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Critical Argument Paper #2: Modernity

The early twentieth century had significant societal change, with the emergence of new technologies, ideas, and ways of life. People began to think differently about beauty and what it meant to be "modern." Historically, beauty was often about tradition and adhering to social norms, but by the 1900s, being modern meant embracing new fashions and giving women greater independence. The beauty business capitalized on this transition by selling goods that made women appear and feel more independent and stylish.

In Belle Époque (late 19th and early 20th centuries), the concept of a "modern woman" was associated with advancement and freedom. Women began wearing loose-fitting clothes instead of tight corsets and other old fashion trends. Designers like Paul Poiret and Coco Chanel greatly influenced this new, more comfortable, and fashionable look. The beauty business took advantage of this and began marketing items like lipsticks, fragrances, and face powders. Many women wanted to look like the actresses they see in movies. So, the beauty industry produced goods that helped women aspire to these celebrities' appearances. Modern beauty was about expressing independence and uniqueness, not just appearing pretty.

Now, the idea of what it means to be modern has changed dramatically. New beauty standards were promoted through movies, ads, and magazine covers and were also linked to the idea of modernity. Beauty used to be about meeting a certain standard, but these days it's far more about being yourself and oneself. People of various shapes, sizes, and skin tones can feel

represented because of the inclusive variety of modern beauty standards. That is because historically, the beauty industry mainly promoted a limited and uniform standard of beauty, one that typically favored white, thin, and traditionally feminine features. Companies like Fenty Beauty, founded by Rihanna, offering a wide range of foundation shades for people of all skin tones, demonstrate how diversity is increasingly celebrated in beauty. The culture of beauty has evolved further in the modern age of social media. Popular beauty trends are shaped by influencers on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Nowadays, celebrities and social media users are crucial for creating contemporary beauty standards and promoting skincare and cosmetics products that prioritize individuality. For example, Influencers such as James Charles, a makeup artist and YouTuber, and Huda Kattan, the founder of Huda Beauty, have changed the way beauty goods are promoted to customers in addition to popularizing new cosmetic techniques. These influencers frequently spread the word about the importance of self-expression by urging their fans to try out different looks and cosmetics to show off their styles. Furthermore, with the popularity of "no-makeup makeup" and an emphasis on skincare, the embrace of natural beauty represents a transition away from heavy, glamour-focused cosmetics. Nowadays, rather than covering their characteristics, people prefer to seem natural and emphasize them. Glossier and other brands encourage a natural appearance, demonstrating that being confident with your skin is a key component of modern beauty. Another example of a modern trend is the need for sustainable and environmentally friendly beauty products. Companies like Lush and The Ordinary concentrate on making environmentally friendly products without using dangerous ingredients. Today, being "modern" also means being environmentally responsible and choosing how to use wisely to look oneself best.

In conclusion, since the early 1900s, the concept of "modern" beauty has evolved significantly. Back then, modern beauty meant being smart, cosmopolitan, and expressing oneself while keeping to traditional conceptions of femininity. The beauty business built on these trends by providing products that allowed women to appear like Hollywood stars while also celebrating their newfound independence. Today, modern beauty is all about accepting variety, self-expression, and uniqueness. The cosmetics business has kept up with these changes, providing products that express new ideals such as inclusiveness and well-being. From the growth of body positivity to the influence of social media, beauty today demonstrates how society's beliefs about appearance and identity are always changing.

References:

[Video Lecture: Belle Epoque](#)