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Contemporary Issues in Fashion

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### **Inclusivity in Beauty: Rare Beauty**

Today there is a growing segment in the beauty industry of celebrity owned beauty brands. Some may say that this is becoming oversaturated and the brands are not standing out from one another. With so many celebrity owned brands emerging consumers want them to be unique and have more than a recognizable name attached to them, diversity is important and is a nonnegotiable (Marsh, 2021). Rare Beauty is a color cosmetics brand that was launched in September of 2020 and founded by singer and actress Selena Gomez, who has attached not only her name to her products as well as a cause she is passionate about (Rare Beauty, 2023). Through her company she is advocating for mental health awareness and donating money for improved mental health services through her organization the Rare Beauty Fund. It is clear that celebrity owned beauty companies are a segment that is continuing to grow and is most definitely here to stay, so it is important that brands such as Rare Beauty are finding ways to stand out from the rest. Today consumers expect more from brands and celebrities so having inclusivity as part of a brand's identity from the start is key to success. The way Selena Gomez has used her platform and brand to promote inclusivity as she gives a voice to people who are struggling with mental health issues is an example of what needs to continue to occur within the beauty industry today.

Rare Beauty is a beauty brand which sells color cosmetics as well as makeup tools. Since their launch in 2020 there have been a variety of new products, color ranges, and tools

added to their collection. When they first launched they released a foundation and concealer range with 48 shades, mascara, blush, lip balm, lip cream, liquid luminizer, brow pencil and gel, and a liquid liner (Cacciatore & Tannenbaum, 2020). The initial launch featured color cosmetics with 12 different formulas, over one hundred different shades, and three makeup tools. Over the last three years they have added new colors, formulas, and products to their collection. They also became well known for their liquid blush which has gone viral on Tik-Tok for how pigmented and effective it is. The brand's overall aesthetic is minimalistic and light, it is described as makeup meant to enhance natural beauty not to cover and disguise natural features (Nemirovsky, 2022). Their minimalist aesthetic is reflected in their product formulas which are all lightweight. Their foundations and concealer are all light to medium coverage rather than heavy and matte full coverage. The colors of their eyeshadows, lip products, and blush are natural tones as well as light although they are buildable formulas.

Selena Gomez is an actress and singer who first rose to fame as a child actress on the Disney Channel show *Wizards of Waverly Place* and later fully pursued her career as a singer (IMDB, 2023). Through the years she has been featured in a variety of successful television shows and movies. Her music career has been just as successful with her most recent album "Rare" named like her beauty brand, reaching number one on the Billboard 200 chart (Aniftos, 2023). When creating Rare Beauty, Selena Gomez wanted to use the company as a way to advocate for mental health because of her own struggles which she has become extremely candid about. She had recently had what she called a "psychotic break" which forced her to cancel her tour in order to seek treatment where she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression (Ordon, 2023). Being impacted by mental health herself

Gomez wanted to create a company that included this community and removed stigma around those who have mental health issues. When describing the company Gomez said, “Beauty doesn’t have to be defined by a like or a comment, or your body. The whole time we were creating [Rare Beauty], we were under the notion this was going to be also about mental health and crafting a safe place for people to connect.” With mental health being a lifelong struggle for Gomez, as the founder of the company she wanted it to be part of their branding and messaging from its inception because she hopes to spread awareness on the issue. Her background with mental health has clearly had a significant influence on her brand and how she chooses to market it. With the creation of her brand she has become more and more outspoken about her own struggles and describes how she had trouble getting out of bed, suicidal thoughts, lashed out at her friends, and could not keep up with her demanding work (Kaufman, 2022). As she promotes her brand she is speaking out about the way which mental health issues have impacted her life, and is helping others to understand that we all, even celebrities, struggle with mental health issues.

Although when we think of a group that is isolated and impacted by the beauty industry, those with mental health issues are not what first comes to mind, yet the beauty industry has worsened and been the cause of mental health struggles that consumers have faced for years. Toxic beauty standards have been an issue in the beauty industry since its inception, creating an industry that has perpetuated body shaming, low self-esteem, eating disorders and many more mental health issues (Oduunmorayo, 2023). The beauty industry has been known to promote unrealistic beauty standards and until recently many brands have not spoken out about mental health or the way that the beauty industry has perpetuated these problems. The pandemic has caused many brands to begin to speak out on the matter,

because since the pandemic there has been a significant increase in those who are dealing with symptoms of anxiety or depression, with about one third of adults in the United States struggling (Carlson, 2021). This is why it has been so significant to see brands come out with campaigns emphasizing mental health aiming to destigmatize it and open a space for discussion about it within the beauty industry. With brands such as Rare Beauty being fully dedicated to changing the way the industry and the world views mental health and creating access for those struggling to get help shows that more positive change is to come. Consumers want a brand that is outspoken on issues close to them and although many view mental health as a matter that should not be discussed, Rare Beauty is showing that there is nothing wrong with seeking help or speaking out about the struggles you are facing.

The name of the brand “Rare Beauty” was chosen specifically to promote inclusivity and make the brand's values clear from the inception. Gomez explains in an interview, “Being rare is about being comfortable with yourself, I’ve stopped trying to be perfect. I just want to be me. I think Rare Beauty can be more than a beauty brand. I want us all to stop comparing ourselves to each other and start embracing our uniqueness. You’re not defined by a photo, a like, or a comment. Rare Beauty isn’t about how other people see you. It’s about how you see yourself.” By emphasizing that we are all rare and unique the brand is promoting self-love and inclusivity, how we are all beautiful inside and out. Gomez explains that she does not want people to worry about what others think about them and to be happy with themselves, because thoughts such as these can lead to or worsen mental health. She also emphasizes not worrying about what others think about you because of the stigma around mental health, how many do not want to seek help or speak about their struggles because they are concerned about what others will think if they know. By using her brand to

give a voice to those who struggle with mental health issues and speaking out about her own struggles she is de-stigmatizing the issue and making space for the community within the beauty industry.

Besides spreading awareness through Rare Beauty, along with launching the brand Gomez has launched a mental health fund called The Rare Impact Fund. At the launch of the company they made a commitment to donate one million dollars to help mental health services in underserved communities, and match donations of two hundred thousand dollars (Aziz, 2021). The Rare Beauty Fund was able to uphold their commitment and within a year had donated over one million dollars (Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, 2021). Rare Beauty and The Rare Beauty Fund were launched together because one percent of every sale at Rare Beauty gets donated to the fund (Rare Beauty, 2023). Together they create an amazing opportunity to spread awareness on mental health and increase access to mental health services. Rare Beauty and the Rare Beauty Fund are creating a space for mental health to be spoken about and included in the beauty industry. Gomez explains on her website, “I hope by sharing my own story and using my brand and platform to talk about and connect more people to resources that support their mental health, I can encourage others to get the help they need and bring more mental health services to educational settings.” This is the philosophy behind Rare Beauty and The Rare Beauty Fund, in combination these are able to achieve Gomez’s goal of education and outreach. Having the Rare Beauty brand accompanied by the non for profit Rare Beauty Fund shows the brands a true commitment to the cause and how the brand is actively making change.

Every year Rare Beauty releases their Social Impact Report, and the report for 2022 showed the astonishing progress they have made for mental health inclusivity in the beauty

industry. Some of the highlights from 2022 include holding a mental health virtual event, attending the White House Mental Health Action Forum, launching the Rare impact ambassador fund, holding over five hundred mental health organizations in one hundred fifty different cities, raising five million dollars, and growing their voice on social media to spread awareness (Cohen, 2022). Accomplishments such as these are what makes Rare Beauty such a unique company in the beauty industry, their inclusion of the mental health community has created so much positive change. It is clear that Gomez's company has a bright future and will only continue to grow and create space for these conversations in the beauty industry in years to come. The report also outlined their goal for the next ten years of their brand which is to raise over one hundred million dollars and expand their education and outreach beyond the United States and into underserved communities across the globe. With the amount that has been accomplished in 2022, it is guaranteed that The Rare Beauty Fund will have no problem reaching their goals and much more by the end of 2023.

Inclusivity is also achieved through Rare Beauty's commitment to educate those who do not suffer with mental health issues and young people in order to normalize the issue. Rare Beauty has partnered with organizations such as the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) and the National Council for Behavioral Health in order to provide communities with over two million dollars for educational resources on mental health (Aziz, 2021). Besides these partnerships the Rare Beauty website is not only where one can purchase products but also where one can find a variety of mental health resources. There are articles on providing information on a variety of mental health conditions, how to support a friend or family member, the types of mental health care professionals, and what to do if you or someone you know is having a mental health crisis. Educating young people and those

who have never experienced a mental health issue is a way in which you are growing support and building a community. Rather than isolating those with mental health struggles including all types of people grows a support system and normalizes the issue. This company is creating a conversation and ensuring they are including everyone in that open conversation. Most importantly Gomez understands that education is the key to inclusivity, and the only way a community moves forward and improves is through education.

Since the launch of Rare Beauty and The Rare Beauty Fund other beauty brands have taken notice and are joining the mental health discussion. The term “self-care” has become popular in the beauty world encompassing both taking care of oneself physically with beauty products but also mentally. This is a conversation that the beauty industry is starting to put a focus on, even more so since the inception of Rare Beauty. The success the brand was able to achieve while remaining true to the founder’s main cause shows that it is possible for a business to do this. It is a way to connect with consumers on an extremely personal level, brands are taking notice and speaking out on mental health and “self care” through social media and campaigns. Rare Beauty has truly opened the way for mental health to be included and discussed openly in the beauty industry today.

Today modernity in the beauty industry means a brand speaking out and being active in social change. Consumers do not just want to buy products anymore they want to join movements and will be critical of brands who participate in performative activism or who stay silent (Carlson, 2021). Gen-Z buys products and favors brands based on how outspoken they are on topics they care about and if a brand represents their personal beliefs (Rover, 2023). Consumers are not interested only in the quality of the products anymore, but want to know that their money is supporting brands who have similar values. Rare Beauty

accomplishes this by having one percent of their profits go towards The Rare Beauty Fund. Consumers know that when they are buying their products they are not only getting something that is high quality but their money is directly supporting an important cause. Brands who stay silent on social issues or who do not have a cause they associate their brand with will fall behind and Gen-Z will not be interested in supporting them. It is important to clarify that support can not just be performative, but action and proof needs to be provided that the brand is actually active and supporting a cause. The Rare Beauty website is full of resources on mental health, goes into depth describing Selena Gomez's story, provides links to their fund, and explains how they are taking action. This shows that the brand is serious about their cause and not using it as a money making tactic. It seems as though modernity in the beauty industry has transformed to social activism recently and it will remain a priority for a while longer. As Gen-Z consumers continue to become companies' target audience they will have to adapt to values of these consumers in order to survive.

In conclusion, the beauty industry has a lot of space for improvement when it comes to inclusivity but with brands such as Rare Beauty there is hope for continued change in the future. In the short time that Rare Beauty has been established the company has been able to help bring about a conversation on mental health and with its continued growth there will be a lot more to come from this company. Selena Gomez started this brand with a vision to be inclusive not only in regards to physical traits and beauty but also inclusive of those who struggle internally with mental health issues. The brand's messaging and Gomez sharing how personal the cause is to her has created a strong connection to consumers making it one of the top beauty companies. This proves just how important social activism has become within the

beauty industry and how Gen-Z consumers want more than just a product or a celebrity endorsed product.

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