

A Market on Instagram: Analyzing Beauty Marketing Trends on Social Media

Introduction

Trends change. And people always follow them. What resonates with a group of people can change as quickly as it came, yet its impact on purchasing decisions is undeniable. I've fallen to and (continue to) fall victim to trends I've been introduced to. I've tied ribbon bows on my Stanley water bottle, combining both the coquette trend and the Stanley trend in one go. I've purchased multiple long jeans skirts despite previously claiming I would never be a long skirt girl because I've been influenced by how it trended this year. But I've also stopped myself from buying UGG Tasman Slippers under the impression I was following the trend too late and I would be embarrassed to keep wearing them when they fell out of style. I realized I was right a couple months later, when I noticed it was much harder for me to spot those shoes compared to the time when I was debating on buying them.

While trends may fast, businesses must adapt to their market and continue building their appeal. It's easy to just attribute the word "trend" to what shoe is popular this season or what accessory every other person seems to be wearing, but trends can show deeper insight into what communities as a whole are finding themselves caring about. Trends can begin as a trend, but find itself cemented into an industry for one reason or another. Certain trends can reveal values and movements that resonate within today's culture, signifying changes in attitudes and behaviors. With social media here to accelerate the transfer of those ideas across space, the trends that these tie into permeate faster and deeper than ever before.

The beauty industry is not immune to this, and must adapt to online trends in order to keep their market. For some brands, today's trends may align with a brand's purpose and values, helping propel that brand into further popularity. By contrast, other brands may seem to be

carelessly grasping trends in an attempt to pull customers. Inclusivity is a value in beauty that has increased in popularity over the past couple of years. Its rise to prominence could be considered a trend (although one that remained), especially looking at how some brands reacted to changes in inclusivity in the industry. Before 2017, many brands offered around 8-15 shades of foundation, with most of the shades catering to a lighter skinned population and few catering to darker skin tones (the ones offered were still not that dark). Fenty Beauty was launched in 2017, and their commitment to inclusivity manifested in the 40 shade foundation range they released (Zaprianova). The shade range was basically unheard of at the time, and a huge part of its success. Fenty Beauty's release made \$100 million in its first month of sales, and continues to make over \$550 million each year (Berg). Two things came out of this - customers realized that having makeup that truly catered to their skin color was possible and brands realized they needed to change what they offered or they would lose customers. After Fenty Beauty's release and subsequent burst of popularity, numerous brands expanded their foundation range or released lines with a comparably large shade range. Some examples of brands that did this include Huda Beauty who expanded their shade range and Too Faced who expanded their shade range to 35 shades in 2019 (Carpetta). According to Vogue, one of the most prominent fashion and lifestyle magazines, "pre Fenty, the words "inclusive beauty" were not part of our vernacular. Now? The concept is omnipresent." Inclusivity in beauty was a trend pioneered by Fenty Beauty, but it left a lasting effect on the beauty industry. Many brands saw this and adapted to this, and while they followed the trend, it may be difficult to be able to tell which brands are genuine in learning how to be inclusive and which brands are making purely business moves. Social media can allow a brand to show their customers what they care about, and through social media, customers can decide if the brand is something they would want to trust and support.

The way that social media has deeply been intertwined into today's day to day life for many people means that the way a brand presents itself on social media can truly affect a consumer's perception of them. This includes the way that they advertise their core values to the way that they respond to consumer concerns. Though social media itself exists as a trend, social media allows for both the trend to briskly circulate and for brands to be able to express to consumers that they are adhering to said trends, thus staying relatable to what the market wants to see at that time. Currently, clean/natural beauty and electronic word of mouth, also known as e-WOM marketing, are two prominent trends within the beauty space that social media helps to facilitate. Gen Z in particular, thrives off of social media and looks to these trends to help their purchasing decisions. In this essay I will examine these trends in action through analysis of a range of social media advertising by two brands: Youth to the People and Youthforia, in contrast to better understand how brands use social media to demonstrate an adherence to the trends and values that their target market follows. In doing so, I hope to develop a clearer understanding of marketing for the skincare/beauty sector works through the lens of a consumer who's constantly drawn to good advertising, and as someone who is considering going into this field professionally.

Clean/Natural Beauty



Clean/natural beauty can refer to anything from naturally sourced ingredients, sustainability, vegan formulas, and more. A Harper's Bazaar Study found that 60% of women were more willing to spend money on brands that displayed a priority towards natural ingredients (Stymenko). Customers are more inclined to invest in products that not only contain ingredients perceived to be “clean” or natural, but they are also more willing to invest in products when they know that brand reinvests into the environment or takes care of the environment in their production. However, the term clean beauty is unregulated and exists as a widely encompassing term with many people unaware of the lengths of its perimeters. Despite this, the idea of clean and natural beauty has become prominent over the past couple of years, thus ‘clean’ beauty has come to mean different things for different brands. Youth to the People and Youthforia both incorporate elements of “clean” or “natural” beauty trends but portray it in very different ways in their social media. Examining their social media marketing of natural/clean beauty makes clear the ways that a single trend can be used to create a range of customer experiences depending on the brand, showing how a commitment to their claimed values can help a brand build a relationship with their consumers.

Youthforia and the Natural/Clean Trend

Youth to the People is an example of a brand that stands by their core values and understands how to communicate consistently and effectively through their customers. Their tagline, “We have one planet to protect” is supported by action, and their posts on social media explain what they do to uphold this value. For Youth to the People, sustainability means reducing their impact on the environment through limiting wasteful packaging, recycling and reusing, and donating to causes towards protecting and maintaining the environment. Youth to the People

looks at environmentalism holistically and works to ensure they are protecting the earth through different avenues.

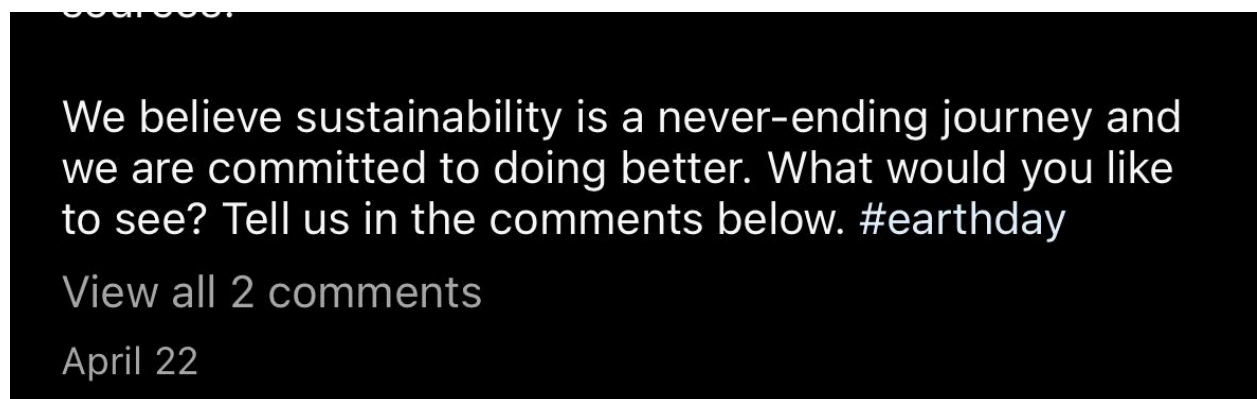
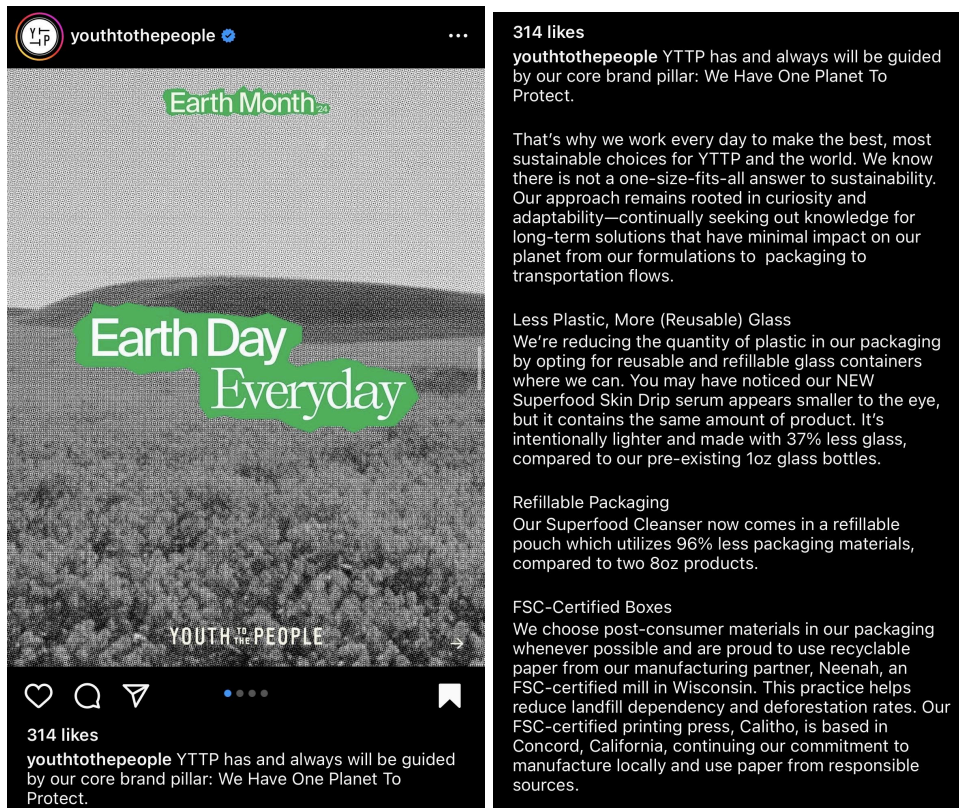


Figure 1, 2, 3: Instagram post and its caption posted on April 22, 2024 from @youthtothepeople

Posts on social media made by Youth to the People demonstrate the way that they incorporate environmental aims into their brand, building trust that they are truly making an effort to protect the Earth. A post on April 22, 2024 (figure 1, 2, and 3) encapsulates the brands

attitude towards environmentalism, stating the moves that the brand has taken and is looking to take to keep true to their core value, such as reducing the amount of plastic in containers and opting for reusable and refillable glass whenever possible and choosing post-consumer materials in packaging whenever it is available to do. Relatedly, a story post revealed they've donated \$1,135,000 to a series of environmental nonprofits, and a post from April 7th, revealed that out of that they've donated over two hundred thousand to the Coalition for Clean Air, Global Fund for Women, and Climate Resolve (figures 4 and 5). They also clarify the ways in which their specific product formulations attempt to help the planet, stating all their products are vegan, cruelty-free, Leaping-Bunny certified, and made locally in California. For many people, skincare choices “now encompasses a more holistic narrative, intertwining personal well-being with global well-being. Cosmetics purchases are no longer just transactional; they are symbolic of broader social and environmental considerations” (Stymenko).

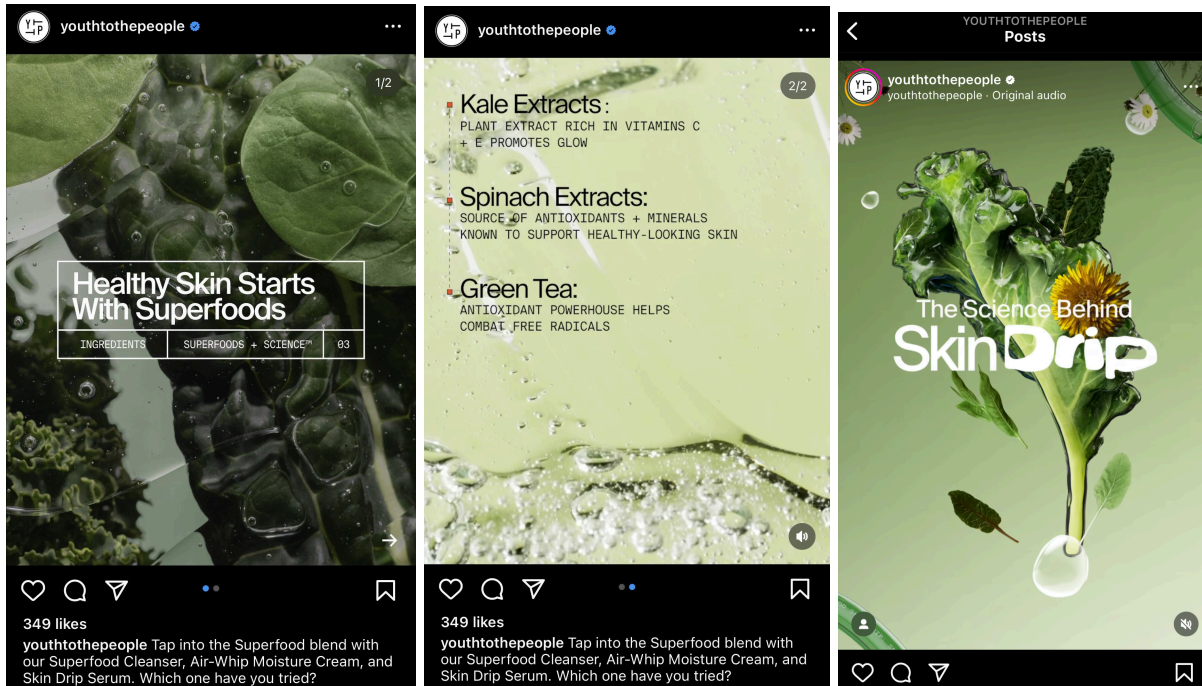


Figures 4 and 5: Two picture of an Instagram post posted on April 7 by @youthtothepeople

A consistent message is maintained throughout numerous Youth to the People's posts, stating that their "approach remains rooted in curiosity and adaptability - continually seeking out knowledge for long-term solutions that have minimal impact on our planet from our formulations, sourcing, manufacturing, and transportation flows." (figure 4). They also state in other posts that little efforts do all up to something bigger, thus their earth-friendly efforts are reflected in decisions across different aspects of their business. While they do make deliberate concrete efforts towards persevering the Earth, they acknowledge their own shortcomings and the fact that there is always some way they can do better. At the bottom of the caption it says, "we believe sustainability is a never-ending journey and we are committed to doing better. What would you like to see? Tell us in the comments" (figure 3). In opening up their sustainability practices for discussion, this brings the brand down from a place of superiority in terms of their contribution to sustainability, portraying a sense of genuinity and sincerity towards its consumers and helping build trust in their relationship.

While sustainability may be the value most associated with Youth to the People, Youth to the People also advertises their formulations reliance on 'natural' ingredients. These ingredients are ingredients that digested are good for as they filled with nutrients and vitamins, thus using them in skincare formulas appeals to consumers because of the association these ingredients have with health. One of their most popular lines boast the superfoods kale, spinach, and green tea as key ingredients, and a post from May 9 explained the benefits of these ingredients in their products (figures 6 and 7). Their newest product, the Superfood Skin Drip Smooth + Glow contains that same blend with the addition of Dandelion and Broccoli Seed Oil alongside other ingredients. One of their posts advertising this product is a video with bird noises in the background, emphasizing the "nature" element of this product (figure 8). For many people,

products that seem to be ‘natural’ are received positively (Kapoor et al). This can be due to different reasons, for some people using ‘naturally’ found ingredients may come with a feeling of the product being better for your skin. For others, the familiarity of ingredients like this can come with the idea that the product should be gentle because they are from nature and not a chemical they’ve never heard of. A study conducted found that products labeled as “natural” experienced a “halo effect” by the consumers, as the consumers believed that products labeled as “natural” were of better quality and superiority in aspects of value, ability and worthiness (Kapoor et al). While these products do boost ingredients that can be viewed as natural, they are not explicitly labeled as “natural,” thus relying more on scientific explanation to get customers to trust them. Youth to the People ensures to emphasize the ‘natural’ aspect of their formulations due to the trending popularity of clean beauty, but they support their claims that these ingredients are beneficial with scientific research. In doing this, Youth to the People not just adheres to a trend to appeal to customers, but rather ensures an execution of a trend that would lead to sustained trust from the consumer.



Figures 6 and 7: Two pictures of an Instagram post posted on May 9 by @youthtothepeople

Figure 8: A screenshot of a video posted on Instagram on May 16 by @Youthtothepeople

Youthforia and the Natural/Clean Trend

On the other hand, Youthforia relies on general terms to appeal to customers, but the lack of detail and explanation from the brand means it struggles with building a fanbase that truly trusts them. Youthforia's tagline is "Makeup You Can Sleep in: Skincare as Makeup."

Youthforia's main selling point is that their makeup products are good enough for your skin that you can sleep in it because it is formulated with skincare ingredients. While this is a good idea and something that can appeal to many people, Youthforia does not execute their concept as well as they could. They do state that they use skincare ingredients for their products, but they rarely disclose on their social media what those ingredients are. Scrolling through their posts from the past, it is rare to come across posts that explain how exactly the skincare in their makeup works. A post from April 23 advertising their foundations says it is "made with 68% skincare ingredients" and with a "formula first approach," but leaves potential consumers in the dust

about what ingredients are being used and for what reason (figure 9). Another post from April 17 shows a woman doing her makeup with multiple Youthforia products. The caption provides a run-down of the products used, and snippets from that include “Date Night Serum Foundation: formulated with ingredients known for their anti-wrinkle + moisturizing properties,” “Pregame Serum Setting Spray: packed with hydration heroes for a boost of moisture,” and “Dewy Gloss: formulated with ingredients that help retain moisture” (Figure 10).

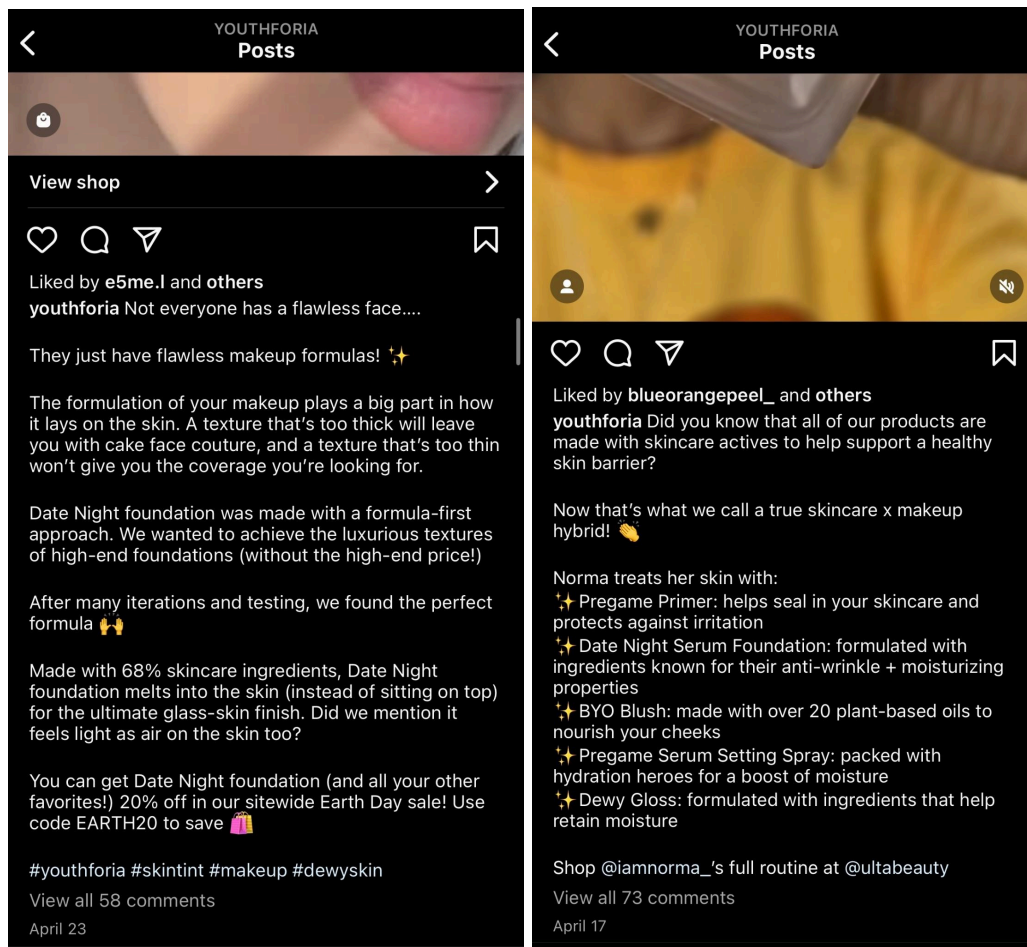


Figure 9: a caption of an Instagram post posted on April 23, 2024 by @youthforia

Figure 10: a caption of an Instagram post posted on April 17, 2024 by @youthforia

These state that their products do contain skincare ingredients and the general reason why it is there, but the brand is so vague about what ingredients they use. Not all skincare ingredients

have the same level of efficiency, and it's hard to look at Youthforia's products and think they are helping your skin when you, as the consumer, do not know what you are using. Youthforia could be using very average ingredients that lack effectiveness, but the consumer does not know that unless they read the ingredient label. In the same light, they could be using extremely effective ingredients that people want to use, but since they are unaware of it the brand does not get the benefit from that. The lack of clarity behind their formulations despite them trying to use the presence of skincare ingredients in makeup as a selling point makes the brand's claim towards makeup that's good for you feel very surface level. The way that the brand attempts to articulate themselves on social media using their tagline does not completely align with the way they present themselves on their website as well. Their tagline of "makeup you can sleep in" and their advertising of skincare makeup highly implies that their makeup is good for your skin and supposed to improve it. Rather than 'good for you,' the brand makes it seem like the products just will not hurt you instead. Youthforia's inconsistent message makes it difficult to trust their brand, as the way they articulate their claims lack transparency.

The lack of clarity behind their marketing is not just present in their claim of skincare ingredient use, but behind their statements of care towards the Earth as well. Despite their clean statement towards sustainability as a defining characterization on their website, it is difficult to believe Youthforia as a brand truly cares about the Earth when they do not offer anything concrete to their consumers that demonstrates this care. Not only is there clearly a lack of posts regarding environmentalism, but the posts being made do not have topics surrounding the Earth as emphasis. The center of these posts are clearly the products themselves, and discussion on the Earth is on the backburner. Similarly as they claim to be a "clean" beauty brand, they also claim to be "sustainable," but their Instagram makes no effort to communicate what exactly they do, if

any, for them to be able to call themselves sustainable. Youthforia posted on Earth Day this year a series of pictures containing their products and a caption talking about their brand's relationship to the Earth. The post says that they take care in selecting what ingredients they use in their products, and use plant-based ingredients. They follow up by saying "respecting the earth and looking good while doing it." This post does not feel like the most appropriate posts for a brand that claims to be sustainable. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, to work towards sustainability means "to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations." Youthforia claims to be sustainable on one platform, but on another they do not discuss the details of it nor do they even mention it. Similarly to the "clean" term, sustainability does not have regulations in the beauty industry, and so what this means for a brand is unclear. What would have been the perfect time to talk about how much the brand cares for the environment instead was the time to mention the brand's "plant-based ingredients," which provide no insight into the way that the brand actually interacts with the Earth. They claim to be "respecting the Earth," but do not communicate to tell their consumers how.

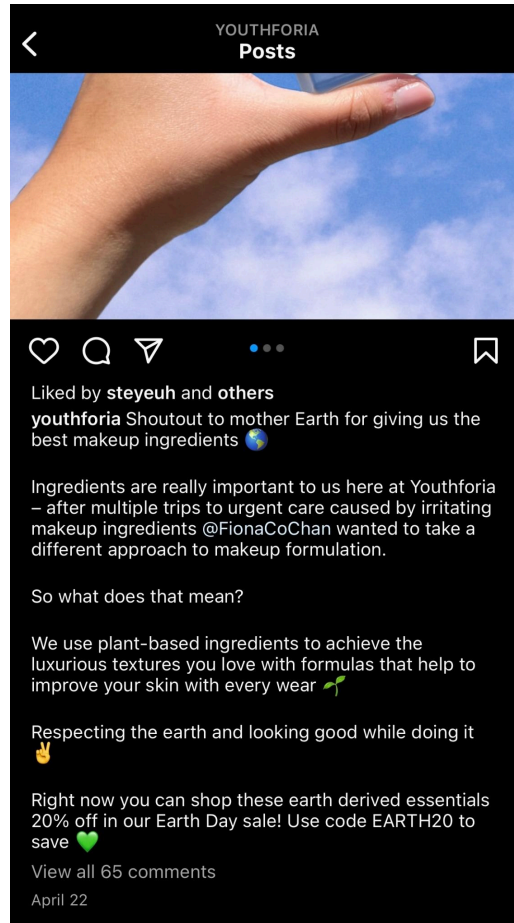


Figure 11: a caption of an Instagram post posted on April 22, 2024 by @youthforia

Electronic Word of Mouth/EWom

E-Wom is another trend that helps brands grow online. Electronic Word of Mouth relies on customers to communicate about a product or a brand in an online space, meaning the brand does not directly initiate its discussion. For this to happen, something has to stand out with the brand or the product in order to propel the discussion and reach new customers, rather than the talk dying out due to a lack of interest by the customers. Both Youth to the People and Youthforia experienced plenty of robust discussion about their products with varying reactions, due to the products themselves and the way that the companies approached interactions with customers.

Youth to the People and E-Wom

Youth to the People's most popular product, the Kale + Green Tea Spinach Vitamins Superfood Cleanser, has become so popular that for many people it has reached a cult following. A quick look at Sephora shows it's one of the most popular cleansers sold with a 4 star rating out of 6.9 thousand reviews. Allure, a popular beauty magazine, allows readers to vote for their favorite beauty products yearly, and the Superfood Cleanser has won every year since 2021 until now.

For this cleanser to reach the amount of popularity that it has, it has to be good enough for it to circulate, and the discussion about it has to be encouraging enough for more and more people to want to try it. Multiple things can encourage a consumer's appeal to this product, ranging but not limited to the user experience with the product, the aesthetic packaging, product claims, and social media posts. A positive overall experience, or hopes of, with the product contributes to people wanting to discuss it and online spaces have facilitated this discussion. It's easy to find reviews of the product on spaces such as Instagram, Youtube, and Reddit. The r/SkincareAddiction community on Reddit boasts 3.2 Million members, and a quick search of the product provides a seemingly endless amount of posts that discuss how it's an irreplaceable "holy grail" cleanser or inquiring more to hear others' experience. For many people, it can be comforting to hear advice from "normal" people such as yourself rather than relying on advertisements. Online communities provide a way for people with common interests to express their opinions, and in this case it can help people discover new products. Through these spaces people can find exposure and encouragement to try new products, and thus the popularity of Youth to the People's cleanser can be partially attributed to the conversations made about the product in online spaces. E-wom permits talk of a product to move fast and stay relevant, greatly helping a brand or product popularity as it allows for the common consumer to find products

through consumers such as themselves. The places in which E-Wom exists are often in spaces filled with people who have similar goals, opinions, or interest towards a specific subject, such as Reddit's r/SkincareAddiction community. The fast movement of information and the view of Ewom as trustworthy helps people influence consumers's purchasing decisions, and the prominent presence of Youth to the People's Superfood cleanser in these online discussion spaces helps show how much E-Wom has helped the product's popularity.

Youthforia and E-Wom

The quick and easy accessibility of communication means ewom can also be dangerous to beauty brands if the brand lacks in some way that consumers dislike. Recently, Youthforia had a controversy online that for many people made Youthforia a brand that they would no longer support. On May 6, 2024, Youthforia had announced in an Instagram post that they were releasing 10 new shades to their foundation range. Interestingly, they posted videos claiming they had a mission to find someone that could fit and model their darkest shade, but many people expressed that the reason it was so dark was due to the fact that it was unrealistic as a skin shade. Quickly, people expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment online because their darkest shade, called 600 deep and described as a "true neutral" was almost straight black pigment. This release of new shades was in response to the line's lack of inclusivity in their foundation range, as most of the colors previously were lighter toned with minimal darker shades. The release of a shade that was an almost straight black pigment felt like a flippant response to the criticism by the customers, and people were quick to call out and acknowledge that online. What happened circulated fast in online spaces with people feeling like the brand rushed to put something out just to make everyone else quiet down about their lack of inclusivity. This resulted in something

that lacked thoroughly testing and time to ensure something was released that was actually usable for customers, rather than something that was there for the sake of it just being there.

Youth to the People and Youthforia are the two brands I look at in this project to analyze the way that brands can try to use trends to grow their brand and resonate with their consumers. Trends can be superficial but they can also represent values that people care about, and so brands must be able to represent themselves authentically and clearly to their consumers to tell them that they care about the same things they do.

Annotated Bibliography

Berg, Madeline. "Fenty's Fortune: Rihanna Is Now Officially a Billionaire." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 6 Aug. 2021, www.forbes.com/sites/maddieberg/2021/08/04/fentys-fortune-rihanna-is-now-officially-a-billionaire/?sh=15c0251d7c96.

This article talks about the singer Rihanna's accumulation of fortune. This is relevant because a large sum of her money comes from the success of her makeup line Fenty Beauty, which may be considered a pioneer in inclusivity in makeup.

Cao, Zhongqin. "Social Media Factors Affecting Customers Purchase Intention towards Skincare Products." 2020. Thesis. *www.wkuwire.org*, <https://wkuwire.org/handle/20.500.12540/397>.

This piece is a thesis created by a student to fulfill their Bachelor of Science in Global Business that discusses how social media affects the purchasing intention of a customer, especially with regard to how celebrities and professionals influence different genders. I will not be looking at celebrities and professionals in skincare advertising, but I will be using this thesis to refer to their Review of Literature to help me find references.

Carpetta, Cathy. "Fenty Beauty's Inclusive Revolution: Rihanna's \$582M Impact." *Bigblue Blog*, bigblue, 9 Dec. 2023, www.bigblue.co/blog/fenty-beautys-inclusive-revolution-rihannas-582m-impact#.

This article talks about different aspects of the success of Fenty Beauty. It emphasizes the role of the brand's commitment to inclusivity, and the ways that it left an impact on the makeup industry.

Droesch, Blake. "Gen Z's Path to Purchase." *EMARKETER*,

<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/gen-zs-path-purchase>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2024.

This article talks about the steps that happen with Gen Z as they make purchases. It talks about the influence of social media while also making the point of how social media is the 'initial' step, and how consumers will do more after seeing a product in social media before they purchase. This article is important to me because social media is usually not the 'make-or break' when it comes to purchases, and what is posted on social media needs to exist within the realm of the brand in the other spaces they exist in, such as on the brand's website and the experience of consumers actually using the product. This is relevant to me because I want to create social media advertisements that are cohesive to the brand as a whole.

Dwi Santy, Raeni, and Reggina Andriani. "Purchase decision in terms of content marketing and

e-WOM on social media." *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR)*, vol. 10, no. 6, 5 Nov. 2023, pp. 921–928,

<https://doi.org/10.15549/jeecar.v10i6.1502>.

Gen Z received a lot of their information and content from social media, thus companies have learned to utilize social media to appeal to that demographic. Ways that skincare brands utilize social media for their products include video content and product reviews called e-WOM. Content marketing, which covers videos, photos, emails, and more are

meant to not purely sell the product, but form a relationship with the consumer so that they will trust the brand, buy that product, and be willing to buy more products. Content marketing is thus referred to as “pull” marketing because it creates more information than what the consumer is actually searching for, thus “pulling” them into purchasing the product. Content marketing is planned in order to retain the current target customer base and encourage more customers to purchase, thus decisions regarding marketing strategies change depending on the changes of the market.

Feger, Arielle. “What Gen Alpha’s Early Obsession with Beauty Means for Brands.”

EMARKETER, 16 Jan. 2024,

<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/what-gen-alpha-s-early-obsession-with-beauty-means-brands>.

This article discusses Gen Alpha’s purchasing power and how to make use of this as a brand. 51% of Gen Alpha’s initially learn about brands through YouTube, while 52.2% of Gen Z used TikTok to learn about products, so it is necessary for brands to cultivate a social media presence as this reliance on the internet for consumerism shows no sign of stopping. This article can be looked at to show the importance of a social media presence in the present day as well as the importance of needing to keep that presence for the future.

Fetto, Funmi. “How Fenty Beauty Changed the State of Play in the Industry.” *British Vogue*,

British Vogue, 6 Apr. 2020,

www.vogue.co.uk/beauty/article/rihanna-fenty-beauty-diversity.

This talks about different ways that Fenty beauty changed the makeup industry. This includes discussion on the state of inclusivity before and after Fenty’s release.

Lebow, Sarah. "Lessons from e.l.f. Beauty and Creator Chris Olsen on Authentic Creator

Marketing." *EMARKETER*,

<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/elf-beauty-creator-chris-olsen-authentic-creator-marketing>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2024.

This article looks at a campaign video released from ELF and discusses key takeaways on why this advertisement is successful. This video did not focus much on the products themselves, but on a conversation, which helped make the brand seem more 'human' to its consumers. From this article, I learned about how important it is to make sure content is authentic to the brand while also being careful not to overdo the 'conversation' part because it can feel fake. It also talks about how "being a little bit of a consumer is extremely helpful in order to be a consumer," which is something that stands out to me because in my capstone I want to emphasize how I can understand consumers in order to be able to attract consumers.

Perkins, Carina. "UK Beauty 2024." *EMARKETER*, 8 Apr. 2024,

<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/uk-beauty-2024>.

This article shows how much spending on beauty through social media 18-34 year olds in the UK have done in a year, revealing that spending on beauty through social media in this age range is twice as much as other age ranges. The article also talks about how beauty is the biggest ecommerce category in the UK, how despite overall sales in beauty are cutting down, ages 18-24 are still spending substantial money on beauty, and how social media is important to consumers learning about and researching beauty products. This article dissects beauty in relation to Gen Z and Young Millennials, looking

particularly at the amount of spending, the rate of spending, and the role of social media and social commerce. There are numerous different statistics I can pull from this article to help make my point about the importance of social media for beauty, giving me the opportunity to look at how this relates to a specific age demographic.

Kapoor, S., Fernandes, S., & Punia, S. (2022/08//). 'Natural' Label Halo Effect on Consumer Buying Behavior, Purchase Intention and Willingness to Pay for Skincare Products.

Cardiometry, (23), 741-755. <https://doi.org/10.18137/cardiometry.2022.23.741755>

The natural label halo effect is the positive effect that the word “natural” has on products and the perception that it being labeled as “natural” increases its perceived value to consumers. A global survey conducted in 2017 found that to consumers, a product’s most important feature was that it used organic products. While this study was conducted in 2017, it is important to note that environmentalism is a value that many millennial and Generation Z markets care deeply about. (halo effect) Up to 2024, this value has continued to show up in the products they purchase and support. For some people this can show up as the literal products being labeled as “natural” or “organic,” or for others this shows up as brands that make a clear effort to support this environment such as Youth To the People. In both cases, the ‘natural’ aspect of the product is believed to be better, and thus is part of the incentive as to why a consumer may decide to purchase it. Another study has been conducted that found that the more aware the consumer was of a product being “natural,’ the more likely it was to be purchased. (halo effect) For marketing, emphasizing this in advertisements is a way to pull consumer purchase, and is most effective when already catering to a consumer base that cares about products being “natural,” such as Herbivore.

Kurniawati, Ade, et al. "The Effect of Digital Marketing and Personal Selling on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Beauty Products ." *Almana : Jurnal Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, vol. 7, no. 1, Apr. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.36555/almana.v7i1.2116>.

Purchasing decisions are the series of decisions a customer makes when deciding to purchase a product using information they've gathered about what problem they are looking to solve, what product they are looking at, and what alternatives to that current product are available. In particular, these decisions include what exact product they are buying, how much they are willing to pay for that product, where to buy the product, and when to buy the product.

Rungruang Jit, Warinrumpai et al. "Understanding Different Types of Followers' Engagement and the Transformation of Millennial Followers into Cosmetic Brand Evangelists." *Behavioral sciences (Basel, Switzerland)* vol. 13,3 270. 19 Mar. 2023, doi:10.3390/bs13030270

This article looks at the ways that consumers engage with social media and how it affects their purchasing habits. The following quote discusses a market shift and different factors that have added to it - "Interestingly, the cosmetic market is booming and considered one of the most aggressively expanding consumer markets. The generational change, with millennial customers joining the market, is the primary driver of this tremendous growth. At the same time, social media communities, which have a long-term impact on cosmetic product purchasing behavior, also encourage this shift."

Stymenko, Roman. "Trends and Innovations in Cosmetic Marketing." *Research Gate*, Nov. 2023, www.researchgate.net/publication/376162144_TRENDS_AND_INNOVATIONS_IN_COSMETIC_MARKETING.

This study talks about different trends in cosmetic marketing that draw in customers - transparency of ingredients in a product and its sourcing, the use of AI, male centered products, products with multiple benefits for a simpler routine, and brand stability and trustworthiness. This article hopes to alleviate grey areas around cosmetic market research. “Studying the cosmetics market, particularly from an academic perspective, has been a challenge for researchers and industry professionals. Much of the academic literature in this area tends to be outdated, reflecting a time when the cosmetics industry and its associated marketing practices were very different from today's digital age. This lag in scientific updates has necessitated a shift in information sourcing.”

Zaprianova, Christina. “The Evolution of Foundation Shade Ranges.” *Strike Magazines*, Strike Magazines, 18 Sept. 2022,
www.strikemagazines.com/blog-2-1/the-evolution-of-foundation-shade-ranges.

This article talks about how brands changed their shade ranges after Fenty’s Beauty’s release.

Reflection

My capstone project is an analysis of the social media of two different skincare/beauty brands in an effort to understand how beauty brands use social media marketing to connect with and

engage with their consumers. This project started out as an analysis of specific aspects of social media posts of skincare brands (color, props, captions, etc) and a subsequent development of my own advertisements based on what I learned, but the lack of research available shifted this project into my own research of these posts. The reason why I choose to do this project is because of my strong interest in the beauty sector, particularly in skincare. Marketing in skincare is a career path that I am currently considering, but I have no prior experience in marketing or looking at skincare in a professional way. This capstone project was created for me to try something new that I've been interested in to see if this is something I would like to continue to pursue. Along the way I also decided this is a project I would like to show to possible employers so that they can see my level of interest and commitment to working in the skincare/beauty industry.

I genuinely enjoyed working with all of my teammates. Sara, Alyssa, and Chelsea were all such easy people to work with. We realized at one point that setting up meeting times with each other was effective in ensuring we would get work done, so all of us would make the effort to try and find times to meet each other. I do think that everyone's peer review feedback was very helpful - Sara is also interested in marketing so her comments tended to lean towards that which was useful, Alyssa reminded me to add more visual elements and data points, Chelsea helped me remember to write in a way that had a personal, memorable touch to it. I think I also provided good feedback to my peers that helped them round out aspects of their project. I think I learned to be more honest and specific in my feedback this quarter, especially because of the comfort my teammates all had with each other and our desire for our teammates to do well, it became easier for me to thoroughly critique their work.

I think my capstone project accomplished my goals in analyzing how specific skincare/beauty brands created social media advertisements either worked for or against them. I was able to find a 'bigger picture' with how trends represented cultural shifts of ideals and opinions, and articulated how brands use trends to connect with their consumers. There are certainly opportunities where parts of a project could have been more thoroughly discussed, or connections between different ideas could have been explained in a more impactful manner. However, I do think I provide thorough, detailed analysis of these brands. In creating this project, I struggled to find research that I could use to support my analysis. Thus, I believe that this paper was relatively unique in its focus and contributed to an area that does not have much studies about it.

I think my Capstone project was around a B+/A-. I do think I accomplished my main goals, but I struggled to articulate myself in the most effective way. I believe I conducted good research, but there are parts of the paper that peer-reviewers had commented on that I was not able to improve on. On the other hand, I lacked a lot of data and had to do a lot of analysis on my own. I think for the Weekly Assignments I achieved an A/A-. I completed all of my assignments thoroughly (though I did mention to you in our meeting that I had completed my PWR presentation and peer reviews online but did not submit on BL). The one thing I struggled with finishing was the first draft by one-on-meeting, but I did explain that the lack of research available had me stuck.