.2	51,855.1
8.	Equity	22,642.8	20,617.0	23,617.0	24,504.0	24,818.5	26,933.6	29,426.0	28,998.8	23,592.6	27,186.5	29,081.6
9.	Current liabilities	6,594.6	9,266.3	8,173.7	9,207.3	9,173.4	10,111.6	10,868.5	11,130.1	16,583.2	13,719.6	14,899.7

* net profit + amortization.

** investements in relation to depreciation.

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Finance (n.d.) compared consolidated balance sheets between 2013-2023: L'Oréal (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2022, 2023a).

Table 2. Presentation of the life cycle phases of the cosmetic products of the L'Oréal Paris brand analysed between Polish, French and German websites

The life cycle phases of a cosmetic product	Polish website of L'Oréal Paris	French website of L'Oréal Paris	German website of L'Oréal Paris
Design and development	●	●	●
Ingredient selection	●	●	●
Production	●	●	●
Packaging	●	●	●
Distribution	●	●	●
Consumer use	●	●	●
Post-use	●	●	●

Explanation:

- Large number of messages of the environmental content (7-10 messages).
- Medium number of messages of the environmental content (4-6 messages).
- Small number of messages of the environmental content (1-3 messages).
- No messages of the environmental content (0 messages).

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Poland (n.d.), L'Oréal Paris France (n.d.) and L'Oréal Paris Germany (n.d.).

Table 2 shows that the L'Oréal Paris websites convey the most information on sustainability issues in France, which may be due to the fact that L'Oréal Paris pay higher attention to a French customer as the French headquarters of the company manages the communications to other markets. The L'Oréal Paris communication strategy is that regardless of the country's origin of a consumer, he/she are informed in the same way everywhere. Furthermore, there is little variation in the amount of content as the information has been tailored to a consumer in each country. A common feature of all analysed websites is the presentation of "L'Oréal for the Future, Because our Planet is Worth it", a relevant programme in terms of sustainable development. Moreover, the language in which messages are conveyed to an average consumer has significant informational value. The L'Oréal Paris websites usually use the language of the country's origin of a consumer. A difference emerges when a consumer views the accompanying video, the research methodology and company's reports. A French consumer is most informed in this aspect, having access to the French-language, most up-to-date Sustainability report of 2023 (L'Oréal, 2023b). A German consumer has an access to the German language, most up-to-date Sustainability report of 2023 (L'Oréal, 2023c), the appendices, f. ex. the research methodology are presented in German but the videos are in German or English. A Polish consumer is least informed, as he/she can only read the outdated Sustainability report of 2021 (L'Oréal, 2021b) in English and view or read other attached videos or methodologies only in English.

Although the authors have fully analysed and evaluated all stages of the product life cycle, the article presents the production, packaging and consumer use phase due to the fact that they were characterised by the highest number of messages of the environmental content.

Table 3 explains that a French and a German consumer obtain the most information, while a Polish one can learn some of the most important facts about responsible factories, closed water cycles in factories, use of renewable energy or the carbon neutrality of factories. The content conveyed is accompanied by important cut-off dates: 2025 and 2030, which are linked to the goals set out in The Agenda of Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015), in particular: Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation, Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, Goal 15. Protect, restore and pro-

mote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Table 3. Production phase of the cosmetic products of the L'Oréal Paris brand analyzed between Polish, French and German websites

Polish website of L'Oréal Paris	French website of L'Oréal Paris	German website of L'Oréal Paris
An increasing number of responsible production facilities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, waste generation year on year as well as contribute to the development of local employment, particularly for the economically disadvantaged, and, in these facilities, access to employee training is increased		
Introduction of visible changes to reduce the environmental impact of production and support customers in moving towards responsible consumption		
By 2030, closed water cycle (so called waterloop) in all factories		
By 2025, 100% renewable energy use in factories		
By 2025, carbon-neutral factories		
No message provided	Adaptation of production tools and industrial facilities to meet targets for sustainable and safe formulations with high quality, reduced packaging and transport	
	Development of a green energy solution, self-producing energy (in Mexico and Belgium) working with local authorities and external companies that give access to local green energy production	
	Sustainable conversion of inputs in factories to offer consumers more responsible products along the value chain	

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. c), L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. d), L'Oréal Paris Poland (n.d. b), L'Oréal (2023c), L'Oréal Paris Germany (n.d. a), L'Oréal Paris France (n.d.) and L'Oréal Paris France (n.d. b).

Table 4. Packaging phase of the cosmetic products of the L'Oréal Paris brand analyzed between Polish, French and German websites

Polish website of L'Oréal Paris	French website of L'Oréal Paris	German website of L'Oréal Paris
Reduction of the amount of packaging and replacing all materials used with better substitutes, introduction of new packaging sizes to reduce the use of plastics and replacing primary plastic with recycled or bio-based materials		
Paper and cardboard used in product packaging and leaflets come only from responsibly managed forests that protect biodiversity. All paper and cardboard used are certified by FSC™ (ang. Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (ang. Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification).		
By 2025, 100% of plastic packaging will be refillable, recyclable, reusable or compostable		
100% of shampoo and conditioner bottles (excluding caps) are made from recycled plastic, saving 6,000 tonnes of primary plastic each year		
Intensification of activities related to the transition to a closed loop economy		
Commitment from ingredient and component suppliers to adhere to the UN's core principles on labour standards		
Designing smaller and/or lighter packaging using more recycled materials		
By 2030, the use of 100% recycled materials to eliminate the use of primary plastic in packaging	Demonstration of eco-packaging strategies: 1) reducing the weight and size of packaging, 2) rechargeable systems, 3) refillable packaging, 4) reusable packaging, 5) replacing single doses of a product with multiple doses, 6) use of post-consumer recycled materials (ang. PCR), 7) use of renewable materials, e.g. organically grown plastics, 8) recycling and improved recyclability of packaging	
No message provided	Acceleration of the transition to a circular economy by optimising packaging	
	By 2030 compared to 2019, reduction of product packaging by 20%	

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Poland (n.d.), L'Oréal Paris France (n.d.) and L'Oréal Paris Germany (n.d.).

Table 4 highlights that a French and a German consumer have access to more messages. Nevertheless, a Polish consumer is familiar with eco-packaging strategies, reducing the amount, weight and size of packaging, replacing primary plastic with recycled materials, using refill systems, and moving towards a circular economy through packaging optimisation. Similarly to communication about sustainable development in terms of production, also in the case of packaging, the content conveyed is related to valid deadlines such as 2025 or 2030, which are related to the goals set out in The Agenda of Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

Table 5 indicates that the messages are very similar, both in terms of quantity and quality of the content. The most significant information is the detailed presentation of a product's environmental impact labelling system at each stage of the life cycle. A consumer can more easily make an environmentally friendly purchase by reading information about a given cosmetic.

Table 5. Consumer use phase of the cosmetic products of the L'Oréal Paris brand between analysed Polish, French and German websites

Polish website of L'Oréal Paris	French website of L'Oréal Paris	German website of L'Oréal Paris
Development of an environmental product assessment tool to help inform and encourage consumers to consume more sustainably and make more planet-friendly choices		
A consumer is provided with transparent access to information on the environmental impact of the product so that they can treat the planet with greater care when choosing their products		
A detailed presentation of the product environmental impact labeling system at each stage of the life cycle, based on the assessment methodology developed by the L'Oréal Group, taking into account 14 factors of impact on the planet. These impacts are presented in the form of A to E metrics (A-rated products have the lowest overall environmental impact, while E-rated products have the highest overall environmental impact). This data is available and located on the brand's product information websites. Carbon footprint and water footprint are particularly highlighted as they account for on average two thirds of the total environmental impact of cosmetic products		
Offering sustainable consumption options, e.g. water-free cleansing products and other rinse-free products that can be used without pre-washing, as well as increasing the rinseability of shampoos and conditioners		

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. c), L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. d), L'Oréal Paris Poland (n.d. b), L'Oréal (2023c), L'Oréal Paris Germany (n.d. a), L'Oréal Paris France (n.d.) and L'Oréal Paris France (n.d. b).

Tables 6 and 7 proved that there is a high disproportion between the overall number of Facebook followers, Instagram and YouTube profile subscribers. The L'Oréal Paris fanpage (Facebook) has the highest number of followers, but due to the low activity in the form of posts and reels, users' engagement is nearly 1,000 times lower in terms of likes, 30 times lower in terms of comments and 260 times lower in terms of views in comparison to Instagram profile of the brand. In the analysed period, the activity of the brand was the greatest on Instagram profile, reaching 100 posts and/or reels in a month in comparison to Facebook profile – with nearly 3 posts or reels in a month, and YouTube – with 1 video in month. The highest level of fan engagement was recorded on Instagram profile, where 802 post and reels were published, 4,515 interactions per post/reel (4,407 likes and 108 comments) were recorded in comparison to low-activity Facebook profile with 305 interactions per post and/or reel (169 likes and 136 comments).

Concluding, between 1.01-31.08.2024, L'Oréal Paris communicated more than a dozen sustainability messages relating to the life cycle of cosmetics on its Instagram profile, while there were no messages on Facebook or YouTube. The only messages relating to corporate social responsibility are those on social campaigns (Stand UP, Lessons of Worth) available only on Facebook and Instagram profiles. An analysis of the profile on Instagram showed a small number of posts/videos (15 out of 802 published during the period analysed) on sustainability issues in relation to the life cycle of cosmetics. Most of the included information available on Instagram were similar as the content described in the ingredient selection, production, packaging and consumer use phase of the cosmetics products of the L'Oréal Paris brand (see also Table 3, 4, 5) and coincided with the cut-off years for the cosmetic industry, i.e. 2025 and 2030, due to the need for the industry to comply with the requirements enshrined in European environmental commitments.

Table 6. Communication activity of the L'Oréal Paris brand and Internet user engagement on its company profiles (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) in the term of 01.01.2024 – 31.08.2024

Social media	No. of followers/ subscribers	No. of posts/ reels/shorts/ videos	No. of likes of posts/ reels/ shorts/videos	No. of comments with replies	No. of shares	No. of reels/ shorts/ videos views
Facebook	35,000,000	21	3,552	2,875	141	484,320
Instagram	11,000,000	802	3,535,025	87,247	n/a ¹	127,761,800
YouTube	17,800	8	131	17	n/a ¹	1,309,725

¹ no publicly visible information on the number of shares of posts or videos (Instagram, YouTube) (information available only for business and creative accounts).

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. a), L'Oréal Paris (n.d. a) and L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. b).

Table 7 tells that the L'Oréal Paris brand on its Instagram profile encourages its fans to read the Product Environmental Score with an explanation of the methodology calculating. All communicated content appeared on the L'Oréal Paris profile on Instagram and happened on very important days, such as Environment Day and International Recycling Day. Almost every post or reel contains this one-sentence message: *L'Oréal Paris has been committed to beauty without animal testing for more than 30 years, indicating that safety and the protection of animal rights and the use of alternative testing methods are very important in the brand's activities.*

Table 7. Topics of the messages provided in the form of posts, reels, shorts and videos on the L'Oréal Paris brand profiles (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) between 1.01-31.08.2024

Social media	Topics of posts and reels on the company profile of the brand
Facebook	Presentation of social campaigns (Stand UP, Lessons of Worth); information and participation in an event; introduction and cooperation with an ambassador; content behind-the-scenes; invitation to a meeting with an expert; beauty tips and tutorials; competition; new product presentation; questions to engage the fans; cosmetics advertisement
Instagram	Celebrity collaborations; content behind-the-scenes; beauty tips and tutorials; product launches and reviews; social campaigns (Stand UP, Lessons of Worth); sustainability and social responsibility; cosmetics advertisement and advices; expert's statement/advice; brand ambassador cosmetics recommendation; model or influencer; consumers' opinion on a product; Lights on Women's Worth podcasts; an event brand participation
YouTube	Social campaign (Lessons of Worth) and new product presentation; skin care and hair care tips; experts' advices; beauty tips and tutorials

Source: authors' work based on L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. a), L'Oréal Paris (n.d. a) and L'Oréal Paris Polska (n.d. b).

Conclusions

The article's results made it possible to draw conclusions about the assessment of the environmental efficiency of the L'Oréal Paris cosmetic products via marketing communication in Poland, France and Germany in 2024. The conclusions from the research can be presented in three ways. **In the context of the literature review:** introduction and systematisation of the concepts and definitions of sustainability, product life cycle principles, product environmental and social impact labeling of the L'Oréal Paris cosmetics products. **From the scientific point of view:** on a thesis level, which has been confirmed. **From the practical point of view:** A French consumer has access to full information in French about sustainability on the L'Oréal Paris websites and social media profiles. Unfortunately, the Polish consumer has little information at his disposal, which calls for corrective action on the part of the company, especially when developing cooperation with the generation of young consumers.

Recommendations

L'Oréal should be encouraged by the results of the study to maximise the role of social media in promoting sustainable life cycle principles of the cosmetic products. In order to accelerate the efforts for higher environmental efficiency, the L'Oréal Paris should use social media to advocate for sustainable practices beyond product promotion. Establish cooperation with influencers and environmental activists to bring the paradigm of sustainability to the doorstep and continuously educate consumers about the benefits of sustainable life cycle principles as well as the environmental and social impact of new era cosmetic products. With the implementation of Directive 2022/2464/EU (CSRD) on corporate sustainability reporting, more and more cosmetics companies are obliged to provide projections and impact assessments of their activities in short, medium and long-term and the integration of the company's strategy with long-term climate policy objectives of the European Union.

The limitations set a potential direction for future research. Firstly, it is worth conducting future studies using cosmetic products from other market-leading companies. Secondly, a systemic improvement in data collection can contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of environmental performance. Thirdly, for a variety of reasons, not all consumers will follow a company's activities on social media.

Acknowledgements

Supported by funds granted by the Minister of Science of the Republic of Poland under the „Regional Initiative for Excellence” Programme for the implementation of the project “The Poznań University of Economics and Business for Economy 5.0: Regional Initiative – Global Effects (RIGE)”.

The contribution of the authors

Conceptualisation, A.Z.C. and P.M.; literature review, A.Z.C. and P.M.; methodology, A.Z.C. and P.M.; formal analysis, P.M. and A.Z.C.; writing, P.M., A.Z.C. and I.O.; conclusions and discussion, A.Z.C., P.M. and I.O.

The authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript

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WDROŻENIE ZASAD ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU PRODUKTÓW L'ORÉAL PARIS W KOMUNIKACJI MARKETINGOWEJ W EUROPIE

STRESZCZENIE: Celem artykułu jest ocena poziomu wdrożenia zasad zrównoważonego rozwoju produktów kosmetycznych L'Oréal Paris w komunikacji marketingowej w Europie. Aktywność L'Oréal opiera się na dwóch uzupełniających się wymiarach: transformacji firmy w kierunku coraz bardziej zrównoważonego modelu biznesowego oraz rozwiązywaniu wyzwań społecznych i środowiskowych. Na wstępie dokonano szczegółowej analizy ekonomiczno-finansowej L'Oréal. Następnie przeprowadzono analizę treści komunikatów dostępnych na polskiej, francuskiej i niemieckiej stronie internetowej marki oraz profilach firmowych na Facebooku, Instagramie i YouTube pod kątem wdrożenia zasad zrównoważonego rozwoju w postaci oceny siedmiu etapów cyklu życia produktu kosmetycznego. W części teoretycznej wykorzystano metody analizy, syntezy, porównania i graficznej prezentacji danych. W części praktycznej zastosowano metody ilościowe i jakościowe. Artykuł nakreśla przyszły kierunek badań w kierunku ciągłej i jasnej komunikacji L'Oréal Paris z konsumentami na poziomie wdrażania zrównoważonego rozwoju.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: zrównoważony rozwój, ocena cyklu życia produktu, komunikacja marketingowa, L'Oreal