

Critical Argument Paper

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BUF 4700: Contemporary Issues in Fashion

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Within our class discussions, lectures, and readings, we have consumed much of the beauty culture through the years, communicating the concept of what modernity was within those years. For the early 20th century (1900s), being modern meant embracing change, progress, and a break from traditional values. The beauty industry played a tremendous role in helping shape and promote this modern identity, specifically to women who, at the time, were fighting for the Women's Suffrage movement, expressing their freedom of speech and equality. Within our required book for the course, *Cosmetics Marketing: Strategy and Innovation in the Beauty Industry*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts by Horvath, Delphine, and Lindsay Karchin (2023), beginning our first chapter, A Brief History of Makeup, we are hit with the reality of beauty for women during the 1900s. During a time when film, theater, and music were thriving, women like Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein helped shape the modern world of beauty for women everywhere. Creating the concept of what beauty was, allowing makeup to be defined as self-expression, a way for modern women to separate themselves from their mothers and grandmothers, creating a new path for themselves.

Technology and the wonders of social media have played a massive role in what goes in and out of beauty culture and industry communities. Even now, having the target still be women, with society ever-evolving, the beauty culture and industry have shifted the significance of being modern, allowing inclusivity and diversity to be an essential factor. Fenty Beauty by Rhianna is a current beauty industry that has paved the way for its diversity and inclusivity within the market. Having launched in 2017, it is one of the first brands to introduce, during their launch, 40 shades of foundation, having changed to 50 in 2019 (Ilchi, 2019). Fenty Beauty by Rhianna has shown other brands a new definition of what modern means today. Redefining the concept of what

beauty means, giving women and other genders equality and representation within the market. With this mentioned, one brand that has also tried and is, as of 2023, considered the most inclusive brand is MAC cosmetics. With the help of AI and the advanced technology of today, researchers Shivaji and Klein examined the presence of six "identity dimensions" through AI, comparing skin tone, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, body size, and disability — across each brand's advertisements, product lineup, and public-facing DEI commitments (Pauly, 2023). MAC Cosmetics ranked number one in this search. It is no surprise that since the 1980s, MAC Cosmetics has also considered itself an all-inclusive, all-divested brand. Their slogan being “All Ages, All Races, All Sexes,” with sexes now changed to “Genders” as of 2023. The empowerment and self-expression of both Fenty Beauty and MAC Cosmetics is what is defined as being modern today.

However, today, many would also define the term “modern” as mainly what is trending now through social media. As in the 1920s, now in 2023, the influences of pop culture have allowed for trends to circulate on selling what is “hot.” With society being heavily involved with the new advancements of social media and technology, modern beauty culture incorporates technology, such as filters, photoshop, and apps that allow users to try on makeup, hairstyles, and skin care products virtually. This advancement of technology has enhanced the consumer's idea of beauty. Many celebrities and social media influencers have tried redefining, in their terms, what modern beauty means. The Kardashians are an example of this; with their perfect bodies and clean, smooth skin, many consumers have bought into purchasing their products in hopes of looking like them. Authenticity is tossed around when discussing modernity, and many would say social media has not allowed authenticity, sustainability, or individuality to be discussed. Although many might have the wrong idea about social media and the influencers/celebrities on

it, it is essential to understand the social progression social media has allowed for the beauty culture and many of the beauty industries to express. It has promoted innovation and supported the growth of diverse businesses overall. Allowing the younger generation to also redefine their definition of beauty.

Although the term modern varies, the idea of modern beauty is ever-changing. Within the beauty industry and culture, there has always been an embrace of skin color, body shape, gender identity, and more. Modern beauty can differ significantly among cultures, generations, and people. To be modern in terms of beauty, it is crucial to adopt the values and trends that align with your personal preferences while acknowledging and appreciating the uniqueness and diversity of others. The overall concept of being modern today can be defined as confidence, pleasure, and a sense of belonging.

Resources

Ilchi, L. (2019, March 19). *9 Makeup Brands That Offer 50-Plus Foundation Shades for Every Skin Tone*. WWD.

<https://wwd.com/feature/makeup-brands-foundation-shades-for-every-skin-tone-1203087469>

Karchin, L., & Horvath, D. (2023). *Cosmetics Marketing*. Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

The Fenty Effect Is Real. (2023, October 19). *Highsnobiety*.

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/most-inclusive-makeup-brands-seeme-index-rankin>