



# DEPICTING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COSMETICS INDUSTRY

## A MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LEADING NEWS SOURCES



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### BACKGROUND

#### The Media

- The media possesses a “major influence on the focus of public attention, the specific issues that members of the public regard as most priority” as well as the ability to direct the public’s attention towards specific aspects of those issues (McCombs, 2008).
- This influencing ability is referred to as the **AGENDA-SETTING ROLE** of the media, which determines which issues are viewed as relevant or not (McCombs, 2008).
- As an observing and reporting agent, the media also serves as an important source of information whose influence can shape public opinion and underlying sentiment (Sen, 2011).
- For companies, the media can operate as a **GOVERNANCE CONTROL MECHANISM** that regularly evaluates firms and its leaders, thus prompting organizations to act if pressure builds up (M. Bednar, 2012).
- Over the years, the media has had a critical role in raising consumer awareness around the sustainability aspects of cosmetic products (Sahota, 2013).

#### Sustainability aspects in a cosmetic’s lifecycle

- DESIGN:** design considerations, especially raw material selection, determine most of the environmental impact of a cosmetic product (Bom et al., 2020).
- SOURCING:** unsustainable production methods of raw materials risk environmental, social and ethical issues in the supply chain (Himeno, 2018).
- MANUFACTURING:** product manufacturing concerns workers’ health and safety, plants’ energy and water usage, waste generation, and transport emissions (Bom et al., 2019).
- PACKAGING:** reliance on plastics for packaging has led to environmental pollution and death of marine life (Sahota, 2013).
- DISTRIBUTION:** combustion of fossil fuel during this phase contributes to climate change (Bom et al., 2019).
- CONSUMER USE:** environmental impact depends on the type of product being used (cleansing products, rinse-off products, leave-on products) (Cosmetics Europe, 2012).
- POST-CONSUMER USE:** concerns around the circularity of plastic packaging waste (Sahota, 2013).

### KEY DEFINITION

- COSMETICS:** “any substance or mixture intended to be placed in contact with the external parts of the human body (epidermis, hair system, nails, lips, and external genital organs) or with teeth and the mucous membranes of the oral cavity with a view exclusively or mainly to cleaning them, perfuming them, changing their appearance, protecting them, keeping them in good condition or correcting body odors” (European Commission, 2009).

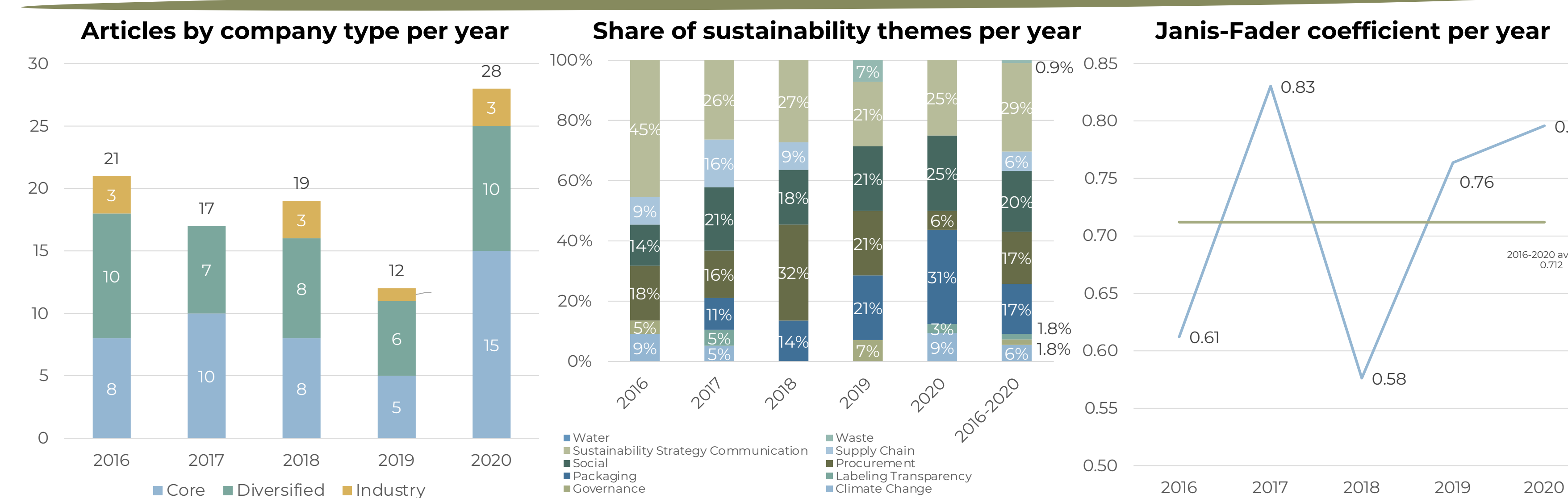
### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to provide a **DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS** of sustainability-related news coverage in the cosmetics industry through a media content analysis.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

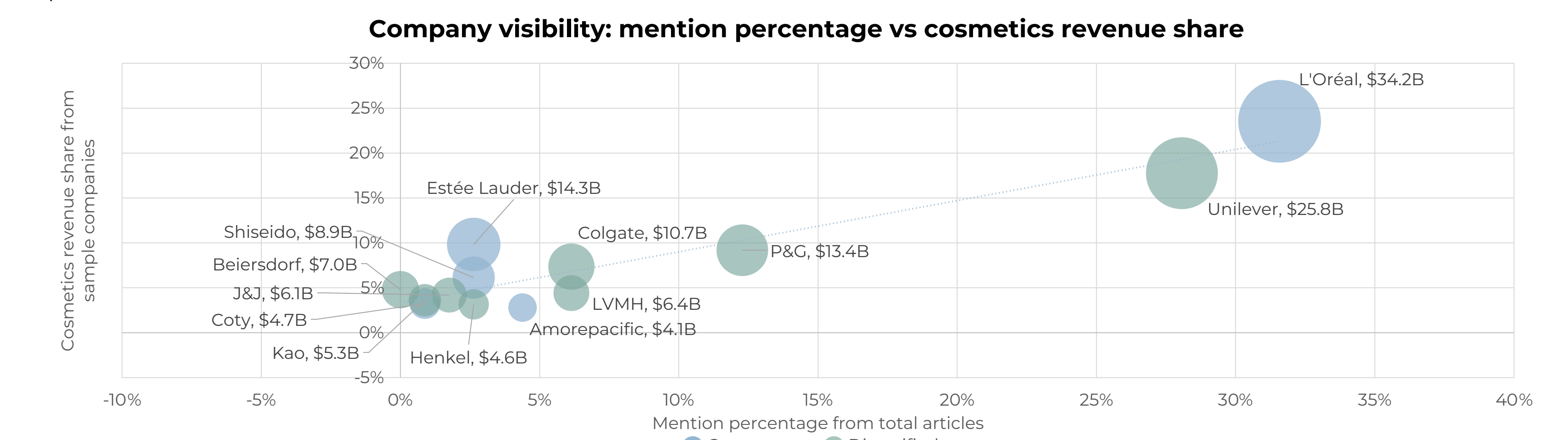
- Has the **NUMBER** of sustainability-related articles increased or decreased **OVER TIME**?
- Which **SUSTAINABILITY THEMES** are more frequently discussed?
- Do some **COMPANIES** have more **VISIBILITY** than others? If so, what characteristics do they have?
- What is the **SENTIMENT** of the news being published?

### RESULTS



Overall, the most salient sustainability themes were "Sustainability Strategy Communication," "Social," "Packaging" and "Procurement" matters.

Although sentiment varied year-over-year, it was generally positive throughout the period studied.



- The companies with the most visibility within the sample are L'Oréal and Unilever, which together amass 60% of all mentions.
- Core cosmetics companies tend to be more visible than their diversified counterparts as they make up the largest share of mentions
- There is a positive relationship between the revenue share of the sample companies and the share of mentions, thus indicating that the more revenue a company generates, the more attention it attracts from the media.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Given the predominantly **FAVORABLE MEDIA COVERAGE**, it can be assumed that the sample companies are socially responsible organizations. Consequently, the industry is perceived positively as well.
- The strong favorability of news articles might put into **QUESTION THE MEDIA'S ROLE AS A WATCHDOG**. As a result, policymakers and regulators might inquire about the degree of influence that these companies and industry have over the media.
- The largest revenue generators are the focus of both positive and negative news articles, thus highlighting the **BLESSING AND CURSE** of being a leading player in the industry.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Key Player Identification

- Identified key players in the industry through IBISWorld reports and Beauty Packaging Magazine.
- Selected public companies that generated over \$4bn USD in annual cosmetics sales.
- Classified companies into two segments: "core" and "diversified" (depending on the portion of cosmetics sales derived from total revenue).

#### Data Collection

- News articles were sourced from **FACTIVA**.
- Search form: "(sustainability or sustainable) and (cosmetics or cosmetic or beauty)."
- Filters applied per company: "Top Sources," "All Authors," "All Subjects," "All Industries," "All regions," "English."
- Published articles ranged from 2016 to 2020.
- Articles were categorized by title, year, company, source, source by geography, source by tenor and sustainability themes

#### Analysis

- Descriptive statistics used to understand trends, frequency, saliency, and relationships.
- Use of the Janis-Fader coefficient to measure tenor (Janis & Fadner, 1943).

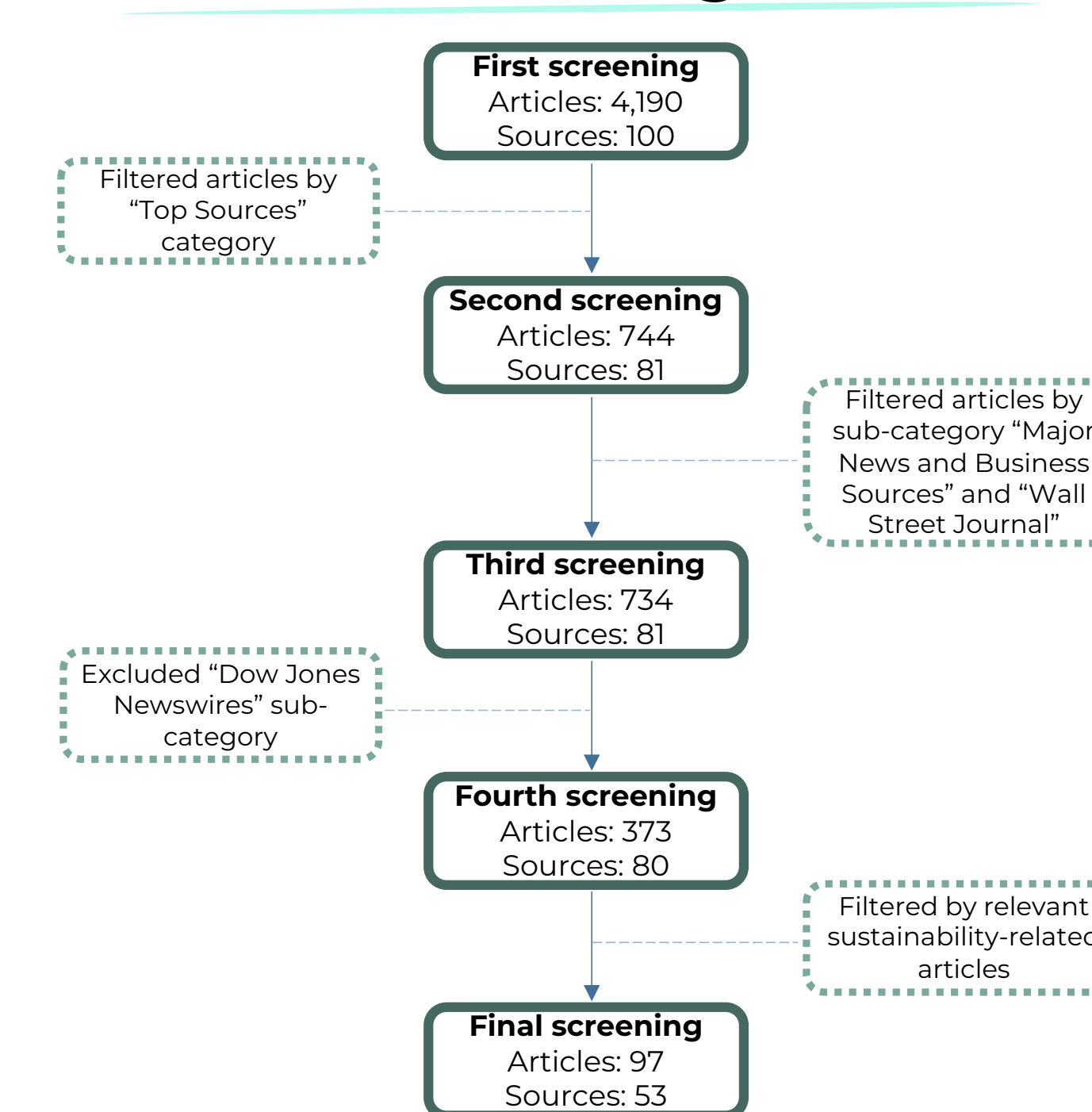
#### Core Companies



#### Diversified Companies



#### Article Screening Process



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