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BUF 4700: Contemporary Issues in Fashion

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Critical Argument Paper

Modernity is an evolving cultural and social style that reflects how an individual dresses today. The concept of modernity is to break off from traditional norms and embrace new innovations and advancements in society. Modernity also comes from global influences from fashion trends, social media, and the increasing interconnectedness of cultures, which drive the rapid exchange of ideas, styles, and innovations across the world. In the beauty industry, traditional beauty standards have evolved significantly, giving way to more diverse and inclusive ideals in today's modern age. In the modern era, the focus is towards inclusivity, technology advancements, and customer engagement through digital fashion and social media. This evolution emphasizes the beauty industry's capacity to not only adapt to societal shifts but also to influence and shape cultural progress.

In the early 20th century, beauty standards focused on timeless femininity and conformity, whereas the mid-century introduced a new era of experimentation, encouraging individuals to embrace their unique styles and redefine beauty on their own terms. The beauty industry reshaped traditional standards and introduced new ideals that emphasized individuality, innovation, and self-expression, aligning beauty with the evolving cultural and social values of the modern age. During that era, makeup was largely associated with prostitutes rather than respectable women, prompting Elizabeth Arden to create a marketing campaign aimed at transforming society's perception of beauty products (A&E, 2014). This concept used by the beauty industry is to allow and create self-expression and to redefine makeup as a tool for empowerment, sophistication, and self-confidence, making it an essential part of a modern woman's identity. Arden's efforts not only normalized the use of cosmetics but also a symbol of

progress going towards the 20th century. This change set the stage for the beauty industry to play a key role in shaping societal standards and encouraging personal confidence for women.

Cosmetic procedures have widely become popular throughout the years, with Alfred Adler's concept of the "inferiority complex" contributing to the desire for physical adjustments as a way to boost self-esteem and address perceived flaws. The inferiority complex ultimately became the key argument plastic surgeons used to rationalize the practice of cosmetic surgery (Haiken, 1997). This reflects the advanced technology innovation in the 20th century by making beauty enhancements and reshaping one's ideal standard of beauty. Some individuals may choose to enhance subtle features of their appearance, such as fine lines and wrinkles, through treatments like Botox and fillers. Others might focus on improving facial symmetry or restoring volume to areas like the cheeks, lips, chin, and jawline using fillers (Bucky, 2024). The idea of modern beauty procedure is to boost confidence and empower individuals to take control of their desired self-image. The widespread adoption of cosmetic surgery by many celebrities was bound to influence a significant number of people to follow in their footsteps (Wilson, 2023). The behavior of celebrities often influences the public to seek ways to enhance their appearance and critically evaluate their own looks in an effort to align with perceived beauty standards. This highlights the strong impact of celebrity culture, where their beauty and lifestyle choices help shape societal norms and inspire individuals to follow on the trend.

Today, many individuals interpret "modernity" in different ways. One would say that social media and celebrity culture plays a significant role in shaping contemporary trends and defining what is considered modern. The culture of comparison on social media, combined with the fact that it doesn't accurately reflect everyone's daily life, can lead to feelings of inadequacy (Ferguson et. al, 2024). In modern day, filters and editing tools are widely used to enhance

images influencing perceptions of beauty and self-image. Many social media influencers and celebrities have enhanced their pictures online creating unrealistic beauty standards among individuals who admire them with the use of photoshop, hair color enhancements, and smooth skin textures. The constant exposure to edited and filtered images promotes low self-esteem and body dysmorphic disorder. However, social media in the beauty industry has made trends accessible globally creating a massive market for consumers. These brands recognize that showcasing a genuinely diverse range of faces is more than just fulfilling a requirement; it creates meaningful representation that resonates with consumers (Erleia, 2024). Diversity and inclusivity has also expanded with the use of social media allowing people of different backgrounds, skin tones, body types, and genders to be represented and celebrated in the beauty industry.

Modernity in the beauty industry has evolved in the past century from traditional beauty to modern beauty, inclusivity, individuality, and self-expression in society. Advancements in technology, the influence of social media, and an increased focus on diversity have transformed the beauty industry, making it more accessible to people of all backgrounds. This transformation highlights how the beauty industry not only mirrors societal values and trends but also plays a significant role in shaping people's views and setting new standards of beauty.

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