Chasing Cleopatra – The Advent of Beauty Culture and the Rise of Cosmetic Marketing in the

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

Chasing Cleópatra – O Advento da Cultura da Beleza e a Ascensão do Marketing Cosmético no Final do Século XIX e Início do Século XX

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ABSTRACT: The concept of idealized beauty standards has fascinated women for centuries, making them pursue unrealistic standards of beauty augured by cultural messages and images promoted by a variety of sources. This research studies the anthropological perspectives of manufactured beauty standards since the late 19th and early 20th century, which have received scant attention in marketing research. Guided by the perspective of gendered subjectivity of manufactured beauty standards, this research shifts the narrative from beauty as a mere consumption practise towards attributing women's perspective of beauty to patriarchal regimes of body and the degree of agency determining personal choice. The research focusses on the study, practice, and actual meaning of beauty in day-to-day life through historical perspectives since the late 19th century, leading toward the formulation of the ideal body image, introduction of cosmetics, and the changing faces of cosmetic marking amidst a backdrop of cultural, economic and political changes by the early 20th century. Data for this research has been collected and analysed from various literary sources, like books, publications, journals, and Internet archives to understand the role of print magazines, advertisements, and Hollywood culture influencing

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the advent and spread of cosmetics through marketing during this era. The findings indicate that the middle-class rise in consumer culture created opportunities for beauty and fashion industries, which created a commercial mass media perpetuated "beauty culture," projecting beauty and fashion as representations and sold to women consumers as tangible goods and services.

KEYWORDS: Cosmetics, Beauty culture, Body image, Cosmetic advertising, Hollywood, Aestheticization marketing, Glamour, Embodiment, Cultural appropriation, Women's Liberation

RESUMO: O conceito de padrões de beleza idealizados tem fascinado as mulheres durante séculos, levando-as a perseguir padrões de beleza irrealistas, alimentados por mensagens e imagens culturais promovidas por uma variedade de fontes. Esta investigação estuda as perspectivas antropológicas dos padrões de beleza fabricados desde o final do século XIX e início do século XX, que têm recebido pouca atenção na investigação de marketing. Orientada pela perspetiva da subjetividade de género dos padrões de beleza fabricados, esta investigação desloca a narrativa da beleza como uma mera prática de consumo para atribuir a perspetiva de beleza das mulheres aos regimes patriarcais do corpo e ao grau de agência que determina a escolha pessoal. A investigação centra-se no estudo, na prática e no significado real da beleza na vida quotidiana através de perspectivas históricas desde o final do século XIX, conduzindo à formulação da imagem corporal ideal, à introdução de cosméticos e à mudança das faces da marcação cosmética num contexto de mudanças culturais, económicas e políticas no início do século XX. Os dados para esta investigação foram recolhidos e analisados a partir de várias fontes literárias, como livros, publicações, jornais e arquivos da Internet para compreender o papel das revistas impressas, dos anúncios publicitários e da cultura de Hollywood que influenciaram o advento e a difusão dos cosméticos através do marketing durante esta época. Os resultados indicam que a ascensão da classe média na cultura de consumo criou oportunidades para as indústrias da beleza e da moda, que criaram uma "cultura da beleza" perpetuada pelos meios de comunicação de massas comerciais, projectando a beleza e a moda como representações e vendidas às mulheres consumidoras como bens e serviços tangíveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Cosméticos, Cultura da beleza, Imagem corporal, Publicidade de cosméticos, Hollywood, Marketing de esteticização, Glamour, Incorporação, Apropriação cultural, Libertação das mulheres

1. Introduction

Cleopatra has fascinated beauty lovers for centuries, being the earliest example of a beauty brand ambassador admired as an iconic beauty and a precursor of cosmetic brand goddesses who gaze down at us from advertising posters today (Mark, 1967). The concept of idealized beauty and women pursuing unrealistic standards continued well into the twentieth century, termed the wild years, owing to the percolation of "consumption culture" in all aspects of life. Consumption culture during this era was an amalgamation of the social, economic, and cultural changes riddling with society owing to the development of the film culture, beauty culture, and the women's liberation movements. Till then, critiques had deplored unbridled consumption in developing worlds and how excessive consumerism and affluence did not result in contentment and happiness—this period also enabled both black and white women to use makeup as a tool to display their identity, freedom, sexual attractiveness, and free will as they ventured unencumbered into society (P. Kathy, 2011).

The anthropological perspective of the gendered subjectivity of manufactured beauty standards needs understanding from three perspectives. Firstly, the anthropological engagement with physical beauty and beautification opposes current social science research, which attributes recent trends in the beauty industry and the popularization of cosmetic surgery to changing consumption patterns, the burgeoning service sector, and the feminization of labour, which occurred in the second half of 20th century in the western words (Liebelt, 2016). Shifting narratives towards women's perspective of beauty are attributed to patriarchal regimes of body and the degree of agency determining personal choice. The arthrological perspective, shifts attention from factors driving women's beauty practices and cosmetic beauty transformations to focus on the study, practice, and actual meaning of beauty in day-to-day life and historical perspectives (Black, 2004; Bordo, 1993). Appearance and beauty serve as means of social distinction. At the same time, aesthetic body modifications can also have a reference in cultural contexts, which is why anthropological studies may highlight the sensuality, desire, and sexuality aspects of beauty (Popenoe, 1962). Secondly, an anthropological understanding of beauty culture enables a deeper understanding of body aesthetics and its contribution to cosmetic marketing using a methodological approach. Anthropological research, therefore, suits the purpose by highlighting the embodied nature of research and the social diaspora (Csordas, 1993).

Thirdly and finally, despite beauty and self-adornment not being a new concept, it has been discovered by anthropologists relatively late, primarily when the evolution and practices of beautification led to the evolution of humanity itself (Nancy, 2000). In the representation of male beautification in history, anthropological studies have biasedly focused on women's efforts at beautification as self-evident or a natural constant requiring no further explanation and represented majorly at a conceptual and

analytical level rather than as empirical research (Liebelt, 2016). The absence of anthropological research on beauty practices pertains to the Cartesian mind-body dualism, a philosophy of mindfulness and so aesthetics that considers human preoccupation with physical beauty, representing the temporary body as a superficial, vain, and morally reprehensible act (Liimakka, 2011; Turner, 2008) In recent trends anthropologists have focused on phenomenological approaches like mind-body dualism, proposing repression of sensualism and adoption of embodiment, giving priority to mind, self, and personhood over the body (Sharp, 2000; Shilling & Mellor, 1996). This study explores the changing definitions of the female body from the late 18th to early 19th century, documenting beauty culture, which evolved from Victorian "kitchen psychic" or homemade cosmetics to a mass-produced indispensable contemporary makeup culture (P. Kathy, 2011).

2. The advent of Beauty Culture and Female Identity

The term "Glamour" has changed over time; the term is ubiquitously applied to men, women, things, places, and lifestyles, implying beauty that is judged from the beholder's perspective rather than which is beholden (Professor., 2011). The 18th-century definition of beauty focused on the autonomous understanding of beauty as a quality beyond the ordinary and mundane. Ancient cultures were obsessed with the aesthetics of appearance, using techniques such as dermabrasion of skin, salt, pumice, grains, bones, and fat. They also attempted chemical peels, massages, and skin treatments using natural extracts and adored their bodies with neck and face body tattoos, piercings, and ornamentation for the last 5000 years (Blanco-Dávila, 2000). Ancient Greeks termed beauty as "kállos" (Konstan, 2015, p. 368), a term closely associated with the sexual or erotic attractiveness of human beings and related to the visual appearance of a person (Konstan, 2015; Tatarkiewicz, 2005). This terminology was attributed to Aphrodite but rarely to virginal gods and goddesses such as Athena, Artemis, or even children. The Romans, however, had no ambiguity regarding the term, which implied perfecting one's physical appearance with archaeological evidence, sculptures, and statues showing the usage of cosmetics by women in Rome (D'Ambra, 2007; Juvenal, 1996). The Roman satirist Juvenal has also written about Roman women's "features lost under a damp bread face-pack, or greasy with vanishing-cream that clings to her husband's lips when the poor man kisses her – though it's all wiped off for her lover" (D'Ambra, 2007, p. 48). Hence beauty standards were based on aesthetic judgments of beautiful in nature and art or beauty in sublime (Kant, 1987). However, the 19th century disagreed on a commonly agreed definition of beauty, placing it in a moral order based on physical appearance, hair color, complexion, and facial appearance (Brand & Korsmeyer, 1995; Lois, 2006; Sally, 1996).

This aesthetic tradition of defining beauty has been challenged by sociologists, critics, postmodernists, and artists, especially as the meaning of beauty needs understanding in a historical, social, and cultural context (Brand & Korsmeyer, 1996; Kant, 1987). Every era described a culturally specific standard of beauty, with the hourglass figure in 1890's, the flapper girl's boyish charm in the 1920's and the unisex look of the 1960s referencing classic beauty from historical times, Roman and Grecian beauties considered ethereal while the African beauties considered exotic (Beardsley, 1975; Nancy, 2000; Peiss Kathy, 2000). Classical beauty and business during the modern-day times found a reference as "significant form" (Langer et al., 1953, p. 14), amongst "art markets developed among elites, whether renaissance princes, gilded age robber barons, or cold war corporate leaders who as patrons of beautiful objects projected a cultural power" (Peiss Kathy, 2000, p. 489). As patrons of garnering an exchange value to women prevalent since time immemorial in enslaved persons, prostitute markets or as wives, as marriage was also a market in which beauty and not brains receive the highest bid (Dimaggio, 1982; E.George & R., 1995; Pollock, 2015).

Thus, beauty served as an exchange value for women's bargaining power during slavery, prostitution, female con artists, and tainted goods, which put a bid on beauty, youth, and fashion ability (Ann, 1861; Gilfoyle, 1992). The beauty ideals and practices determined by the earlier exchange value later paved the way and created opportunities for beauty and fashion industries, which created a commercial mass media perpetuated "beauty culture" projecting beauty and fashion as representations and sold to the women consumers as tangible goods and services. "Glamour," can be described as a sophisticated, feminine allure reflecting upon the altering framework of Feminism and consumerism. prevailing cultural phenomenon, fashion, and celebrities offering women an aspirational self-identity. The beauty industry thrives on glamour and has been lucrative as it spans fashion, film, and cultural studies (Kidwell Brush Claudia, 1974; Lois, 2006; Peiss Kathy, 2000).

The system thrived on constant updating of information about new fashion and beauty trends spread virally through print, image marketing, and word of mouth, capitalized heavily by the print and publishing industry of the 19th century (Halttunen Karen, 1982; Peiss Kathy, 2000; Perrot, 1994). The literature considers the beauty standards of the 19th century as timeless, ethereal, inner and natural, and different from fashion or as a socially driven acquired trait (M. Martin, 2009). Consequently, the publishing boom of the 1830s did not make a sales pitch to sell cosmetics directly but prompted consumers to buy books on achieving ideal moral standards. Books like Godey's and Handsome gift books sold idealistic appearance standards to affluent women consumers, while low-cost manuals were patronized by the factory and domestic workers, fostering a beauty culture amongst the masses and sociocultural scape (Banner, 1983; Godey's, 1840). Magazines like Godey's and advice manuals engaged in narrative

structure and representation strategies developed to engage women consumers by luring them with tales of fashion and gossip, gratifying their interest in appearing beautiful while also implicitly praising other virtues like good sense, demeanour, and goodness of character (Radway, 1991).

This era prophesized idealistic beauty standards, with the usage of cosmetic products becoming rampant, systematic, and self-conscious (P. Kathy, 2011). Women lived within austere means, which changed dramatically after 1945 when advertisers recognized the potential of women as consumers due to their changed consumption patterns. Hollywood industry garnered attention during this era with studios like M.G.M., First National, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and Fox enabling young adults to break free from the monotony of their domesticated lives by exploring leisure activities like going to movies, participating in the voting process and explore life to the fullest (Kristin, 2009). Since beauty is big business, brands, marketers, and advertisers placed the business of cosmetics within the narrative of American history, responding to the social, cultural, and economic changes within the country and creating marketing strategies around the representation of poems, paintings, Hollywood icons, and advertising images rather than the creation of a business plan (Kenneth, 1995; Peiss Kathy, 2000).

The synchronized efforts of the cosmetic marketing industry investigated the changing notion of beauty for women profiting from their changing cultural ideals and social identities, which evolved around figure, face, and fashion. Thus, the rhetoric of beauty, is defined using sociological and psychoanalytic concepts that beauty is a manufactured masquerade that hides the stigma of ugliness (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1990). The Burke theory attributes rhetoric as the language influencing human beings who respond ardently to symbols, which is why the advertising industry persuaded American consumers to have an indispensable relationship with their cosmetics (KerÁNen, 2018).

3. Print and Magazine consumption and Cosmetic Marketing

Early Hollywood propagated cosmetic marketing through the concept of practice, linking cosmetics with personal and social benefits and as a pathway leading toward destination glamour, which required an ardent beauty regime to be followed diligently by women (Lisa, 2015). Hence, makeup brands during the 1930s constantly pushed women consumers to put extra effort into their appearance through makeup and appear beautiful to meet socially and discursively constructed standards. Max Factor, a famous makeup brand of the times, constantly pushed the idea that their makeup would transform women into stars, exhibiting not just physical beauty but manifesting and imagining what they can be while using beauty practices and cosmetic products (Dootson, 2016; Erika et al., 2016). The communication of "You are not born glamourous; glamour is created" (Erika et al., 2016, p. 11) through movies and fan magazines

not only sold the idea of transformation to women but also how to embody the ideals of beauty through practice communicated visually (Dootson, 2016).

In the 1920 article "The Art of Living as a Feminine Institution," by American poet John Peale Bishop for Vanity Fair, the author wrote about phases of civilization, insisting that the art of living is exclusively in control of women, with social arts, conversation skills, culinary skills, Dress, manners and various domestic and social encounters are under the patronage of women (John, 1920; Rachael, 2015). In lieu of above, the 1920s magazines encouraged women to project their self-image as wives, hostesses, and fashionable people, prioritizing domestic bliss over other joys of life (John, 1920). The magazines during this period focused on fostering insecurities amongst women, convincing them that they "lacked something," all the while maintaining a patriarchal system encouraging women to take up traditional domesticated roles in society, focusing on their husbands and family and cultivating appearance instead of intellect (Korinek, 2000; Wolf, 1990).

The magazines were, deliberately, feeding contradictory ideas, which Friedan critiqued as "feminine mystique" and Jennifer Scanlon's "Inarticulate longing" to the women consumers, which led to their commercialization by the early twentieth century as magazines became financially dependent upon advertisers and their incomes to continue in business (Friedan Betty, 2010; Scanlon, 1995). Beauty was a significant feature in magazines like Ladies Home Journal and Canadian Home Journal, without attributing the term beauty product to makeup. This view of makeup, particularly from 19th-century middle-class American households, was hypocritical as facial beauty was synonymous with the goodness of character and purity of spirit. Any attempt to improve appearance was considered a deception by the nineteenth-century middle class. Americans viewed makeup with mistrust and fear, especially when the "painted women" were vilified and libelled as archetypes who, after manipulating appearance, were responsible for poisoning the polite society with deception and betrayal (Halttunen Karen, 1982).

Makeup advertising, during these times, started to focus on the concept of moral cosmetics, which aligned spiritual beauty to aesthetical beauty, advising women to embark upon the improvement of their minds and souls and engaging in exercise and food temperance, allowing their natural beauty to shine through their skin (Briefel, 2009; Caroline, 1839; Halttunen Karen, 1982). The disdain towards makeup and its translation into a mask-like appearance, deception, and immorality continued into the twentieth century. *The Ladies Home Journal* between 1890 and 1919 stressed attributing rouge on a woman's cheek as a mark of sin and immoral standards. The commercialization of magazines leading to a higher focus on beauty and appearance appeared to be in sharp contrast to the moral propriety and frugal restraint exercised by the middle-class masses (Peiss Kathy, 2000; Rachael, 2015).

As a consequence, cosmetic brand advertising started to focus on aspirational standards of beauty that fell within the domesticated constraints of a dutiful wife, homemaker, partner, and mother (Mary, 1920). Cosmetic brand advertising in these magazines masqueraded as aids enabling the idealization of the "natural face" (Rachael, 2015, p. 5). The cosmetic and beauty brand advertising focused on offering advice to the women readers constantly invoking an idealized image of natural beauty which women needed to attain, promoting products which occupied about 50% of magazine space in both the *Canadian Home Journal* and *The Ladies Home Journal*. Cosmetic advertising during this period presented makeup as products aiding natural beauty rather than means of altering the appearance or engaging in a masked deception (Scanlon, 1995).

The 1920s saw a steep rise in consumer culture, casting aspersions in consumers' minds and positioning consumption as an alternative to spirituality enabling consumers to understand the "good life," which could imply a life of moral and religious standards of culture, or an abundant life enriched with luxuries and material comforts (Belk & Pollay, 1985). Magazines during these times portrayed consumption as purchase of commodities, enabling women to display their rainbow moods and identities with the cosmetic advertisements invoking upon women's natural beauty and enabling self-improvement (Davis, 2000; Ladies Home Journal, 1928). The feminist movement steadily challenged the portrayal of women as stereotypical angel idiots of these times. Brands that could not present a complex theme about women were losing to higher-status brands like Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, leading copyrighter and feminist Helen Landsdowne Resor, and the Woman's Copy Department to use distinguished women as themes to market cosmetics (P. L. Kathy, 1998; Weinbaum Eve Alys et al., 2008).

Hence, the first Ponds advertisement in 1924 featured Alva Belmont, a feminist, high societal woman, champion for women's rights, equal work opportunities, and founder of the National Woman's Party, changing the narrative to a more complex appeal of women who were not only beautiful but distinguished and accomplished in their domain (D. C. D. U. Libraries, 2024; Scanlon, 2013; Wills, 2018). The advertisements serenaded Belmont as a woman's rights champion. Still, the image in the ad was not that of the forceful, charming Eva Belmont but rather an archival photograph from her library. Other prominent women featured in the advertisement, Alice Roosevelt Longworth and Mary McConnell Borah, were shown on the periphery. Ponds aimed to impart an image of status and prestige to the women consumers for which they engaged aristocrats and socialites. The Ponds campaign indicates the difficulties the brand faced in addressing women in a complex way. Though women during these times were working in modern societies and were celebrated, cosmetic advertising maintained that beautification and achievement needed to be mutually exclusive (D. D. Hill, 2002a; P. L. Kathy, 1998;

KerÁNen, 2018). The 19th-century beauty ideals not only naturalized gender differences but also legitimized the cultural authority of the middle class.

4. Rise of Cosmetic Proprietors, Entrepreneurs, Manufacturers and Retailers

The 19th-century uprising of the middle class generated interest in beauty and fashion and aligned industries through widespread print and magazine mediums. By this time, small-scale proprietors, entrepreneurs' manufacturers, and retailers started establishing beauty practices to attract middle-class consumers (Radway, 1991). Women consumers played a significant role in the commercialization of beauty by being in business as seamstresses, hairdressers, beauticians, salespeople, and department store shoppers, integrating beauty into the lives of women around them (Wendy, 1997). This change led towards, beauty businesses moving from personal frontiers and domestic services into enterprises run by proprietors and entrepreneurs across cities, gaining significant authority in translating beauty and fashion to local consumers (P. Kathy, 2011).

The alignment of commercial enterprises with ideals of Feminism and beauty led to women's inclusion and opportunities in a culture that had earlier celebrated spiritual, inner beauty and was now emphasizing physical appearance and external beauty instead. The new beauty ambassadors now focused on selling their cosmetics to not just the affluent but also working women, African Americans, and immigrants, making their marketing techniques specific to cultural institutions and practices related to women consumers in their everyday lives. The process of selling cosmetics was based on familiarity, engagement, and development of a long-term relationship with women consumers frequenting salons for hairstyling, grooming, and makeup, not only promising makeovers but also social interaction, economic and political discourse, and even nourished activism and civil rights movement (Gill, 2001; Katina, 1997).

Selling beauty became widespread after 1920, not only in the fashion, cosmetic, haircare, and clothing industries but also attracting tie-ups with aligned industries like modelling agencies, weight clubs, health clubs, cosmetic surgery, and many other commercial ventures. Thus, beauty and fashion were completely delineated in the mass marketing of cosmetics and fashion propagated by retailers, mass print magazines, and the advertising industries.

5. Cosmetic Advertisements

Appearance transformation is a cultural reality that enables a person to buy the desired physical characteristics. Cosmetic advertising in the 1920s displayed embodiment to the consumers by highlighting the stars who were presented as their perfectly presentable selves, with hair and makeup done, embodying glamour through their bodies and actions. The reason why cosmetic advertisements were successful

because of the "expectation of beauty instilled in women as they viewed and read the ads" (D. D. Hill, 2002b, p. 98). The famous cosmetic advertisements were very similar to other product ads, which instead of focusing on the product, engaged the consumers by selling the experience. Advertisements, during these times concentrated on not only selling cosmetics but also towards creating an experience of engaging in beauty practices by showing visual images to the consumers.

While the middle-class consumers of the *Ladies Home Journal* could not have afforded to dine in restaurants, they would undoubtedly have aspired to do so. Advertisements fuelled their aspirations by defining their products in an aspirational environment, emphasizing women's fashionable clothing, figures, and youth selling a lifestyle while enabling self-improvement for women (V. Vivaudou Inc, 1920). Advertisement for Procter and Gamble's Ivory soap in 1928 magazine states "Cosmetics and soft lights are a great help when you wish to be pretty. But a slanting ray of light will betray a surface that is not naturally fine and smooth" (Ladies' Home Journal, 1928, p. 63). The cosmetics have been alluded to in the advertisement but subtly and vaguely to prevent over judgment and as an assistant playing a role in supporting women's beauty. The advertisements mentioned women's roles as mothers, homemakers, and wives, perpetrators of domestic life yet linked to a sustained youthful appearance facilitated by the advertised beauty product (Canadian Home Journal, 1923).

The movie stars were the embodiment of beauty, so there was an association between their character and the cosmetic advertisements. The projection of movie stars as a commodity with a public Image based on a system of image management, public relations, and media manipulation gave them an aura of realness (Professor., 2011). The cosmetic advertisements presented a real, human image of the stars, which gently balanced stardom and did not get overpowered by it. The advertisements between the 1920s and 1930s saw a perceptible shift, with 1920 Palmolive and Jonteel ads depicting ideal, demure stereotypes of women while the 1930s displayed women in full glamour, accepting their sexuality with confidence (D. D. Hill, 2002b). Cosmetic marketers displayed women in full splendour through their advertisements, displaying them as irresistible beings not only to others but to themselves a swell. Foucault's theory of power explains the role of cosmetic advertisements during this era as a mode of communicating the shifting power structure of women through newly attained glamour, sexual confidence, and active lives (Haugaard, 2022; Lynch, 2014).

The films and advertisements made in the 1930s displayed modern working women, focusing on the newfound buying power of women consumers, who were the target consumers cosmetic brands wished to pursue and needed to thrive upon (Eckert, 1991). As portrayed in 1920 advertisements, Salleys "Tampa Steps Out" is an example of women in cosmetic advertising shown as modern and frolicking, applying bright makeup with the lyrics personifying the women as "Miss Tampa always struts her stuff

with Perfume paint and powder puff" (C.Nicole, 2010, p. 188; Salley, 1925). Cosmetic advertisements also signified differences in beauty, using social definitions, physical dimensions, race, ethnicity, gender, and class through various sales and advertising strategies. Hairdressers were trained in different techniques of hair reinforcing in the "black" or "white" style (Willett, 2000).

By the 1930's "both men and women were still classified by an elaborate lexicon of skin tones (yellow, smooth-brown, creamy, black, bright, blue-veined) and hair textures (good, bad, halfway bad, nappy, kinky)" (P. Kathy, 2011, p. 232). The cosmetic industry was radicalized by the 1950's with women asserting their rights of assertion by applying lipsticks and using makeup for a makeover of self-image (P. Kathy, 2011). The salons moved beyond the domain of masculinity to convert into unisex by the 1960s, capitalizing on a movement challenging notions of masculinity and male dominion during the "youth revolt" (Walker, 2000). Cosmetics sold by brands like Noxzema for teenagers and older women developed an advertising strategy for Cover Girl, a medicate makeup line focusing on both glamour and health with the tagline "glamour that's good for your skin" and "clean makeup" (Center, 1990).

This strategy aimed to make the products acceptable to both age groups, so the brand focused on stressing health and glamour through their advertising. The notion of female beauty, by the 1960s envisioned a "look" that conveyed an impression or feeling by creating a visual gestalt using a certain hairstyle, models' clothing, cosmetics, and so on (Englis et al., 1994). Hence, the epitome of beauty was young, fair-skinned, blonde, fit, and self-absorbed in her beauty, with models like Cybill Shepard and Cheryl Tiegs completing the sun-bleached California look aptly fitting in the cultural mainstream of Middle American household (Earnest, 1927). For most of America, beautiful meant to be white, urging both black and white females to obtain fairer skins and straight hair. During this period, the black beauty culture was distinctive "because it explicitly reflected and articulated twentieth-century racial politics in the United States, especially as it was emerging in the context of black migration and community formation of American cities" (Susannah, 2007, p. 3).

Advertisements in predominantly black readership magazines like Ebony perpetuated the white standards for black women yet allowing a wide scope of black women products even if they aimed to make the black women whiter (Ebony, 1948; Susannah, 2007). The advertisements were a reflection of the socio-economic status of black Americans when as many as 60% of them were employed as domestic help in the 1940s and were entering into clerical jobs (Haidarali, 2005). By the "mid-1940s, the average per capita income of African Americans was \$779, compared with \$1,140 for whites." (Susannah, 2007, p. 87), and magazine advertisements started to focus on cosmetics and attire for working black consumers.

However, while the suburban middle class was growing, African Americans were more segregated than ever, as only a few middle-class blacks could associate with the images of black women in

magazines, showing the disparity between the working class" since so many black women, regardless of class, had to work outside of the home and hardly led lives of suburban leisure" (Susannah, 2007, p. 104).

A close investigation of the imagery of The Gibson Girls and the Flapper from the twentieth century leads us to conclude that class and notions of race highly influenced the gender constructions of female beauty ideals. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, amidst the changing social, cultural, and economic changes and the success of the civil rights movement, the popularization of the "Black is beautiful" movement represented the antithesis of white supremacy, demanding racial equality for African American women. Thus, years between 1895 and 1925 were called the "New Negro Movement," where middle-class black women crafted their own black identity at the crossroads of white ideal standards of beauty and the concept of upliftment (Ngoupande-Nah, 2024; Rabinovitch-Fox, 2021).

The end of the 1960s saw cosmetics made predominantly for black women with headlines such as "New Cosmetics to Make Black More Beautiful" (Baird, 2021, p. 557), thereby seeking to redefine beauty standards and celebrating dark black skin and tight curly hair. However, this redefinition of beauty standards paradoxically became the key parameter for cosmetic companies to engage with black women. A careful study of intersectionality as a category leads us to understand the unrealistic pressures borne by black women regarding their appearance since the 1960s when the "Black is beautiful" movement enabled visibility towards black women's cosmetics and makeup products, celebrating blackness which, however, was short-lived and retraced by the 1980s.

Actress Whoopi Goldberg, who grew up trying to match unattainable beauty standards in the 1960s, states, "When I was a little Whoop of a thing, the Breck girl was considered the standard by which beauty was judged. You had to have good hair – which meant straight, flowing and ponytail adaptable –light skin and thin lips. If you were like me, you knew you stood a better chance of winning a Nobel Prize than of waking up beautiful" (Johnson, 1994).

Beauty culture provided black American consumers and entrepreneurs multiple opportunities to develop black skin care and hair products during the first two decades of the 20th century. Hair care solutions by Madam C.J. Walker and Annie Turbo Malone, focusing on smoothening and not straightening, made their fortunes in the black industry, and small businesses such as black-owned Overton-Hygienic Manufacturing Company focusing on black cosmetic products were on the rise

(Patton, 2006; Roberts, 2016). Black women's relationships with cosmetics were even more challenging as they navigated cosmetics manufactured by companies like American Products and Boncilla laboratories, which traditionally manufactured and marketed cosmetics to white women, aggravating issues concerning color, class, race, and gender (P. Kathy, 2011).

Makeup, unlike hair, did not find its roots in black history and, with its association with prostitution, alienated black women who were reluctant to use it to draw attention to their sexuality. However, during the later years, this notion relaxed, with prominent colored and race women such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Margret Murray Washington, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown promoting the dignity of women's labour, black feminist ideology, and race pride encouraging women to choose feminist ideologies. Thus, adopting feminist ideologies, race pride, glorification of dark skin, use of makeup for social success, and denouncement of skin lightening diminished the stigma associated with it (Harley, 1996; Roberts, 2016; Wolcott, 1997). From the late 19th century, most of the limited cosmetic options available to women were skin bleaches and skin-lightening powders. White cosmetics companies like Plough Chemical and National Toilet introduced bleaching creams, Black & White cream, and Nadinola. Brands like Overton-Hygienics's High Brown Face Powder, though not marketed as a skin lightener, could have been used for that purpose (P. Kathy, 2011; Roberts, 2016). The pervasive cultural contexts constituting idealistic beauty standards failed to include black women by rhetorically setting them in opposition to white normalcy (Fanon, 2008). Thus, cosmetics intended to lighten skin color heightened the issue of colourism stratifying people based on their skin tone, with skin color used as a demarcation of class and social status within the African American community (Keith & Herring, 1991).

By 1980, big corporations monopolized the black cosmetic businesses, hyper-sexualizing and exoticizing black women by creating rhetorical meaning structures within the cosmetic industry, reproducing and imposing racialized and gendered discourses on the black female body (Chloe, 2021; M. L. Craig, 2017). The "black is beautiful" paraphrase gave the industry a readymade marketing strategy, with corporations coming with many black products to showcase their racial solidarity (L. W. Hill & Rabig, 2023; Susannah, 2007). During this time, companies like Libra and Lori Roberts, despite their white heritage, created tailor-specific cosmetics for black women using race, black nationalism, and black power rhetoric to attract the African American demographics, revelling in increased economic freedom and purchasing power (Susannah, 2007).

6. Aestheticization as a cosmetic marketing strategy

The perception that "beauty sells" became a common strategy by the 1920's. Manufacturers, brands, and advertisers used beautiful men and women as representations to sell their products (Peiss Kathy, 2000). The promise of "beauty appeal" thus lured them into consumption, promising the psychological and social benefits of looking good. Beauty adds measurable value to goods and products and holds a personal value for consumers when connected with their self-esteem, presentation, and individual identity

(N. M. of A. History, 1990). Toothbrushes sold by the Prophylactic Brush company shifted focus from health and hygiene to beautiful smile; Wrigley sold chewing gum as a five-minute facial for secretaries, while automobiles changed car selling strategy to match consumers' looks (Earnest, 1927). The concept of "beauty appeals" has been promising consumers the psychological and social benefits of looking good and has become the premise of selling cosmetics to consumption-centric households (N. M. of A. History, 1990).

The launch of Lux toilet soap by Walter Thompson in 1925 promoted the soap as a new category, calling the Lux product in some advertising tag lines "the pure essence of soap in flakes," removing any categorical reference to the soap as a detergent (D. U. Libraries, 2024, p. 1). The brand was put on a pedestal removing any suggestion of dishpan or laundry usage replacing the term suds with lather depicting the soap as a boudoir and not in a kitchen, throwing more glamour in the product (Unilever, 2023). The glamorization of the product justified the price in the consumer's mind and eventually helped market the brand, with soap gaining popularity as the soap for hands, bath babies, and shampoo (J. W. H. C. for S. A. & M. History, 2024; Unilever, 2023). Hence aesthetic categorization, helped brands define their target markets with brands like High-Brown Face Powder converting their packaging to elegant and respectable, using models with light brown skin matching the sleek aesthetics of the brand.

Similarly, French perfume brand Bourjois sold their java face powder in a traditional floral container marketed as a natural beauty aid for conservatives. In contrast, the same powder was jazzed up in a new pack and called Manon Lescault, a romantic searching tool akin to flappers (Johnson RW, 1922). Cosmetic businesses were reshaped and recategorized for commercial gains, with the revised sales and marketing typology describing products as ethereal, exotic, fair, dark, foreign, and international. Max Factor created advertisements helping women with their beauty type, instilling a complexion analysis chart in their products. William Hogarth defined an "S" shaped curve as synonymous with women's beauty, and brands like Depilatory ZIP Hair Removal by Jordeau used the shape to show women's hairless underarms in their 1925 advertisements, glamorizing an otherwise indelicate context in women's beauty (Hogarth & Davis, 2010; periodpaper.com, 1925).

Most businesses added an *art moderne* to many product categories to meet the artistic movements happening across society. Brands used artistic inspirations from art movements and museums, adding creative elements through brand windows, packaging, and photography. Beauty brand Marinello's face ream packaging as a skyscraper and the modernist advertising photo shoot of Jergens by Edward Steichen were examples incorporating modern art form in their marketing (Leach, 1994; Meikle Jeffrey, 2001; PORTER, 1999). Aestheticization played an essential part in the corporate work culture through hairstyle, Dress, makeup requirements, and weight restriction of employees as it directly contributed to the brand

identity of the brand, especially white-collared job professionals required to present a pleasing personality to the consumers. Post-World War II airlines chose to hire women as flight attendants whose beauty appearance, requiring to wear nail polish, gloves, girdles, and hair colors and maintaining a stipulated weight were mandated by the airlines who wished to project a svelte, youthful beauty of their employees (COBBLE, 1992; Georgia, 1982).

Airlines prohibited African American women from wearing dreadlocks and cornrows, forcing them to maintain a "white" appearance while maintaining an appropriate corporate identity (M.Paulette, 1991). After World War II, aesthetics and appropriation were strong influences in maintaining corporate identity. Business magazines like *Fortune*, run by Henry Luce, received a makeover by being printed in large format on heavy paper stock with modernist artist-designed covers (Lears, 1985; Reilly, 2004). Aestheticization after World War II was means of projecting cultural and economic authority. Helena Rubinstein showed off her extensive art collection in salons and even loaned it to museums for display. Thus, Art and Aestheticization, were not considered vulgar and vain but a celebrated decorative tradition (Harris, 1990; Helena, 1966; Serge, 1983).

7. Hollywood and the cosmetic industry

The American movie industry played a definitive role in fashion, film, and cultural studies. The early 1920s established the role of cosmetics in society through an upsurge in print, media, and broadcasting technologies aligned with the rise of Hollywood by marketers "who invented the fantasy of beauty and the concept of creating and selling a dream" (Lisa, 2015, p. 124). As Hollywood gained prominence, the fans imitated movie stars, emulating their look and makeup through tutorials and images published in print and magazines, pushing the brands to expand from Hollywood to mainstream.

Clara Bow's rise and fall due to Fan magazines in 1921 was meteoric after catapulting to fame, winning the "Motion Picture" contest in 1921. Clara was considered a Hollywood sex symbol by her early retirement after her final appearance at Frank Lloyd's Hoopla in 1933. She received as many as forty-five thousand fan letters monthly (Orgeron, 2003). The fans adored her style and striking red hair, with henna sales peaking due to fans adoring her looks and wanting the same red color for their hair (David, 2000; St.Johns, 1978, p. 233). Inspired by their favourite stars fan magazines, apart from selling merchandise, also engaged in selling the notion of beauty to consumers, communicating how to embody

Hollywood glamour through product consumption. Hollywood's influence on creating a fantastical idea of beauty depicted the interrelatedness of the movie culture with consumer culture.

Along with Clara Bow, Hollywood celebrities' lives became increasingly sensationalized and sold as a market commodity to avid readers and fans by 1920s, when "movie players could speak to the public

about their divorces and love affairs with at least some of the frankness they used among themselves" (Herbert, 2010, p. 81). This tacit form of publicity, however, was in sharp contrast to the late nineteenth century belief denouncing curiosity in the business of others, even celebrities and public figures as crude and improper. However, despite this belief, curiosity had been institutionalized and normalized by 1920, especially in Hollywood, where movie studios and fan magazines fed the avid fans information about their favourite movie stars, also reinforcing notions of female consumption of images, products, and films. Bow symbolized a promise to the spectators that would transform them literally by the 1920's.

The female fan magazine reader, pursuing extratextual supplemental information about their favourite stars, was an obvious extension of the female fan spectator that "can be traced through concrete historical manifestation in which women not only experienced the misfit of the female spectator about patriarchal positions of subjectivity but also developed imaginative strategies in response to it." (Hansen, 1994, p. 125). While considerable evidence suggests that many fan magazine readers were female, some work was occasionally attributable to the male readership. However, when in June 1922, *Motion Picture magazine* announced Clara Bow as the winner of the 1921 "Fame and Fortune contest," they did not find a single male eligible contestant amongst a long list of female contestant winners, establishing fan magazine discourse as a female commodified culture (Abel, 1999; Motion, 1922; Orgeron, 2003).

In a way the star system enabled women consumers to articulate their fantasies tangibly through product consumption critically establishing mass fashion and beauty industries (P. Kathy, 2011). From 1910 to 1950, fan magazines were a source of advice on all issues: beauty, homemaking, fitness, family, and relationships, with many columns giving advice based on the prominence of advertisements accompanying the beauty columns (Mclean, 2019). The democratization of prices created a conducive communication practice for beauty and cosmetics. In 1932, *Photoplay* magazine published a beauty column, "Photoplay's Hollywood Beauty Shop," with the subheading "All the beauty tricks of the stars brought to you each month" (Lisa, 2015, p. 110). Hence fan magazines, were instrumental in communicating beauty information to the readers, enabling them to embody beauty like the Hollywood stars they emulated (McDonald & Lanckman, 2019). Beauty ideals and makeup practices constituted a discourse that spread amongst women consumers through mass communication channels like branding, advertising, and mass marketing efforts made by the cosmetic industry.

The Brands' strategy was to sell not only merchandise but also a notion of beauty to the consumer and how to embody their favourites Hollywood icon. Makeup practices and Dress also signified social status, as was evident by Westmore, a popular cosmetics company that spearheaded the makeup division at Paramount, Universal, Warner Brothers, RKO,20th century Fox, and many other Hollywood studios, creating an indirect connection with the cosmetic industry with the Hollywood film industry (Lisa, 2015).

The studios exerted tremendous control over the stars and the Westmore makeup artists just by applying lipstick on Bette Davis, a popular actress between 1930's and1940's, creating feminine role models influencing makeup trends and changing the shape of millions of American women (Higashi, 2014; Lisa, 2015; Thyne et al., 2016).

In July 1935, popular magazine Variety wrote about cosmetic brands Max Factor, Elizabeth Arden, and the House of Westmore engaged in a bitter battle towards the attainment of Hollywood dominance, which came to be known as the "Powder Puff War" (Dootson, 2016). The usage of Technicolor in Hollywood films required a higher level of illumination than in black and white films, requiring extensive research into appropriate makeup. The criticism of Pioneer Pictures' release of the movie Becky Sharp is due to the actor's poor skin tone appearance due to gaudy makeup in Technicolor (Higgins, 2000). However, Kathryn Dougherty, editor-in-chief of *Photoplay* magazine, applauded the film for enumerating two significant changes: the introduction of sound in motion picture technology and the second significant change, the employment of color on the screen.

The introduction of Pan-Cake makeup by Max Factor in 1935 was to meet the unique requirement of Technicolor films. When actresses started taking large quantities of Pan-Cake home with them for personal use, Max Factor realized that their new makeup looked beautiful on and off camera, leading them to introduce Pan-Cake to the general retail trade by 1938 (Thomas Erika, 2018). Most brands focused on beauty and communicating glamour in different ways, as glamour became a visual style that could be copied and replicated (Penny, 2007). The colored films enabled mass marketing of cosmetics as before the advent of color, the consumer could emulate the hairstyle, lip shape, eyebrows, etc., by viewing the stars on screen, but after the popularization of color, they needed the exact shade to emulate the stars (D. D. Hill, 2002b).

For example, the consumer purchased lip color as determined by the red shade of Joan Crawford's lips, a famous Hollywood actress between 1920-1970, rather than the shape of the lips (D. D. Hill, 2002b). Max Factor first sold Society makeup in the United States and London, later making it available to customers worldwide with the brand yielding considerable marketing influence in the cosmetic industry (Thomas Erika, 2018).

Hollywood's "Golden Age" had a palpable influence on the advertising, beauty, and cosmetic industry, creating a relationship between ephemeral beauty standards and marketable consumption of beauty products displayed through embodied practices (Lisa, 2015). From the makeup and cosmetic brands' perspective, beauty is an object undergoing a continuous transformation that capitalizes on women's insecurities about their bodies and appearance. Hence, historically, beauty marketing reflected

society's cultural expectations for women: to make financial, mental, and physical investments to maintain a beautiful appearance.

By the 1920s, the flapper girls brought new liberated beauty aesthetics to the foray. Embodying that aesthetics meant freedom and liberation where, "Women were smoking, choosing their sexual relationships, earning their living, shortening their skirts, and cutting their hair. It was the first time in Western history young women claimed the right to life beyond marriage and motherhood" (Lisa, 2015, p. 114). Brands like Elizabeth Arden's "Colour Harmony" advertisement from 1939 do not show products but instead display images of glamourous women (Penny, 2007, p. 20). A similar ad for Cutex displays the products but puts a lady applying lipstick and nail polish in prominence (Penny, 2007, p. 22). Ideal standards of beauty. Makeup was thus communicated by the Hollywood industry using branding, marketing, and mass advertising channels, setting dangerous precedents of weight and appearance for women consumers (Natalie, 2017; Stephens et al., 1994).

Between 1930 and 1933, the word "secret" was added to cosmetic marketing, placing Hollywood and Max factor in a position of power, with the terminology underlying something they know but the consumer does not. Though the usage of this term phased out soon, the emphasis on appearing beautiful remained throughout the decade in cosmetic marketing, with Hollywood stars as expert sources of advice (McDonald & Lanckman, 2019; Mclean, 2019). The cosmetic industry, kept pace with the emerging fashion adopted by Hollywood stars to market their products, delivering discourse through magazines widely propagating themes of embodiment drawing parallels between products and self-improvement to acquire Hollywood "glamour." The visual culture of magazines is similar to that of Photoplay propagating "glamour" as a cluster of traits that can be replicated and revised by image makers and consumers (Berry, 2000; Patrick Keating, 2017).

Fashion in the 1930s brought symbolism to the forefront, with Max Factor displaying it seamlessly through its cosmetic advertisements. Thus, the symbolism, or transformation and self-identification with being glamorous and hence beautiful through product consumption shifted the world to a "symbolic economy" (Berry, 2000, p. xiii). The inclusion of working women in several sectors, which increased their buying power, was identified as "physical capital" (Berry, 2000, p. xiii). There was a significant change in cosmetic brand advertising from 1920, when cosmetics were emerging, to the 1930s, when powders and foundations became a staple in women's washrooms, renamed as "powder rooms" (Lisa, 2015, p. 180), revealing a perceptible shift in the practice of makeup.

Hence, in the 1920s, brands like Max Factor were teaching women the application of makeup. It changed between 1933 and 1938 when Hollywood stars started to showcase their makeup skills, with brands using a closeup of their faces and the stars applying makeup as an advertisement, with Max Factor

advertisements enabling embodiment and glamour by displaying the application of product (Thomas Erika, 2018, p. 75). The June 1938 advertisements of Max Factor in *Photoplay* showcased Hollywood actresses Olympe Bradna applying "Your powder," Betty Grable applying "Your Rouge" and Mary Carlisle applying "Your Lipstick" with "You" connecting directly to customers inviting them to be a part of the process reinforcing the aspirational and desirable attributes of Hollywood stars which needs to be embodied (Photoplay, 1938).

Beauty and cosmetic advertising focused on shifting glamour concepts, highlighting the negative aspects reinforcing traditional hierarchies. Mass media beauty advertising created and played on women's insecurities, creating sexist and patronizing advertisements, which increased by the 1920s, reached their peak by the 1950s and were at their zenith by the 1960 (Lisa, 2015). Advertisements during this era were instrumental in evoking physical and social transformation for women consumers.

By the 1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement politicized self-presentation with women, Blacks, hippies, students, and anti-war activists advocating self-fashioning as part of political activism. This gender-bending activism challenged women's role in society and how they dressed and appeared through hairstyles and makeup, challenging broader concepts of sex roles and Feminism (Anderson, 1996; M. Craig, 2011; Graham, 2004; Todd, 1993). The introduction of women to the workforce changed the way they dress, and the anti-feminist movement, notably under Phyllis Schlafly and opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment, emphasized the Unfeminine appearance, seeking to eradicate gender distinctions (Hillman, 2013).

The *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan in 1963 called for increased opportunities for women in the workforce, calling attention to the status of middle-class homemakers (Elaine, 2017; Friedan Betty, 1963). Till then, American media had blatantly sexualized women's imagery through sexualized images of women in makeup, hair, and dress (Authors, 1973). The feminist point of view at that time was that advertisements for women's makeup and feminine products were for men rather than women as they encouraged men to expect women to be trapped in a form of sexual slavery, expecting them to be a mere sexual object with makeup and clothes being a part of the trade (Aronowitz, 2014; Kreydatus, A., 2005).

Postmodernism at this period was called "a new social and economic order "periodizing" concept whose function is to correlate a new type of social life, and a new economic order is often euphemistically called modernization, post-industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capital" (Fredric, 1988, p. 193). This new life required a new identity construction, establishing a new order of cultural representations defining women from a more individualistic and feministic perspective. Women consumers during this era found themselves plural and felt quite at home,

with cosmetics and makeup established as modern products (Baudelaire, 1964; Bordo, 1993; Susman, 1984).

According to Charles Baudelaire, the creator of the term modernity, while makeup was treated as a tool to appear proper for women in the 19th century, the postmodern era saw women appearing to appear "magical and supernatural while wearing makeup in public" (Baudelaire, 1964). The cosmetic advertising during these times focussed on marketing makeup as a second skin, or as an embellishment and adornment creating "an abstract unity in the color and texture of the skin, ... immediately approximates the human being to the statue" (Baudelaire, 1964). Makeup brands used videotapes running for an hour to sell cosmetics and tutorials on applications that served as makeovers. Brands like Victoria Jackson Cosmetics Inc., Linda Mason, and Barbara Daly of Body Shop represented their product lines, advertising the skills and strategies used by the makeup artists through private sessions, acquiring the customer's phone numbers and credit card details after selling the videotapes. Customer information enabled the makeup brands to stay in regular touch with customers, sending out newsletters and photographs of the brand, building a steady product-consumer relationship (Fredric, 1988).

The 1938 advertisements of cosmetics firm Volupté introducing new lipsticks in the market showcased two kinds of products. One was for girls "girls who lean toward pale-lacquered nails, quiet, smart clothes and tiny strands of pearls"; the other was "for the girl who loves exciting clothes, pins a strass pin big as a saucer to her dress, and likes to be just a little bit shocking." (Peiss, 1996, p. 311). The brand gave the product names based on their texture and color. The soft matt finish product was *Lady*, while the other with a gleaming lustrous hue was *Hussy*. Mademoiselle's line for advertisement was, "Each of these two categories being as much a matter of mood as a matter of fact, we leave you to decide which you prefer to be. "By 1930, cosmetics had become indispensable to women's style, appearance, and identity, and makeup brands let women choose their self-identity.

8. Conclusion

This research offers a historical perspective illustrating the influence of culture and society on the perspective of beauty and its commercialization. Through the years, both men and women have strived to appear attractive, trying to meet the beauty standards set by society. The potential ability of products and styles linked to prototypical beauty ideals sets a case of both approach and avoidance for cosmetic marketing brands enabling tailoring of target-specific marketing strategies highlighting ideal beauty standards to the consumers. Marketing communications need to emphasize upon the perfect appearance and avoid associating the consumer with anti-ideals in order to be successful. Using historical cosmetics marketing, brands should focus on the following aspects.

Firstly, and most importantly, the brands should focus on whether the beauty type aspired by the target consumer corresponds to that which dominates the genre. Secondly, individual differences like self-consciousness or consumers' need for approval can be incorporated into marketing strategies to predict which customers are more likely to emulate the choices made by the cultural gatekeepers of society (M. C. Martin & Kennedy, 1993). Additionally, Marketers need to undertake additional research to understand the role of cultural guardians in creating a look and its consumption pattern in society, which can influence the cosmetic marketing strategies applicable today.

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