



ENTERED BY LEWIS MOBERLY

/ SKIN SAPIENS

CLIENT NAME
SKIN SAPIENS

ENTRANT
LEWIS MOBERLY

DBA DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS
AWARDS ENTRY
NOVEMBER 2022

FOR PUBLICATION

Simple is, simple does...

Natural skincare. It's very now. And it's very oversupplied. With everyone from Revlon to Khloe Kardashian and Saatchi & Saatchi all coming out with their own high-profile ranges.

So it took a very brave man to launch his own kitchen-created products on the back of design alone, with almost no marketing support.

Yet just 2½ years from launch, James Jardella's Skin Sapiens brand has attracted global publicity, gained prestigious distribution and smashed its targets with year after year of exponential growth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an oversupplied and ultra-competitive market, a brave decision to cut back on marketing to invest in brand and packaging design helped new sustainable skincare brand Skin Sapiens achieve 2½ years of exponential growth. After exceeding its 3-year revenue target 6 months early, the brand is now on course to overdeliver by 140% before the year end.

Parenthood changes people.

In the case of beauty industry insider James Jardella, becoming a father made him think again about what we put on our skin – and on our children’s. So much so that he quit his job, sold his flat, and set to work creating a new kind of skincare range. It would be natural, sustainable – and clinically effective.

The problem was, others had the same idea too. Numerous celebrities, beauty megacorporations and even advertising agencies were all rushing to launch their own ‘natural’ ranges. And, in a crowded market where new brands need to attract attention to survive, James didn’t have enough budget to afford both marketing and design, at the kinds of levels necessary.

So he faced tough choices. And he made a bold decision. He decided to cut back on launch marketing, and focus instead on branding and design. In this way, he set out to create a standout brand capable of securing prestigious distribution and consumer demand.

Enter **Skin Sapiens**. A new skincare brand with a stylishly minimalist design deeply rooted in sustainability of materials. It’s a brand that has attracted interest from as far afield as Vogue Japan. In a crowded market, Skin Sapiens has secured some of the best distribution deals with some of the biggest-name retailers. Names like Selfridges, Feelunique.com and Holland & Barrett.

The result is that in a market growing slowly but steadily at 6.6% a year, Skin Sapiens has achieved double and triple-figure revenue growth year after year.

And as James Jardella says:

“I look back in amazement at what we’ve achieved. A year and a half of R&D, then launching into an unforeseeably tough period in a world hit by Covid. We not only managed to keep our heads above water, but we also went on to exceed our revenue and profitability targets on an almost non-existent ad spend. To have gone through all that and to end up where we are today is a real testament to the foundations of good design.”



CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

THE PROJECT BRIEF

To develop the name, brand and pack design for a new range of organic skincare products capable of gaining significant distribution and consumer demand in a crowded and competitive market, despite a minimal marketing budget.

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- Go from zero to £200,000 annual revenue within 3 years of launch*

MARKET PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- To achieve £200,000 revenue requires the equivalent of just over 14,000 purchases of 2 items. This is based on an average price of £16 per item (£32 for the two), with 90% of purchases through retailers (revenue value £13.33 per £32 purchase) and 10% of sales direct to customer (£26.66 revenue value)

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- Create a standout brand and design capable of securing both retail distribution and direct sales in the face of intense competition from better-funded rivals

SCOPE OF WORK

- **Naming** – brand name
- **Identity** – brand identity
- **Packaging** – product design for initial 6 products (Year 1) and subsequent launches in years 2 and 3

* **Why £200,000? Why 3 years?** £200,000 is the level at which the business achieves profitability after 3 years trading. A survey of skincare startups reveals that for businesses successfully 'badging' off-the-shelf formulations, outlay is low and profitability may be reached within the first year, but for businesses investing in R&D and manufacturing, we're looking at 3–5 years¹.

¹ <https://www.beautyindependent.com/how-long-it-really-takes-indie-beauty-brands-profitable/>



CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW (continued)

BACKGROUND TO THE BUSINESS AND THE PRODUCT

A beauty industry insider changed by the experience of becoming a father sets out to create a better approach to skincare. Trained as a medical engineer, James Jardella built his career in the beauty industry. With years of experience working for brands like L'Oréal he knew how products were made, and the kinds of synthetic, highly-processed ingredients that were used. But in 2017 he became a first-time dad. Looking at Alex, his newborn child, he knew there had to be a better way to care for skin.

Talking to friends he found that many of them felt the same. When he did his research he saw evidence of a far wider need, with sales of 'free from' products steadily growing at around 6.6% a year. But many of the products available then either weren't truly natural, or didn't actually work.

So he quit his job, sold his flat, moved to Spain and set to work in his kitchen. When he was ready he teamed up with a laboratory specialising in vegan formulations. By the end of 2018, James had a 'capsule range' of six products. They were natural. They were sustainable. And they worked.

BUT others had the same idea. While James was working on his formulations, others had been doing the same thing. Some, like botanical skincare range *byOM*, were startups created by former employees of industry giants. Others were created by celebrities. Even ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi launched its own range. Meanwhile, the big players had been developing ranges like *Garnier Bio*, launched in 2019 and designed to be both more natural than their previous efforts, and more effective. The market was becoming increasingly crowded, and many of the new entrants had full ranges of up to thirty different products, dwarfing Skin Sapiens' bare six.

Limited funds put success in jeopardy. The big players had deep pockets. By way of context, the archives of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising hold a case study describing how skincare giant Garnier decided to run what it described as a *small-budget relationship marketing test*. The budget was £500,000. This was in 2004.

But at the end of the development process, James was left with a grand total of £90,000. £50,000 of this was needed for working capital for R&D, stock, staff wages and fulfilment. This left just £40,000 to cover everything else.

Tough choices force a bold decision. James couldn't do everything on the budget he had. There wasn't enough money to be a serious contender in marketing spend. Splitting the budget in two between marketing and design would have meant doing neither well. But there was enough money to do a good design job – if he cut back on marketing.

And this is what he did. He spent a total of £30,000 in the first year. Just £6,000 of that went on marketing. A further £3,000 went on producing a crowdfunding video.

And he invested everything else – £21,000 – in branding and design.

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW (continued)

DESIGN SOLUTION

- **Design objectives: absolute CLARITY and market-leading SUSTAINABILITY.**
Nine out of ten people have no idea what's in the products they put on their skin². We set out to be the brand that makes it crystal clear. Meanwhile, 2/3 of UK consumers are sceptical about claims of sustainability³. So we were determined that our designs and materials would walk the walk. There would be no single-use plastic, for example – a strategy that would deliver on the 2019 European Plastics Schedule for Circularity 11 years ahead of the 2030 deadline.
- **Naming.** We were impressed by James' story, and how he was changed by fatherhood. There's a word for that: *wisdom*. Which, in Latin, is *sapiens*. As in *homo sapiens*. *Homo* is Latin for *man* or *human*, from a Greek root meaning *same* or *alike*. The name SKIN SAPIENS was created to convey wisdom, distinction and a sense of connection, a collective of people sharing a vision for a better future.
- **Identity.** The product is pure, simple and pared down. Design embodied those principles in visual form. For the logo, the SAPIENS 'I' sitting symmetrically and relating to the 'I' in SKIN works as a navigator, pointing you to the product. It's a design observation that's both distinctive and helpful. Everything must earn its place.

² SkinPro U&A study, 204 people
³ <https://www.edie.net/two-thirds-of-brits-sceptical-of-sustainability-related-business-communications/>

SKIN SAP/ENS

"Creating a new skincare brand from recycled materials has been full of challenges, but throughout it all we've been brilliantly led by you. The result is a visual identity for Skin Sapiens which is original, authentic to our purpose and which we can't wait to share with the world."

"Here's our first ever batch of minimalist skincare. Putting you in control of what goes on your skin and into the planet is our one mission. Thank you for believing in us and helping to make it happen."

James Jardella CEO and Founder, Skin Sapiens

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW (continued)

DESIGN SOLUTION

- Packaging** design is purposefully simple. Today’s consumers turn quickly to the back of pack. Clarity, simplicity, honesty are paramount. Our insight was to put key information on the front. On the back, consumers are told the natural origin of every ingredient and, on the side, the % recycled content of each component. The tone is friendly, transparent and direct. The colour palette is inspired by minerals found in nature. It’s also pale enough to allow bottles to be recycled. In fact, the plastic bottles are made entirely from recycled UK drinks bottles, so the loop is closed.
- Post-launch.** The brand and its packaging were used as the key visuals for a social media marketing campaign built around posts raising topical issues (‘Your Baby’s Skin: The 101 Guide to Care’ / ‘Why Luxury Shouldn’t Cost the Earth’ / ‘My Eczema Story’).



straightforward information

friendly and transparent BOP

clear % of recycled content

“So happy to see this little beau win ‘Best Baby Balm’ at the 2020 Beauty Shortlist Mama & Baby Awards today! Congrats to the talented people who helped make it happen... I’m humbled to have you by my side on this startup journey.”

“Thank you so much again for your ideas and design work. I love our calls, they’re like peering into the future. Very exciting!”

James Jardella CEO and Founder, Skin Sapiens

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW (continued)

OVERVIEW OF THE MARKET

Natural and organic skincare

- **A big market**, in 2021 the category was valued at \$6.7 billion globally, with UK revenue of £220 million ⁴
- **Growing steadily**, forecast to keep growing at 6.6% p.a. until 2030 ⁵
- **Increasingly crowded and competitive**, with both new entrants and skincare megacorporations all wanting a piece of the action
- **Which makes it incredibly difficult** for a small startup brand of limited means to break through and achieve any kind of success

Big and growing. Organic food. Natural fabrics. Green energy. As worldwide interest in 'no nasties' products gathers pace, skincare has become a key arena. With growing numbers of people now believing that factory-made synthetics are bad, one thing they really don't want to be doing is rubbing them on their own skin. Or their children's.

Better products. Natural skincare products have been around since at least the mid-1970s. But for years they were held back by a 'hippy' stigma, and a lack of perceived efficacy. People didn't believe they worked as well as mainstream products. But with the entry of companies like Unilever and Revlon, that's all changed. Serious budgets are now being invested in R&D. We are seeing a whole new generation of products that promise to be both morally wholesome and clinically effective. That's a win-win for consumers.

Intensifying competition makes natural skincare one of the toughest environments for a small startup company to succeed in. The list of competitors grows by the day. It includes household names like P&G, Estée Lauder, Garnier, Clorox, The Body Shop and L'Oréal. There are also hundreds of new offerings from increasingly unexpected quarters. Celebrities like Victoria Beckham and Trinny Woodall ⁶ are following Gwyneth Paltrow's lead. Even advertising giant Saatchi & Saatchi launched its own natural skincare brand *Okana* in 2019.

Two market segments. There is the 'affordable' or mass-market segment, which accounts for 71.9% of sales and which has the greatest number of products and brands. Then there is the expensive or premium segment, which accounts for the remaining 28.1% of sales, and which is growing at a slightly higher rate (+6.8%).

Where Skin Sapiens fits. A typical Skin Sapiens item would be around £16. That puts it in the crowded mass-market segment.

⁴ Source: Statista https://www.statista.com/topics/4708/natural-and-organic-cosmetics-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/#topicHeader__wrapper

⁵ Source: Grand View Research <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/natural-skin-care-products-market>

⁶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/extras/indybest/fashion-beauty/skincare/celebrity-skincare-brands-kylie-kora-b1877024.html>

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW (continued)

KEY FACTS

- Skin Sapiens was launched on **30 January 2020**
- In the year leading up to launch the company spent **£21,000 on brand and pack design**
- A further £4,175 was spent on design in Year 1 after launch to create packaging for 6 additional products which were launched in Year 2
- In Year 2, the design was used as the centrepiece for media advertising costing £12,000



adult range extension (Year 2)

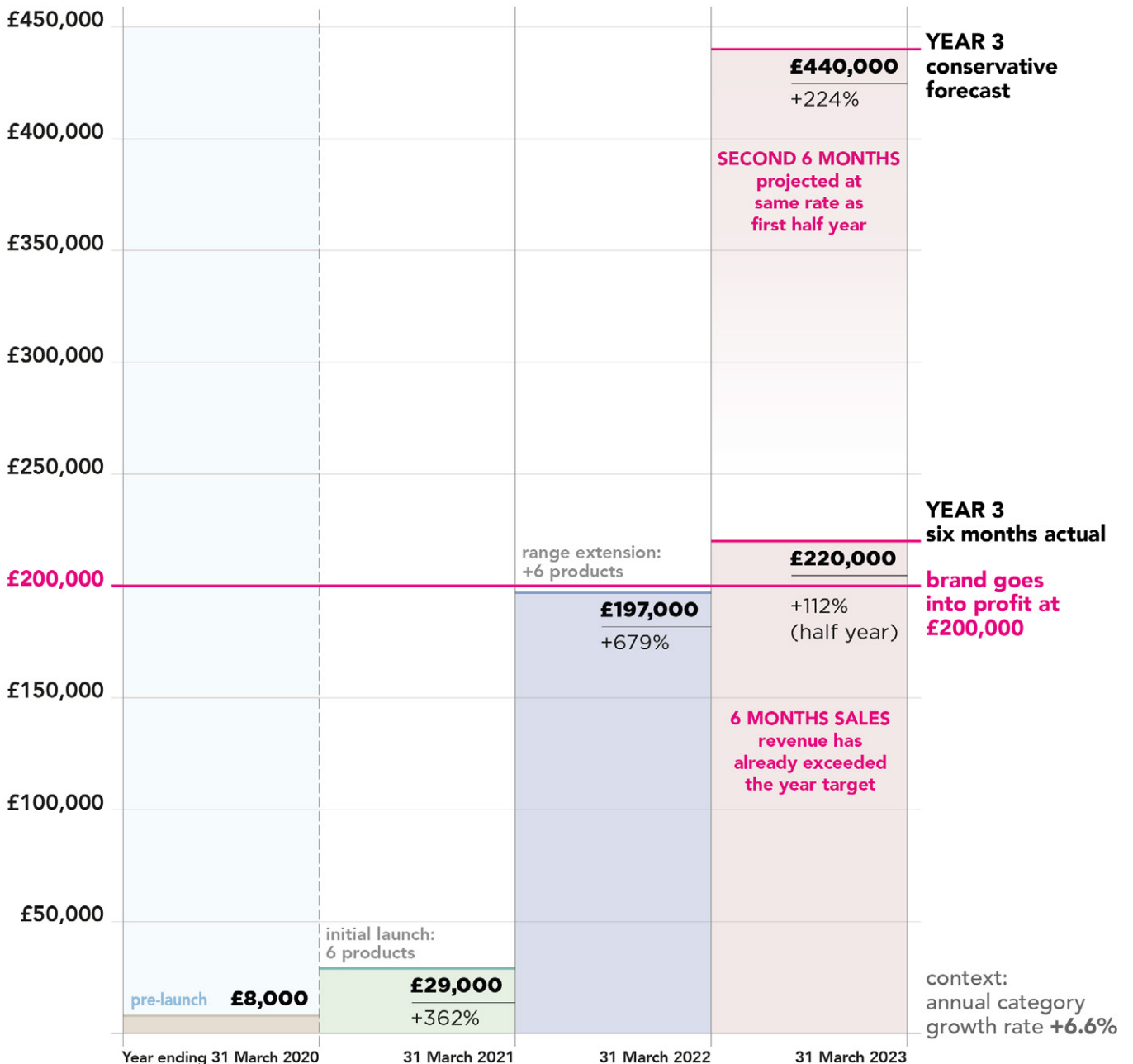
RESULTS

BUSINESS RESULTS

The business objective was to go from zero to £200,000 annual revenue within 3 years of launch. Just 6 months into its third year it has already exceeded that objective, and is on course to hit £440,000 – more than double the goal – by year end.

- **Revenue has grown exponentially since launch.** The natural skincare category is growing modestly at 6.6% a year, Skin Sapiens’ revenue **tripled** in the year to March 2021. It increased **six times** over in the year to March 2022. In just 6 months to September 2022, the latest period for which data is available, Skin Sapiens’ revenue has already smashed its 3-year target and exceeded sales for the entire previous year.

Skin Sapiens’ revenue growth 2019–2022



RESULTS (continued)

MARKET PERFORMANCE RESULTS

To achieve £200,000 revenue would have required 12-month sales equivalent to just over 14,000 purchases of 2 items at a total of £32 at 90% retail and 10% direct to customer. Skin Sapiens exceeded this target within the first six months of the year. More than this, evidence from D2C sales indicates that the number of items purchased by individual customers has increased steadily since launch, with the result that the average purchase value has increased from £28.99 to £33.24, and the number of items from 1.8 in Year 1 to 2.0 in Year 3 to date.

Year	Average purchase value (D2C)	Average items per purchase (D2C)	Equal to X number of purchases (D2C + Retail)
Pre-launch purchases	£28.99	1.0	591
Year 1	£30.43	1.8	2,042
Year 2	£30.51	1.9	13,836
HALF-YEAR 3	£33.24	2.0	14,183
Projected to year end at same rate	£33.24	2.0	28,365

DESIGN RESULTS

The design objective was to create a standout brand and design capable of securing both retail distribution and direct sales in the face of intense competition from better-funded rivals.

In a hugely crowded and competitive market, design created a standout brand.

Skin Sapiens became a style sensation, featuring in the beauty press not just in the UK but as far afield as Vogue Japan.

As Marcomm News put it: **“This launch not only marks a fresh direction for the skincare market, it also shows how design can powerfully point to a product’s sustainable and desirable credentials”**⁷.

Skin Sapiens’ limited budget did not stretch to a U&A or tracking study. However, what is notable from reviews of the product, whether from consumers or from magazines and lifestyle media, is how often, and how prominently, design and packaging are mentioned.



Vogue Japan



Facebook

They developed a range that uses as few ingredients as possible, with as little effect on the environment as possible. The products are entirely vegan and packaged in recycled packaging. They have a clean, modern look to them that looks high end. What I like most is ‘they do what they say on the tin’ no wordy scientific labelling... moreover what you see is what you get. Facial wash to body lotion... it’s all written on the packet.

Healthy Living London⁸

⁷ <https://marcommnews.com/tag/skin-sapiens/>

⁸ <https://healthylivinglondon.com/london-health-fitness-reviews/tried-tested-skin-sapiens-review/>

RESULTS (continued)

MARKET PERFORMANCE RESULTS (continued)

Despite being a complete unknown, Skin Sapiens secured astonishingly prestigious distribution.

In a market oversupplied with natural, organic and sustainable skincare brands, Skin Sapiens' unique combination of product, branding and packaging secured distribution at some of the most stylish retailers in the UK.

First was a tie-up with Selfridges, the iconic chain of high-end department stores famous around the world for the style and desirability of its products. This was soon followed by retailers like Feelunique.com – an online retailer of prestige beauty goods with 1.3 million active customers from 120 countries – and Holland & Barrett, a multinational chain of health food shops with over 1,300 stores in 16 countries.

"We are delighted to be bringing in Skin Sapiens as part of our Project Earth Campaign at Selfridges. Our focus was to partner with brands who champion sustainability and have this at the heart of their business. Skin Sapiens definitely follows this ethos."

Melissa McGinnis Head of Beauty Buying, Selfridges



"I found Skin Sapiens (the best name ever) whilst scrolling through Instagram one evening – their name caught my eye obviously (Sapiens is the Latin for 'wise')!

I took a look through their website and was fully invested immediately.

The way they shared their ingredients with such transparency really impressed me – you literally know what you're putting on your skin."

Social Media

RESULTS (continued)

PERFORMANCE OF RESULTS

Exponential revenue growth in a market growing at 6.6% annually.

Skin Sapiens went from zero to almost a quarter of a million just 2½ years from launch, with half a million in sight by year end. Starting with home-made formulations originally developed in the founder's kitchen, design helped turn them into a standout brand, available worldwide, comfortably beating its revenue targets and exceeding category growth rates many times over.

A chain of cause and effect driven and sustained by design.

Four factors were involved in Skin Sapiens' success: an effective, natural product; strong and principled packaging and design; prestigious distribution and a very modest spend on social media. Without a good product nothing would have been possible – but other brands also had effective, natural products. It was design that made Skin Sapiens a standout brand and secured prestigious distribution in leading retailers. It was only after sales and momentum began to grow that the company then invested more than a token sum in social media ads, and these ads were built around communication cues taken from the pack design, with an up front, copy led approach that runs through everything, and the use of horizontal lines and the oblique / in communications to make it ownable.

- **Pricing.** Skin Sapiens' pricing puts it in the middle of the mass-market natural skincare category. A 30ml bottle of face serum costs £19.99 at Holland & Barrett. Typical rivals include Weleda (£17.50), Upcircle (£15.00) and Kri (£22.00). By contrast, premium sector serums sell for anything from £29.00 (Pai Rosehip Oil) to £76 (SpaceNK Soho vegan serum) to over £100 (Stella McCartney).
The brand's success was not due to any price advantage.
- **Product.** Skin Sapiens skincare products are both natural and effective. Twenty years ago this would have been rare. Even five years ago it would have been remarkable. Today, with the huge industry investment in R&D in the category this is par for the course. **The brand's success was not due to product advantage.**
- **Range.** Skin Sapiens launched with 6 products, followed by a further 6 in Year 2. Garnier launched 11 organic skincare products in 2019 alone⁹. **The brand's success was not due to its range.**
- **Distribution.** Securing prestigious distribution was key to Skin Sapiens' success. But in a market with many hundreds of natural and organic skincare brands, standout branding and design were the key elements in gaining that distribution. **Increased distribution was a result of brand success, not the cause.**
- **Advertising and marketing.** Skin Sapiens chose to build its brand by investing in design rather than advertising. In its first year the company spent £21,000 on design but just £6,000 on social media ads and £3,000 on a crowdfunding video. In Year 2, after the brand had gained distribution and momentum, the brand and pack design were used as key visuals for social media posts costing £12,000.
The brand's success was not due to advertising.
- **External factors.** As Skin Sapiens launched the world was hit by Covid. With a business plan designed for bricks and mortar distribution, the brand barely had a functioning D2C site and no presence on Amazon at the start of the pandemic. Skin Sapiens was disadvantaged by the pandemic, while other brands with a pre-existing online community saw their sales rocket.

⁹ <http://www.gailporter.co.uk/review-garnier-organic-skincare/>