

**Diversity and Inclusion in the Beauty and Cosmetic Advertising and its Impact on  
Corporate Reputation**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Weissman School of Arts and Science  
Baruch College, The City University of New York  
In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS  
In  
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

By  
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May 2022

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## **1.0 Introduction**

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.”

In the current political, economic, and social state of the world, CEO’s and corporate communicators are paying more attention to their brand reputation. Across many industries, reputation management has been a top priority, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing issues surrounding gender, race, and ethnicity. For instance, the Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and the Stop Asian Hate movement, just to name a few. Additionally, the rise of digital advertising and influencer marketing has made it easier for consumers to call out or “cancel” companies that are not transparent and authentic. The beauty and cosmetic industry, for example, continues to face several challenges involving diversity and representation in product development and advertising.

Makeup and skincare have been popularized for their versatility. More specifically, it gives people the ability to enhance facial features, or conceal imperfections. Makeup has also been used a tool for creative expression. Products like foundations, concealers, eyeshadows have been tied to a specific gender, women. However, in the more recent years, corporations have expanded their focus to improve diversity and inclusion, helping to grow their brand, their reputation, and target audience. For example, people who identify across various points of the gender spectrum use makeup as a tool to break stereotypes surrounding the beauty industry. In 2016, CoverGirl, a well-known cosmetic company, gave their brand a new face. They named James Charles, YouTuber and social media influencer, the first male brand ambassador (Abelman, 2016). This industry groundbreaking move symbolized a new normalization of men in makeup. This also allowed other brands to reevaluate their DEI efforts.

Makeup and skincare are used differently among industries and cultures. For example, theatrical performers may use makeup and prosthetics to simulate an injury or wound on stage or in a movie. Additionally, in drag culture, makeup is used to exaggerate and draw attention to their features (Kornstein, 2019, p. 6). Korean makeup trends and skincare have also dominated the industry. They are known for their rich skincare products and minimal makeup looks that appear youthful and soft (Agustina and Lukman, 2017, p. 6).

With the help of technology and years of scientific research, makeup and skincare have come a long way. The creation of waterproof makeup, and the discovery of anti-aging ingredients, are just two examples of how cosmetics have evolved. Despite these revolutionary innovations, there is one prevailing challenge within the industry. For decades, brands have primarily marketed their products toward people with lighter complexions (Hunter, 2007, p. 13). Makeup brands have consistently left out people of color in their line of foundations, lipsticks, concealers, skincare, and their advertising for these products.

As a person of color and an avid consumer of cosmetics, it is important to call upon companies to be more considerate of darker skin-toned individuals and their undertones. Consumers today are invested in companies that deliver quality products and are transparent with their audience in all aspects, including their DEI initiatives and efforts in advertising. Inclusivity in the media, will ultimately drive positive change in the industry and improve brand reputation. Additionally, it embraces all walks of life, creating a more relatable experience for consumers and a sense of belonging for marginalized groups. While many brands have jumped on the opportunity to re-establish their position and reputation in the industry, others have missed the mark or have not yet made the effort. Beauty influencer and makeup

artist, Katrina Marrufo says, “What I’ve seen just through the years of getting PR stuff, it always just seems that anyone darker than, like, a medium tan is just an afterthought” (Ingram, para. 8).

Across many organizations, corporate communicators take part in conversations with executives, managers, and individuals in marketing and advertising roles to bring awareness to the important issues surrounding DEI today. Bringing awareness to these challenges opens up several opportunities to assess gaps in company DEI efforts, internally and externally. This is a study of the beauty and cosmetic industry and how corporate reputation is shaped by representation in advertising and product development. The research aims to demonstrate select ways how brands have marketed their products throughout history by retrieving print advertisements from various archives. I draw conclusions based on textual information provided with the print ads, as well as design choices, background, people, and/or products that are included and how they are presented.

I then compare my historical analysis to current marketing trends and ways that companies have worked to combat inequality in their products by analyzing marketing done on social media platforms like YouTube, and Instagram. By analyzing video and print campaigns from television and social media, new and old, I will identify common themes, differences, and changes in the way diverse groups are represented. Exploring images and videos will help to understand the evolution of diversity and inclusivity in the beauty industry and more importantly, how companies today choose, or do not choose to represent minorities in their campaigns.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Corporate Reputation and Advertising**

A company’s reputation is often influenced by its relationships with stakeholders and the messages they convey to the public. Company earnings, employee and consumer satisfaction,

Corporate Social responsibility (CSR), and knowledge of the ever-changing industry, are some factors that contribute to a company's reputation. However, corporate reputation as it relates to advertising can be attributed to "firm credibility, brand equity, and value judgment among society" (Fassbender, 2020, p.10).

Advertising that convey positive messages like inclusion, continue to make a tremendous impact on the industry. Since the launch of their "Real Beauty" campaign in 2004, Dove has remained one of the most impactful brands in beauty. After surveying 3,000 women in 10 different countries, research showed that only 2% of women felt beautiful (Rogers, 2021). Since then, the brand has been committed to making women feel beautiful in their own skin. In 2013, Dove carried on the campaign through a social experiment. While partitioned from one another, women were asked to describe themselves to a sketch artist. The women were then asked to describe each other to the sketch artist. The results showed that the self-described sketches were inconsistent with the sketches described by another woman. It concluded that women judge themselves more harshly and are quick to hone in on their flaws, while these "flaws" are invisible to others (Rogers).

Media Analytics Executive, Emily Rogers, writes, "Campaigns are successful when the message is relevant and the conversation keeps going. Dove nailed it on that note...". As a result, "It elicited a strong emotional response and high shareability rate from viewers" (Rogers, 2021, para. 6). Overall, Dove's commitment to their company values impacted how stakeholders perceived the brand.

## **2.2 The Evolution of Makeup**

History gives us a window into the world of makeup, making it possible to understand its various purposes. Most recognized for their use of makeup and skincare were the ancient

Egyptians. They took pride in the way they maintained their hygiene. They bathed in water from rivers, use natural oils to moisturize and hydrate their bodies, and “Everyone, regardless of age or gender, wore makeup” (Chaudhri, Jain, 2009, p. 164). Makeup in ancient Egyptian culture was used for more than just enhancing one’s beauty. Like modern day eyeliners, they used kohl, a black pigment that was lined around the eyes to prevent damage from the harmful rays of the sun. In addition, “Cosmetics and all their accoutrements had spiritual and ritual significance, too. Various containers and palettes might be decorated with symbols associated with rejuvenation, or animal pigments might be ground into the makeup to imbue the wearer with some of their powers,” (Riley Black, 2022, para. 2).

“In eighteenth-century America, both men and women of the upper classes wore make-up. But, shortly after the American Revolution the use of visible “paint” cosmetics (colored cosmetic for lips, skin, eyes, and nails) by either gender gradually became socially unacceptable,” (Smithsonian, para. 1). However, women continued to wear makeup in the nineteenth century. They created makeup and skincare recipes that spread throughout households that helped to reduce the appearance of imperfections on the skin. Some women enjoyed experimenting with colors, however, this was frowned upon as makeup has often been used to maintain standards of a heteropatriarchal society. Men have influenced the ways women wore makeup to make it more suitable or more attractive for them. “Painting one’s face was considered vulgar and was associated with prostitution, so any product used needed to appear “natural,” (Smithsonian, para. 1).

By the twentieth century, makeup became socially acceptable and women wore makeup that would imitate what they saw on television, accomplishing the “Hollywood” look. In addition, as the U.S became more diverse, white women would also experiment with makeup to

look more “ethnic” by tanning, something that was once associated with “working-class women who performed outdoor labor; now a tan identified a woman as modern and healthy, participating in outdoor recreations and leisure,” (Smithsonian, para. 3).

Fast forward, makeup in the twenty-first century evolved into much more than a product you can buy at a drugstore. Beauty products have made their mark in retail stores like Sephora and Ulta. Additionally, makeup how-to’s and tutorials became popular in the social media atmosphere, specifically YouTube in the late 2000’s with Michelle Phan being one of the most recognizable people in the online beauty community (Tang, Gu, Whinston, 2012, p.1). One important milestone in this era was gender representation and the breaking of stereotypes in the industry. Social media had redefined the purpose of makeup. People of all genders and sexualities were becoming the face of makeup campaigns, like James Charles, Jeffree Star, and Manny MUA (Komulainen and Hjort, 2017, p.3).

Most brands made the effort to normalize extensive shade ranges in their line of foundations and concealers, in comparison, to a time when the standard shade range consisted of light, medium, and dark for all genders. Some companies have gone to great lengths to even accommodate skin concerns like skin texture and hyperpigmentation by making products that color correct and are made with natural and environmentally friendly ingredients.

### **2.3 Colorism and Shade Range**

While there have been many milestones in beauty inclusivity, it is important to address the root of color discrimination in the cosmetic industry. Makeup in America has dated back to the 1880s (Smithsonian, para. 2). When makeup became popular in the 1900s, products were primarily marketed to high-class white women. During a time of racial discrimination and segregation in America, the demand for shade range was overlooked by the media. Struggling to



find representation in this industry, women of color took matters into their own hands and created “a niche market, with a handful of companies creating makeup specifically for black women,” (Werle, 2019, p. 3).

For decades, there has been an issue of favoritism of lighter-skinned individuals over individuals with darker complexions in the media/entertainment industry, income, politics, education, etc. This favoritism constitutes colorism. Medium to darker skin is often viewed as insignificant or unattractive. When black people/bodies were first featured in advertising for beauty products, it was to promote products that claimed to “help” darker skin tone individuals lighten their complexion, for example. The issue presents itself in American culture and many other cultures as well. For instance, across Asia, the market for skin-lightening products continues to grow. “Fair & Lovely, a skin-whitening cream that used to come with a shade guide, generates over \$500 million in revenue from India alone for Unilever’s India group,” (Rao and Flora, 2021, para. 6).

Valmor Products Co. was started in 1926 by chemist Morton Neumann. He created products for black women that he thought would cater to their hair and skin care needs. One product called Valmor’s Sweet Georgia Brown Face Powder essentially promised to make black women more attractive. “It promised a “lighter appearance in 10 seconds” and pointed out that the powder “is specially made to give tan and dark complexions the BRIGHTER attractive beauty that everybody admires,”” (Nittle, 2018, para. 11). Yet again, this is an example of way that men used their place in society to dictate the way women looked and dressed.

History has shown its liking to lighter complexions in several aspects of life. For example, casting for roles in the entertainment business. In addition, it has been ingrained in our childhood through nursery rhymes (Frisby, 2019):

*“If you’re black, stay back;  
if you’re brown, stick around;  
if you’re yellow, you’re mellow;  
if you’re white, you’re all right.”*

This nursery rhyme, started in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reinforced the idea that darker skin tones were unattractive. It gave young children the idea that skin color defined your place in society. Furthermore, “It was later made into a song by Big Bill Broonzy about the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation in the United States based on the “separate but equal” doctrine of the U.S. Supreme Court,” (Hussain, 2018, para. 4).

While colorism still exists today, companies have stepped up their efforts to be more inclusive in their makeup shade range. “By having a diverse workforce, you are more likely to learn about the concerns and preferences of various population segments. This allows you to adjust your products or services to make them more enticing to these groups, potentially leading to an increase in your number of customers,” (TechWish, para. 10). In 2018, Nigerian-American YouTuber, Jackie Aina collaborated with Too Faced to expand their foundation shade range. Jackie worked diligently behind the scenes to create shades that catered to darker complexions and their various undertones. This was received well by the public and was a pivotal moment in the beauty community as it challenged other brands to listen to diverse voices within their companies.

While notable milestones like these have helped pave the way for other brands in the industry, there have also been setbacks. In 2018, makeup artists, beauty gurus, and influencers took to Instagram their opinions on the Beauty Blender controversy. Beauty Blender was founded by Latina celebrity makeup artist, Rea Ann Silva. After the release of their first makeup



**Figure 1- Instagram**

to choose from. They responded to one comment on Instagram saying, “We hear you but the image on trendmood’s post has a wacky filter and doesn’t give a true representation of our shade range,” (Capon, 2018, Image 4).

This also angered many customers as they looked to Rea Ann Silva as an example of a strong woman of color, dominating the beauty industry. As a Latina who has experienced exclusion because of her background, audiences expected more from her brand. “I always try to do the most and not the least...Being Latina, we are a very colorful people. We are not afraid of color. We embrace color. And we celebrate color,” (Moten, 2020, para. 14). Consumers are likely to be loyal to brands that stay committed to their core beliefs and values. Therefore, makeup lovers everywhere had a hard time forgiving the company for this mistake, especially after the release of Fenty Beauty foundations.

## **2.4 The “Fenty Effect”**

Fenty Beauty was founded by singer Rihanna in 2017. Their first launch included a remarkable shade range of forty foundations. Since their launch, the company has added ten

product, the Bounce™ Liquid Whip Long Wear Foundation, customers viewed their brand differently. A promotional image of the new foundations was first posted on Instagram by the famous beauty news account @trendmood1 in Figure 1. The top three rows of foundations cater to fairer skin tones. The last row gave those with medium to dark skin a smaller selection of shades

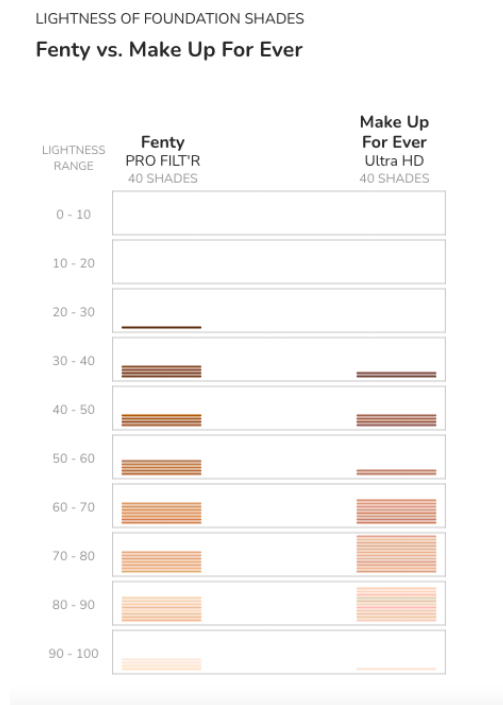
more shades to their collection (Figure 2). Their slogan, “Beauty for All” is exactly what they established.



**Figure 2**

Fenty Beauty set a high standard that many other companies have started to question whether they were being inclusive enough, calling it the “Fenty Effect”. According to Saputo (2018), “It was a call to action for all industries to do more and challenge the status quo. In beauty, it caused a chain reaction of brands that responded positively by expanding their makeup lines to be more inclusive” (para. 16).

Fenty became the first brand to fill a gap in the market and do it successfully. The brand stands out because of their ability to “put their money where their mouth is”. That is, to make people of all shapes, sizes, races, religions, and genders feel included. In Figure 3, it measures the distribution of each shade of the Fenty Beauty foundation versus



**Figure 3**

another brand, Makeup Forever, which came out with its own 40 shade foundation line shortly after Fenty. The graph shows that the representation between each range is consistent and almost evenly distributed on the Fenty side. The Makeup Forever side shows that majority of their shades are catered to those with lighter skin tones. Therefore, as many brands are trying their best to be inclusive, they still have difficulty creating shades that work.

Before Rihanna, there was Madam C.J. Walker. Madam C.J. Walker was the first black woman to incorporate her own beauty company, called Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company. She created a line of hair products and cosmetics that were formulated specifically for black women.

She later became the “first woman in the United States to become a self-made millionaire, as well as a Black philanthropist and activist” (Paul Mitchell, the School, para. 9). Despite these milestones, there is still much room for improvement in the industry. Fenty Beauty has revolutionized the beauty industry through its inclusive campaigns, products, and strong corporate values.

## **2.5 Gender Representation**

Cis-women, otherwise known as non-trans or women who identify with their sex assigned at birth (TransHub, para.2), have most often been the face of the beauty industry. Everything from hair, makeup, skincare, and fashion, it is safe to say that there is an immense amount of pressure for women to maintain their appearance and hygiene in order to meet society’s standard of beauty. Women are constantly criticized for the clothes they wear, their ability to style and apply their hair and makeup, all while being the target of anti-aging products that promise to reverse signs of aging. “...girls and women are generally expected to dress in

traditionally feminine clothing and to be polite, accommodating, and nurturing, while men in society are expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold,” (Jairath & Daima, 2009, p. 1640).

For a long time, men were expected to be masculine, show little to no emotion, and prioritize other things over worrying about appearance and hygiene. This demonstrates the impact that media has on what is considered beautiful for women and the lack of acknowledgment for men and other genders in the industry.

According to the World Health Organization, gender is defined by many things. It involves characteristics that society deems as masculine, feminine, and/ or androgynous. It is constructed of roles, norms, and behaviors. Over the years, society has concluded that the idea of gender has is an individual experience and feeling. This is known also known as gender identity (Steensma, Kreukels, Vries, and Kettenis, 2013, p.3). Gender identity can be associated with or different from the gender a person was assigned at birth. Similarly, gender expression is the way someone presents themselves. Gender is expressed through physical appearance, behavior, or mannerisms; for example, hair, makeup, fashion sense, and even voice (Ontario Human Rights Commission, para. 4).

“Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity,” (World Health Organization, para. 3). It is also important to understand gender non-conforming and transgender individuals. Gender non-conforming individuals do not identify with the stereotypical roles of their sex (assigned at birth). For example, a man who wears makeup and isn’t afraid to show their emotions, or a woman who chooses to pursue an education

and a career in place of being a stay-at-home wife or mother. Lastly, it is important to understand that transgender

“is an umbrella term referring to people with diverse gender identities and expressions that differ from stereotypical gender norms. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, trans woman (male-to-female MTF), trans man (female-to-male FTM), transsexual, cross-dressers, or gender non-conforming, gender variant or genderqueer,” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, para. 6).

Now that these terms have been defined, we can acknowledge that brands have not been authentic with their DEI efforts. Modern-day individuals have normalized gender fluidity, especially with the help of entertainment and social media. “With a wider reach of pop culture in the 21st century, and with more male celebrities exploring gender-bending fashion and makeup concepts- like actor Jaden Smith, singer Harry Styles, beauty guru Jeffrey Star and more- the boundaries between masculine and feminine in terms of fashion and beauty are blurring,” (Jairath & Daima, 2009, p. 1639). With this, brands continue to miss that mark in their line of beauty products and their campaigns. Gender fluidity is an emerging market that companies should strive to reach.

Gender fluidity can be expressed simply in the way products are marketed. For example, most shampoos, perfumes, and skincare products are marketed towards women, while companies must create separate items labeled “for men”, in order to reach their male audience. This issue is still apparent in many other industries besides beauty. The gender binary is reinforced in children’s books, clothes, and toys. They are most often defined by the colors pink, for girls, and blue, for boys. Children’s toys are also often defined with roles associated with men and women.

For example, baby dolls, kitchen playsets, and cleaning toy sets are sold to young girls, while boys choose from toys associated with building, trucks, and sports.

While these stereotypes have been ingrained into our lifestyle, the beauty industry has slowly made efforts to create a welcoming environment for all genders. Fenty Beauty, a line of makeup and skincare founded by singer, Rihanna, has set the stage for other brands to improve their own diversity and inclusion efforts. An ad campaign for their skincare line included both men and women of all races. These broke barriers in the industry and made the bold statement that skincare is not just for women. “Dubbed as “the new culture of skincare”, the Rihanna also pointed out that the new skincare range is made for all genders as part of her commitment to inclusivity.’ (Nylon Singapore, 2020, para. 4).



(Nylon Singapore, 2020)

Drag culture has also contributed to the way the everyday person wears makeup. In drag, artists have come across ways to make their makeup more vibrant, last longer, and appear flawless. A lot of these techniques are reflected in the way the average person applies makeup. However, there are several issues facing the drag community that need to be addressed.

“A number of studies comparing male and female skin have found that sebum content and trans epidermal water loss are higher in men. In addition, men are more prone to skin pigmentation, inflammatory conditions of the skin (such as acne) and deep wrinkling of



facial skin despite having thicker skin. These findings are thought to be partially influenced by sex hormones,” (Wong, 2021, para. 4).

This also demonstrates the need for more inclusivity in the formulation of makeup and skincare for men.

## **2.6 LGBTQ+ Representation in the Makeup Industry**

Queer individuals dominate a large population of the beauty community. Some of the most well-known beauty influencers are a part of the LGBTQ+ community. For example, James Charles, Patrick Starrr, Jeffree Star, Bretman Rock, and NikkiTutorials are all famous for their contributions to makeup and trends in the industry (Lahmami, 2021). These influencers started their careers by posting video tutorials on YouTube. Some having no professional experience prior to these videos, shared techniques and tips for applying foundation, eyeshadow, and filling in your eyebrows. They quickly gained fame after viewers found their content helpful. While also dominating the beauty industry, they also represent the LGBTQ+ community.

Most recently, famous “beauty guru” NikkiTutorials had proudly come out as transgender which left a huge impact on others. She was applauded for her courage and admired by her followers (Zhang, 2022). In addition, beauty guru Jeffree Star has always been known for representing androgynous individuals in his years as a musician and now a beauty influencer.

## **3.0 Methodology**

Qualitative research “enables researchers to obtain insights into what it feels like to be another person and to understand the world as another experiences it” (Austin, Sutton, 2014, para. 2). Representation in all aspects of the beauty industry matters. As we’ve discussed only some of the key differences among people in our society, it is also important to acknowledge intersectionality. Intersectionality is defined by many things such as power, class, privilege, race,

sexual orientation, physical ability, age, etc. Overall, the intersectionality theory states that “Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people” (Taylor, 2019, para. 2).

Through a historical analysis of advertising, I will draw conclusions of how large corporations have evolved when promoting aspects of diversity. The analysis will uncover specific patterns in the beauty and cosmetic industry regarding representation of diverse groups, or the lack thereof.

### **3.1 Research questions:**

1. What changes in representation of gender, age, skin tone, skin type, and ideas of femininity and masculinity can be seen in historic examples of cosmetic advertising and contemporary social media?
2. How does a lack of attention to diversity and inclusion in beauty and cosmetic advertising effect brand reputation?

### **3.2 Archives**

Data was collected from print advertisement archives. Archived images are a great way to identify significant changes throughout history. “They help to contextualize a specific time/or place of interest, for fleshing out ‘what things looked like then’”. In addition, it is beneficial to “know what it actually looked like and not just our idea of what it looked like,” (The American Archivist, para. 26).

The images established an understanding of the role diverse groups have played in the branding of cosmetic companies and how it may have impacted their reputation at the time. To avoid biases, I compared print ads of two companies. The year of which the print ads came from

were at the start of decades starting from the 1920's to 2010's, as the 1920's was notable for individuals, more specifically women, gaining freedom to express themselves creatively through makeup and fashion.

### **3.3 Social Media**

To gain a perspective of what modern day diversity in the beauty and cosmetic industry looks like, I also analyzed images and videos pulled from different social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. These images and videos visually represent progression for diverse groups in the industry. They will also provide case studies relevant to the topic of inclusion in the advertising of products.

## **4.0 Results**

The purpose of this research was examine how select cosmetic and beauty companies have approached diversity and inclusion in their advertising and how it impacts corporate reputation. The results detailed below provide historical analysis of trends and themes in the beauty industry that have shaped the way companies continue to advertise their brand today. This analysis demonstrates the changes in representation of gender, age, skin tone, skin type, and ideas of femininity and masculinity. The case studies presented serves as examples of how diversity-related aspects have either harmed or helped a company's character. Makeup has played a significant role in the world of television, drag, and now social media. As today's generation is becoming more involved in corporate reputation and responsibility, the demand for representation increases. This section will discuss the prominent themes occurring throughout the data collection.

#### 4.1 Themes of Gender, Femininity, and Masculinity

First, female representation in beauty and cosmetic advertising have always been prominent. Yet as the decades progress, the shifting notions of femininity become apparent. In the 1920's the illustrations of women appear soft, delicate, and innocent (Appendix C, image set 1.1). Trends in the 1930's demonstrate the same innocence, but in the context of catering to the opposite sex. Their feminine innocence fades in the next decade as the narrative now portrays women as promiscuous and romantic. The advertisements quote things such as, "Beautiful Eyes for You," "for your dream romance... hold him tonight...". Ultimately, these images and language emphasize the more sexual features of a woman's face, her lips and her long eyelashes. Sexuality plays a role in these ads. The lack of representation in regard to the LGBTQ+ community is still prevalent.

Some companies may advocate for diversity and inclusion, while leaving out certain aspects that may pose a threat to their sales. According to Statistica, "a study from May 2019, seven percent of responding U.S. adults said that they would be more likely to purchase a product after seeing a same-sex couple in an ad. At the same time 18 percent said they would be less likely to purchase a product for which an ad featured a same-sex couple." The first appearance of a same-sex couple in the sample of images occurs in 2019 (Appendix C, Image Set 2.0). This ad for Mac Cosmetics, shows two men embracing one another. Since Mac has been known for their inclusivity, this comes as no surprise to their consumers. However, we can assume based on statistics that some consumers were unhappy when seeing a same sex couple, while others were inclined to support or purchase from the brand.

While it is evident that advertisers have continuously changed the narrative of what women should look like in the eyes of cis, heterosexual men, in the more recent decades, men have challenged traditional ideas of masculinity. Though men in the entertainment industry have worn makeup throughout these decades, in “the later 20th century, makeup for men was hardly mainstream. Instead, it was reserved for the fringe: artists and rock 'n' rollers like Boy George, David Bowie, and Prince. Around this time, though, many of the most legendary male makeup artists began working in the field,” (Montell, 2020, para. 8). From 2010’s to today, men have appeared in mainstream beauty and cosmetic advertising. Ultimately, continuing to break down walls and blurring the lines of gender norms.

#### 4.2 Skin Tone/ Product Shade Range

The beauty and cosmetic industry continues to be one of the greatest contributions to modern day beauty standards. From the 1920’s to the 60’s, thin, white women with Eurocentric features were highly idolized, while minority consumers have struggled to find other women in beauty campaigns that resembled them. Therefore, we can assume that companies have neglected the needs of women and men of color in their advertising. To further support this claim, brand like CoverGirl, famous for picking models and celebrities as ambassadors for their brand, signed the first woman of color, Lana Oglivie only in 1992 (figure 4). The first sight of representation of black women in the data collection appeared in the Appendix C, Image Set 1.6, in an ad for waterproof makeup. The



Figure 4

second, comes from a Revlon campaign called “The Most Unforgettable Women in the World” (Appendix C, Image Set 1.7). It shows a trio of black women, fierce and empowered in their own skin and big hair. In the 2009 advertisement for Rimmel London, we see a wide arrangement of foundation shades where previously women were to choose light, medium, and dark (Appendix C, Image Set 1.9).

As discussed earlier, after the release of Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, it set a new standard for cosmetic companies and brands worked quickly to be more inclusive in their shade range as well. We see this in Lancôme’s foundation ad in 2018 (Appendix C, Image Set 2.0). It includes a more extended shade range (40 shades) than we’ve seen before. Alongside is an image of actress Lupita Nyong'o, a great representation of deep dark skinned women across the globe. Similar patterns continue throughout the following decades.

### **4.3 Skin Texture as it Pertains to Gender and Age**

The promotional images and video stills from 2022 (Appendix C, Image Set 2.1), display people who identify across various points of the gender spectrum, individuals with textured and/or matured skin. Textured skin can be defined by many characteristics. For example, some individuals have facial hair as seen in the 2022 images. Those who wear makeup with facial hair may want to cover the appearance of hair and/ or skin discoloration, bumps, and burns that may come with shaving, not to mention five o’clock shadows.

It is common for people of all ages to take part in caring for their skin, which is why in the 2020 Fenty Beauty video campaign (Appendix C, Image Set 2.1), it featured men and women of different skin tones. We see a diverse group of models, some being recognizable celebrities like Lil Nas X, A\$AP Rocky, and Rihanna herself. It emphasizes that skincare, typically targeted towards women, can be used by everyone. Although this brand has broken barriers and

challenged stereotypes, the campaign noticeably lacked people of different ages. This addition would create a more accurate representation of their target audience.

In the data collected, representation of mature skin appears less frequently. The first example of a makeup product being catered to mature skin is in the 2020's data set (Appendix C, Image Set 2.1). The images from this year were gathered from the Instagram of One Size Beauty. The first woman, Leslie Munsell, endorses the specific product being advertised, setting powder being used on mature skin. Mature skin can be also defined by many things, but is most commonly used as an umbrella term for aging skin. More specifically, as one gets older they will inevitably develop fine lines, wrinkles, sun spots, etc. Aging skin is commonly used in a negative manner, especially for women as standards of beauty have always revolved around maintaining one's appearance of youthfulness. Some might agree with the idea of preserving our appearance, and others may not. True beauty comes when a person embraces what makes them feel the most confident.

## **5.0 Discussion**

The analysis of cosmetic advertisements throughout history in the beauty and cosmetics industry helps to illustrate how little this industry has evolved over time in terms of diverse representations. Companies like Maybelline, Revlon, and Max Factor, in the first few decades, have promoted the idea that individuals of a certain demographic are the preferred standard of beauty. Ultimately, leaving several marginalized groups feeling unseen by brands. While the results of the data show that large corporations have gradually spotlighted minority consumers in the media as it pertains to makeup, people of color, and those representing various genders and sexualities, consumers continue to see a gap in representation and products that cater to their specific skin concerns, textures, and undertones.

Consumers want to know that their voices are being heard and that brands are being authentic (Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, and Grohmann, 2015, p. 2). Brands that are inclusive create a safe space for minorities to not only be creative, but more importantly, to have access to products that cater to their needs. It is also important to be authentic as companies who use diversity and inclusion as a marketing strategy may not always deliver products the way they intend to. This communicates that the company does not completely align with these values. Instead, consumers may view it as a ploy to drive sales, and to ultimately avoid losing their audience to a company that cares. It is important to note that competition can sometimes drive companies to make drastic changes that may not benefit them or the consumers. The Language of Diversity Report from 2021 states that 76% of “Communicators reported that their organizations were more likely to publicly express a commitment to DEI than to take action”.

“To make a real impact and inspire consumers, brands must be authentic in their approach.

Diversity in beauty is not a marketing tactic – it’s an essential practice that requires brands to listen and collaborate with members of communities they hope to reach to ensure successful and meaningful products and campaigns. Inclusion is an ongoing (and necessary) process that needs to be considered during every phase of the product development process,”

(Hennigan, 2021, para. 5).

In the digital age of advertising, many brands gain their reputation in ways such as paid, earned, and owned media. One of the more popular ways in today’s world is earned media, more specifically, social media. In the Beauty Blender controversy discussed previously, it demonstrates the importance of practicing diversity in all aspects. In addition, it demonstrates how one mistake can spark negative public engagement that can harm the reputation of a brand.



It can be considered a bad example of using DEI as a marketing strategy, or “jumping on the band-wagon” to appear inclusive to their consumers.

- "Look at that shade range.. another #racist #whitewashed brand,”
- “Guess y'all only know 7 WOC because those are the only shades we can use,”
- "Bounce back to the lab and create more shades for darker skin tones,"
- "How come there's two rows of the same shade? But revolutionary with that foundation tray, I'll give you that!" (Krause, 2018, para.3)

Beauty Blender suffered tremendous reputational damage. Being labeled as “racist” and “whitewashed” are harsh allegations to comeback from, especially in an environment where cancel culture is prevalent. In the end, popular beauty and cosmetic companies will continue to underrepresent margins of people in their advertising if they are not authentic in their efforts.

In the more recent years, influencers have used their platforms to create positive change. "I want to make sure that everyone can see a little bit of themselves in the brand," says Patrick Starr of One/Size Beauty. One Size, a brand that revolves around inclusivity, has set a precedent for other brands in the industry. Their motto is, “Makeup is a one/ size fits all”. In other words, makeup should be associate with a specific gender, age, race, etc. This brand wears its value on its sleeve. Companies can use a similar storytelling approach in their advertising to further connect with their audiences.

“The founder already sees the impact of ONE/SIZE in the heartfelt messages he's received since announcing it. "We're really changing people's lives," he shares, holding back tears. Thinking of the people who have told him that they couldn't be themselves, or the statistics of suicide risk for LGBTQ+ youth, he adds: "I've felt I've had due diligence and a purpose of celebrating my uniqueness for them." (Diaz, 2020, para. 6).

Consumers today like to know that the brands they purchase from are genuine. It also helps when creators, brand ambassadors, and CEO's are relatable and are aligned with the continuous changes in the industry.

The print ads chosen for each decade present only a glimpse of the common beauty, fashion, and advertising trends. These ads capture the essence of the way different individuals are portrayed in the media. In addition, videos were chosen based on recent controversies and milestones in the industry. The ads and videos collected to represent each decade aims to highlight the tremendous progress within society, while also noting the downfalls and areas of improvement. The conclusions drawn are based on values and their frequencies. For the convenience of this research, the limitations of this study remain in the collection of data as it does not capture the various aspects and definitions of diversity and inclusion.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Throughout American history, being white, skinny, having blonde hair and blue eyes were the beauty standard. Despite the efforts to diversify beauty, white normativity continues to be an issue. With this in mind, large corporations should be using their platforms to promote healthy standards of beauty, which include representation. Representation in the beauty industry plays a huge role in how people perceive beauty. Giving minorities a space to express themselves in the cosmetic industry teaches people, young and old, that diverse voices matter, that they are important and have value. It also set a precedent for companies that are just starting out. Brands like Fenty Beauty have only been the start of what should be practiced across the board.

Overall, generations of today have challenged large corporations to be inclusive in every aspect of their business. "63% of Americans say they are inspired by beauty brands that show diversity in advertising. Consumers want to see diversity in beauty ads because it "reflects real

life” (68%) and because it “shows that there are different ways to be beautiful” (56%)” (Hennigan, 2021, para. 3). With more emphasis on inclusion and diversity, corporate communicators have felt the pressure to take a stand on issues surrounding D&I in both the creation and advertising of their products. Brands that have amplified their voices have seen positive feedback, ultimately, boosting their reputations.

## 7.0 Appendix A

**Table of Codes**

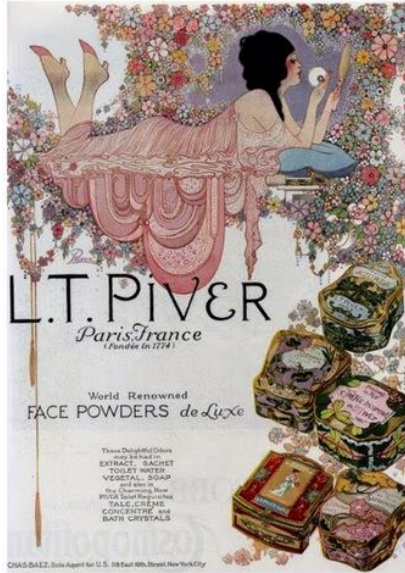
<b>Descriptive Coding for Images + Video</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Women/ Men</li> <li>2. Feminine/Masculine</li> <li>3. Makeup</li> <li>4. Beauty</li> <li>5. Skin</li> <li>6. Skin tone</li> <li>7. Complexion</li> <li>8. Age</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Text</li> <li>10. Background</li> <li>11. Role</li> <li>12. Setting</li> <li>13. Scenario</li> <li>14. Props</li> <li>15. Products</li> <li>16. Language</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presence (facial expression, attire, hair)</li> <li>2. Hints to gender stereotypes</li> <li>3. Gender roles</li> <li>4. Product placement</li> <li>5. Tone of text + audio</li> <li>6. Storyline</li> </ol>

**8.0 Appendix B****Value Chart**

	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male Representation	1.2, 2.1
	Female Representation	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.0, 2.1,
<b>Romantic Relationships</b>	Female-Male Relationships	1.2, 1.2,
	LGBTQ+ Representation	2.0, 2.1
<b>Skin Tone/ Product Shade Range</b>	Light	1.1, 1.2, 1.3,1.4,1.5,1.6, 1.7, 1.8,1.9, 2.0, 2.1
	Medium	1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.1
	Dark	2.0, 2.1
<b>Textured/ Mature Skin</b>		2.1

9.0 Appendix C- Data Collection

Image Set 1.1



(Decade: 1920's)

Image Set 1.2



(Decade: 1930's)





Image Set 1.5



(Decade: 1960's)

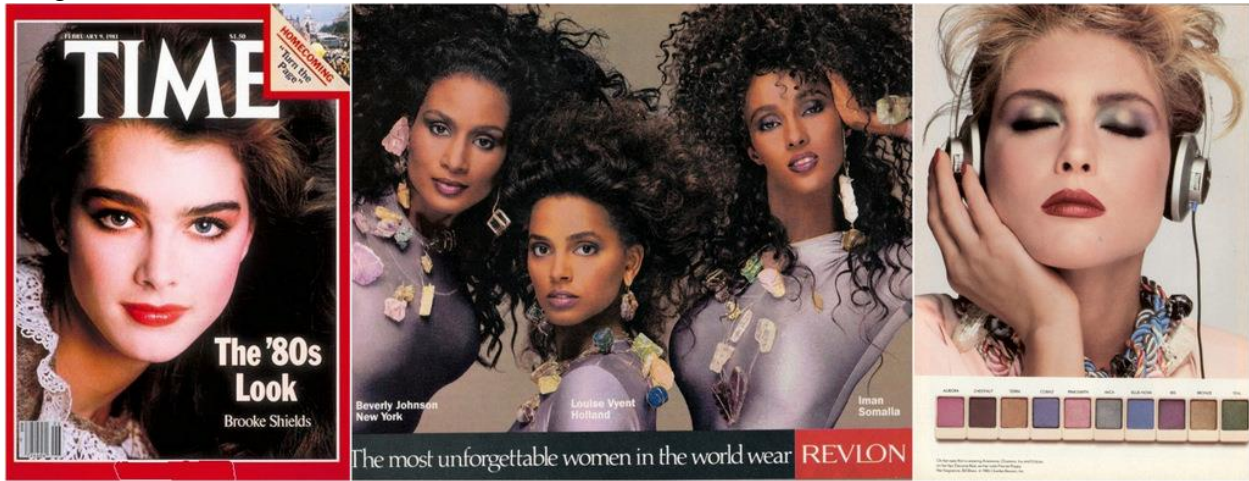
Image Set 1.6



(Decade: 1970's)



Image Set 1.7



(Decade: 1980's)

Image Set 1.8



(Decade: 1990's)

Image Set 1.9 (Decade: 2000's)



(2000)



(2004)



(2009)



(2002)

Image Set 2.0 (Decade: 2010's)



Video: Maybelline Commercial Compilation 2010-2014

Image Set 2.1 (2020's)

Introducing The New Culture of Skincare | Fenty Skin

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Original Audio

onesize Mature skin beauties, take it from @lesliemunsell There's a way to work powder into your routine! 🙌

Leslie uses our Ultimate Setting Powder in shade Translucent to control shine 😊

What are your tips and tricks? Spill the tea below 🗨️

#regram #makeuphack

11w

vividlykafi Such good advice!!

11w 1 like Reply

View replies (4)

lesliemunsell Yes!! The best 🙌🙌🙌

Liked by patrickstarr and 365 others

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onesize #BEAUTYBLURBALM IS FOR EVERYBODY

Tag a BESTIE to celebrate the power of love & acceptance for ALL self-expression

7w



rajani\_mua

7w 1 like Reply



680 likes

FEBRUARY 16



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onesize YOU'RE IN CONTROL OF YOUR COLOR & SHADE EXPRESSION

@daxtonayah wears #MADEFORSHADE in the Light Trio

MUA: @yvonnetheartist

Edited · 5d



zachflu Yesss @daxton



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# D&I in Beauty & Cosmetics Industry

Final Audit Report

2022-05-26

Created:	2022-05-26
By:	Lisa Alli (lalli5468@gmail.com)
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2022-05-26 - 1:04:57 AM GMT
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