

Valerie Waldron

11/4/2023

Prof. Denis Sutton

BUF 4700 –Contemporary Issues in the Fashion Industry

Critical Argument Paper# 2: What does it mean to be Modern today?

Many facets of modernity within society during the early 20th century were called to take place simultaneously. For example, this is when America was becoming urbanized in industrialization, leading to World War I and facing an economic boom in the 1920s. Being modern in the early 20th century was major it was staying current those times and a product that was introduced during the time was new and innovative to the people who lived through it. Being a person who lived through the industrialization of transportation and the concept of modernity is the umbrella of the different aspects of how came to fruition in the 20th century. However, modernity in the beauty industry in the 20th century was the driving factor for innovative marketing and the new foundation for the new beauty standards of what people are influenced by in the industry today.

Modernity in the 20th century played a couple of factors that helped pave the way for this concept to come into play like the idolization of old Hollywood celebrities and advertising beauty standards to the public. Furthermore, women have been putting themselves through some eras to be able to be part of the decade's trends. Being modern in the 1900s, meant that women went through different periods of modernity which required either cinching their waists smaller with a corset, cutting their hair, or In the early 1900s, being modern meant conforming to the

trends of the era in order to fit in. This was especially true for women who had to follow the latest fashion and beauty standards to be considered modern like enhancing certain parts of their faces with makeup. According to the article, it states “the S-bend corset ushered in the era of the Gibson Girl, whose voluptuous bosom appeared enticing and less uptight to men and envious to other women. This slant forward gave a woman a more alluring, sensual look as if she were leaning into you (Mew, 2022). Modernity in the 1900s focused on women's depiction of the ideal curvaceous body which encouraged the term the “New Woman” which was pushed to the public as the hourglass figure to have during those days and the start of the early stages of makeup was starting to become popular amongst women. According to the author, it states “Though commercial cosmetics were gaining popularity, most women used homemade makeup or very limited products to achieve a porcelain doll look. This was characterized by ample amounts of rouge, defined eyebrows, powdered faces, and small and bright lips, but was mostly a “no makeup” makeup look (Mew, 2022). Even though during this time there wasn't an official brand that had made its debut for the commercialization of makeup products women earlier knew that before it came out there was a desire to enhance certain parts of the face to attract others to them.

Beauty in the Modernity aspect was used in the 20th century and was influenced by movie stars and musicians by exploring its own modernity within the society of what the ideal face of makeup was to look like. According to the article, it states “Makeup was worn exclusively by movie stars and musicians between 1900 and 1919 but despite there being limited consumers at the time, some major advancements were made in the cosmetics industry. Max Factor founded his own beauty lab in 1909 to create products for the stars, and the first metal tube of lipstick was invented in 1915. (Krause, 2019). Furthermore, women who were considered modern went

through a few more advances like ditching certain makeup trends that were no longer on trend anymore. Through the decades of the 1920s to the 1930's there was something else in beauty the less is more makeup look in the 1930s. According to the article, it states "Women typically applied petroleum jelly or olive oil to their eyelids to create a glossy effect and enhance their eyelashes with dark henna. To tie everything together, women commonly plucked their eyebrows into slim shapes with high arches and winged-out edges. Some women even shaved their eyebrows entirely and drew thin lines with a pencil. (Krause, 2019). The concept of modernity was used in the beauty industry by incorporating makeup as the official use by government officials, especially red lipstick; the staple for women in the 1940s for the purpose of morale-boosting who were alive during the war.

Modern times that we are living now in the 21st-century beauty culture and how the beauty industry has become such a part of the culture and how we do certain things. For example, makeup is no longer as simple as it used to be and has many more layers that are required but the same foundation as to why it was created remains over a hundred since beauty became such a mainstream concept in modern times. According to the article, it states "That is taking the beauty and cosmetics sector by storm is the surgery and clean beauty trend. At the same time, brands are becoming more understanding of the conflicting effects their works can have on the environment (n/a, 2021). People are becoming vocal about what's no longer working for them anymore, people are adamant about knowing what they're putting on their skin. Also, people want to know that the product that they are using is ethically manufactured and not putting other animals in harm for their product. So, people would much rather know that the product that they're supporting is following ethical means to creating their products.

Furthermore, Gen Z teens and millennials are advocates for the movement of being yourself which is the best personal definition that describes their unique meaning of beauty. According to the article, it states “Young adults also have more diverse beauty ideals, so they want inclusive product marketing that features models of color, of all colors, ages, sexes, and models that don’t identify as a binary gender. (Clark, 2019). So, when it comes to young people’s buying experience; they want to experience authenticity from brands, and they want retailers to see them as unique individuals not lump them all into one giant group of people.

Modern technology in beauty today has advanced in such a way that we no longer need to go into the store and have a one-on-one session to figure out what your right shade of foundation maybe because you can use your phone to find it for you. According to the article, it states “Google at I/O, has shared a preview of an AI-powered dermatology assist tool that helps you understand what’s going on with issues related to your body’s largest organ: your skin, hair, and nails (n/a, 2021). This is such a phenomenal tool to have because it can detect certain diseases faster than going into a doctor's office and possibly prolonging the issues; whereas now you have a smart device that lets you know the diagnosis ahead of time without wasting valuable time. According to the article, it states Gen Z is also a video–first generation. Whereas older generations turned to department store beauty counters for advice on how to make their eyes pop or their cheeks rosy, and red, teens and young adults today are turning to YouTube tutorials to discover how to get creative with their makeup (Clark, 2019). The in-store experience remains crucial to this day because there is only so much you can get through a screen so to try a beauty product it is important to still try it on before making the final purchase. Furthermore, having a

balance between the beauty industry being online and in person is important because there is only but so much you can get from the online and in-person shopping experience.

Over a hundred years since the start of the beauty industry there have been so many changes that have happened that were either positive or negative. But, regardless of it, all beauty remains in being in one of the most successful fashion businesses in the world. Even though the times have changed and people seeking more transparency, inclusivity, and overall authenticity there will always be acknowledgment of the importance of how the beauty industry became so popular and will remain for the years to come. What's to come next of the beauty industry is something that I'm not quite sure what will become of it but hopefully, issues like unethical use of beauty could be resolved with the rise of clean beauty where people are conscious of skincare and how it could be better in the beauty industry in general.

Bibliography

Clark, K. (2019, March 7). *How Gen Z is Changing the Face of Modern Beauty*. How Gen Z is changing the face of Modern Beauty. <https://www.paramount.com/news/audience-insights/how-gen-z-is-changing-the-face-of-modern-beauty>

Krause, A. (2019, April 25). *What the ideal face of makeup looked like over the last 100 years*. Insider. <https://www.insider.com/ideal-face-of-makeup-throughout-history-2019-4#world-war-ii-largely-impacted-standard-makeup-looks-of-the-1940s-4>

Mew, A. (2023, March 28). *The insane history of beauty standards since 1900*. Evie Magazine. <https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/the-insane-history-of-beauty-standards-since-1900>

N/A. (2021, August 22). How modern technology redefines the beauty industry in 2021/22. <https://f-trend.com/blog/how-modern-technology-redefining-beauty-industry-202122#:~:text=Beauty%20brands%20now%20source%20ingredients,clean%20and%20easy%20to%20use>.