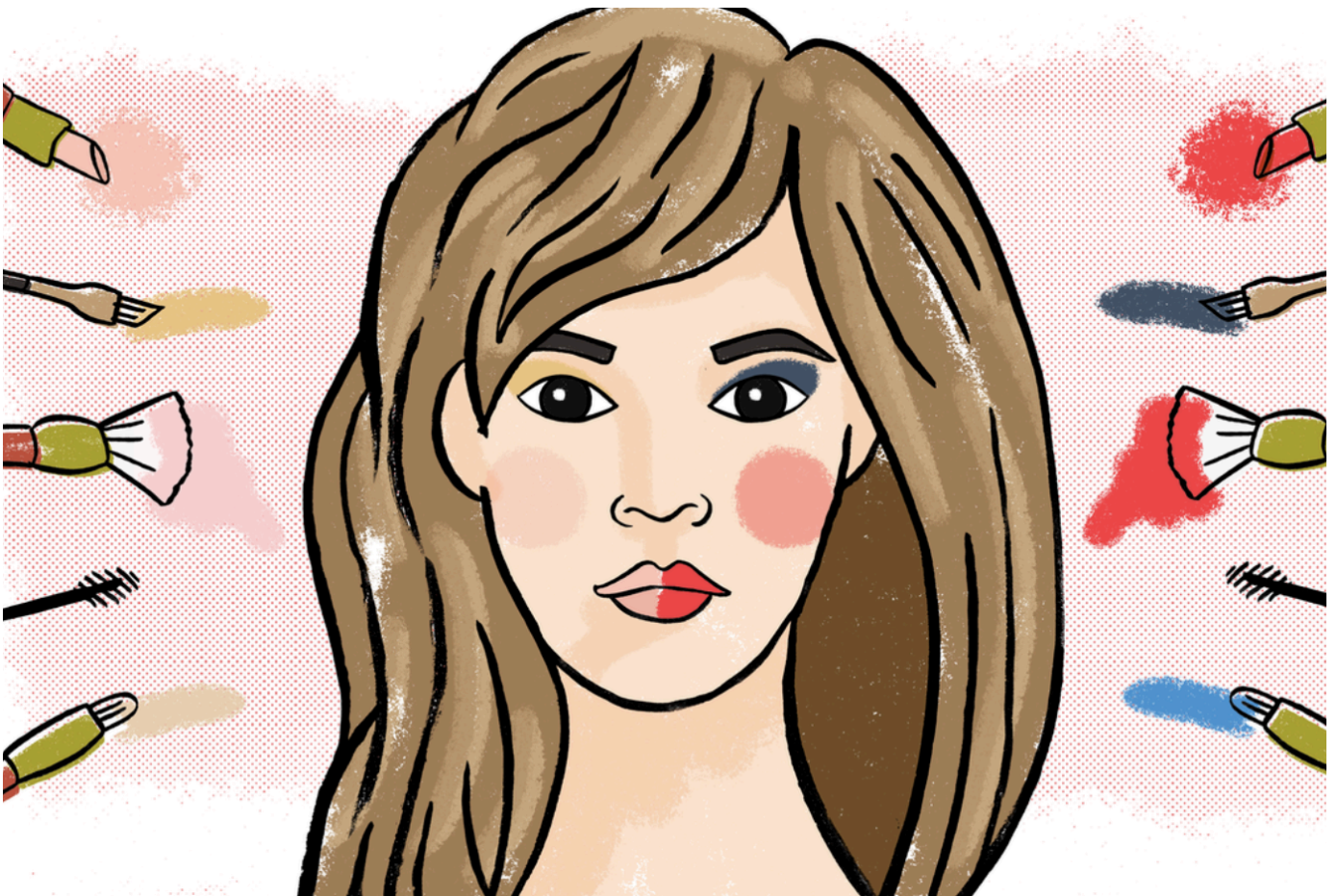


## Bare-Faced Revolution: Exploring Modern Beauty Ideals and Consumer Culture



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In the early 20th century, the notion of modernity emerged as a powerful concept that symbolizes progress, innovation, and a departure from traditional norms, particularly in the context of gender roles and societal expectations. The beauty industry capitalized on this shift, positioning cosmetics as essential tools for women to express their newfound independence and confidence. As women began to enter the workforce in greater numbers and participate more visibly in public life, beauty brands marketed products like lipstick, mascara, and face powder as symbols of the modern woman. This period saw the rise of iconic figures such as the flappers, who embodied modernity with their bobbed hair and bold makeup, encouraging a cultural narrative that linked makeup to self-expression and empowerment (Peiss, 1998).

Today, the definition of modernity in beauty has transformed significantly, moving away from the superficial glamor of the past to embrace authenticity, diversity, and sustainability. This shift is characterized by a rejection of unrealistic beauty standards and a celebration of natural beauty and body positivity. Pamela Anderson's decision to present a makeup-free look at the Spring/Summer 2024 Paris Fashion Week serves as a poignant example of this transformation. In her recent "Get Ready with Me" video for *Vogue France*, Anderson stated, "I'm not trying to be the prettiest girl in the room. I feel like it's just freedom. It's like a relief," highlighting her desire for self-acceptance and a break from societal pressures regarding appearance. Her influence in the realms of fashion and beauty is likely to inspire many to embrace a similar ethos of authenticity (Harrison, 2024).

This shift toward a more genuine representation of beauty has been further propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which fundamentally altered how individuals approached personal care and self-expression. During lockdown, many people began to question their beauty routines, leading to a rise in interest in minimalist beauty practices. A survey conducted by No7 revealed

that 82% of women reported wearing less makeup, while 52% indicated they had completely re-evaluated their beauty priorities since the onset of the pandemic (No7, 2024). This trend reflects a broader societal embrace of authenticity, with influencers like ‘influencer’ Katarina Brennan stating that she felt “instantly inspired” by Anderson's choice and expressing her frustration with “fake versions of models and celebrities.”

Industry leaders have acknowledged this cultural pivot as well. Reena Hammer, Managing Director of Urban Retreat, noted that “the tides are turning on thinking that beauty is just superficial.” Alexia Inge, co-founder of online retailer Cult Beauty, remarked that “projecting the glamor of full-face make-up feels unseemly in these difficult times,” indicating a shift towards more genuine representations of beauty in response to contemporary challenges (Inge, 2024).

Among the emerging trends in this new beauty landscape is the growing popularity of acne patches, which have become symbols of empowerment and self-acceptance. Once viewed merely as products to conceal flaws, these patches are now worn as badges of honor and individuality, allowing people to express themselves without the pressure of conventional beauty standards. Brennan, for example, proudly states that she feels “proud” to wear them publicly, highlighting the acceptance of natural skin (Brennan, 2024).

While makeup continues to hold a place in personal beauty routines, there has been a marked shift in societal perception. The focus is now on viewing beauty products as optional tools for self-expression rather than necessities. This evolution reflects a broader cultural movement towards inclusivity and authenticity, inviting individuals to embrace their unique identities and imperfections. As the beauty industry adapts to these changes, it signals the dawn of a new era where self-acceptance and genuine representation redefine what it means to be modern in beauty.

Beauty and consumer culture have historically played significant roles in shaping the concept of modernity, both in the early 20th century and in today's society. In the early 1900s, being modern signified a break from traditional norms, particularly as women gained greater independence and visibility in public life. The beauty industry capitalized on this shift, marketing cosmetics as tools for self-expression and empowerment. During this era, the rise of beauty brands promoted the idea that makeup could enhance a woman's confidence and femininity, aligning with the broader societal changes of the time (Peiss, 1998). The emergence of products like lipstick and powder became synonymous with the modern woman, fostering a culture where beauty was intricately linked to identity and status.

Fast forward to the present day, the notion of modernity in beauty has evolved to embrace authenticity and individuality while challenging conventional standards. This shift is encapsulated by the rising popularity of the “no makeup” trend, which emphasizes a natural, fresh-faced appearance as a form of self-acceptance. The influence of celebrities like Hailey Bieber and Sofia Richie Grainge, who showcase dewy skin and minimalist makeup routines, reflects a broader societal movement toward celebrating one's inherent beauty (Kurtz, 2023). The #NoMakeup movement, which has amassed over 19 million tags on Instagram since 2020, indicates a significant cultural shift away from the heavily glamorized looks of previous years, such as the full-coverage makeup that dominated the beauty landscape in 2016.

However, the “no makeup” aesthetic may not be as genuine as it appears. Many influencers promoting this look often have undergone cosmetic procedures like lip fillers or Botox, and they frequently edit their images to present an idealized version of themselves (Moore, 2024). This creates a paradox where the “no makeup” trend, while seemingly promoting authenticity, can perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards that are difficult for the average person to achieve.

Brands like Glossier have successfully capitalized on the shift toward minimalism in beauty, adopting a “skin first, makeup second” philosophy that celebrates natural beauty. Founded in 2014, Glossier has developed a loyal following by offering products designed to enhance rather than mask individual features (Smith, 2024). Their emphasis on a less-is-more approach resonates with consumers seeking authenticity in their beauty routines. However, even with such brands advocating for a more natural look, the beauty standards set by influencers often remain unattainable for many.

Recent events, such as Pamela Anderson’s choice to appear makeup-free at high-profile gatherings like Paris Fashion Week, have sparked conversations about societal pressures surrounding beauty. Anderson's decision to go bare-faced was framed as both a personal experiment and a form of rebellion against the glamorous expectations placed on celebrities (Harrison, 2024). Her remarks about the passing of her longtime makeup artist, Alexis Vogel, underscore that makeup can carry deep emotional significance beyond mere aesthetics.

Yet, one must consider whether individuals who do not fit traditional beauty norms would receive the same praise for embracing a makeup-free look. Rumors suggest that even Anderson has undergone cosmetic procedures, raising questions about the authenticity of her bare-faced appearance (Moore, 2024). This complexity highlights a potential downside of the “no makeup” trend: while it aims to promote natural beauty, it can inadvertently alienate those who do not meet specific standards.

Ultimately, while embracing natural beauty is a positive development, it is essential to recognize that the “no makeup” trend can be misleading. The focus should shift to the understanding that true beauty transcends external appearances; it lies in authenticity and self-acceptance. As the

beauty industry continues to evolve, it is vital to foster an inclusive environment where diverse expressions of beauty are celebrated and where individuals feel empowered to embrace their unique identities, regardless of societal expectations.

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