

DRAG QUEENS AND MALE BEAUTY INFLUENCERS CHALLENGE THE MAKEUP INDUSTRY AND GENDER ROLES

01

HISTORY OF MEN IN MAKEUP: EARLY CENTURIES

Men in makeup has been prevalent for centuries, often seen in various non-Western countries. Makeup in ancient societies was a symbol of wealth, social status, and spirituality. Men wore makeup in theater settings to impersonate women because women were not allowed to perform, which is where the term “drag” originated (Tran, 2020). Drag was born out of gender inequality.



02

WHAT CHANGED POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF MEN IN MAKEUP? MASCULINITY VS FEMININITY DICHOTOMIZED

The Enlightenment (1685-1815) motivated people to explore different areas of research. Through the study of sexuality, drag was frowned upon, as it was now associated with homosexuality. Queen Victoria coined makeup as a symbol of Satan, deterring men from wearing it. Men could even be arrested for wearing makeup (Tran, 2020). In the 80's, they would be seen as rebellious, categorizing them into the alternative scene. Many were forced to hide in underground clubs, shamed by the rest of society.



03

DRAG QUEENS PENETRATE THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

In 1998, RuPaul was the first drag queen to represent a makeup company in the MAC Viva Glam campaign, opening up the makeup industry to aspiring drag queens and men (Intner, 2021). As Goodman states, “They are the definition of free expression which transcends sex, gender, economic background, and race” (2018).



04

MALE BEAUTY INFLUENCERS CHALLENGE GENDER ROLES

Male beauty influencers such as Manny MUA, Jeffree Star, Patrick Starr, and James Charles have had major contributions to normalizing men's grooming, even becoming the faces of multiple makeup brands and creating their own brands. They have educated men on different products once marketed toward women, encouraging men to experiment with various products and discover "nontraditional" ways to use them. Influencers have sparked a new generation of men wearing makeup, even inspiring young boys to create their own makeup social media accounts.



05

HOW IS MAKEUP NOW MARKETED?

Many brands now market their makeup products in a genderless fashion. They have now expanded marketing to all genders, emphasizing that makeup does not have to be feminized. Chanel, one of the most famous makeup brands, launched their "Boy de Chanel" line in 2018, using the word "boy" to stand for "be only you" (Elan, 2020). This line included products that men could use to emphasize their beard, eyebrows, lips, and skin. Other brands such as MilkMakeup and UrbanDecay enforce the idea of genderless beauty. These were steps to remove the gendered notion that makeup was only meant for women. Now, almost every makeup brand implements gender inclusivity in their advertising.

06

HOW DOES THIS CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES?

As increasing amounts of men are wearing makeup, the stigma around it is falling. Drag queens and male beauty influencers enforced the acceptance of gender fluidity, encouraging other men to try makeup products that are not specifically marketed toward men (Pianceza, 2019). The Chanel brand comments, "Men should be free to use makeup products to correct or improve their appearance, without calling into question their masculinity. Many men do not see makeup as a way to define gender, but as a form of art. Drag queens have paved the way for free expression, as it allows people to transform into whatever they want and be confident doing it."



07

ARE MORE MEN WEARING MAKEUP?

In Europe, men's beauty products are predicted to be worth more than 49 billion Euros, showing a drastic increase in male makeup sales (Elan, 2020). Many men now report that makeup has helped them with body dysmorphia and low self-esteem. In fact, most "masculine icons", such as David Beckham, and many male political representatives such as Donald Trump, report wearing makeup regularly. Makeup application is now seen as an equivalent to grooming hair or having a skincare routine. Now, about 1/3 of young men are considering trying makeup, and Google searches show an increase in searching for the terms "men's makeup" (Pianceza, 2019). Lastly, there has been a 20% increase of Instagram accounts created by male beauty influencers.



08

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Currently, most men wearing makeup want to go undetected. As younger generations consume the current media, more and more boys are trying out different forms of makeup. Attitudes are changing, and the demographic for male makeup users gets younger and younger (Shapiro, 2017). Many young men are optimistic that gender norms will continue to shift, and one day, gender will not be a question in terms of makeup. Men in makeup are often now praised and accepted. We are in the beginning of a revolution of breaking down gender barriers, and we have drag queens and male beauty influencers to thank.



Annotated Bibliography

Elan, P. (2020). Beauty and the bloke: Why more men are wearing makeup. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/feb/23/beauty-and-the-bloke-why-more-men-are-chooisng-to-wear-makeup-warpaint>

I am aiming to use this article to emphasize that many male public figures wear makeup to increase their confidence. It gives examples of beauty influences such as James Charles and Jeffree Star, but it also gives examples of random public figures such as Donald Trump and Daniel Kaluuya. In today's society, attitudes toward makeup are moving away from "feminine" beauty and closer to genderless beauty.

Goodman, S. (2018). How drag has changed the face of art, fashion, and beauty. Los Angeles

Times. <https://highschool.latimes.com/sierra-canyon-high-school/how-drag-has-changed-the-face-of-art-fashion-and-beauty/>

I love this article because it emphasizes drag breaking down gender roles and how men have been trying to do this for centuries. As I noted in my project proposal, this article talks about instances where men were practicing drag and did not even know that they were. It even explains that Shakespeare created the term "drag" when he had men dress up as women for his plays, and the article notes how different expressions of drag have sparked LGBTQ+ movements.

Ho, L. (2020). The world of male beauty influencers. Affable.ai.

<https://www.affable.ai/blog/the-world-of-male-beauty-influencers>

My intent is to use information from this article to explain how beauty marketing has changed thanks to male beauty influencers. Nowadays, many brands strive to remove the gendered aspect from their advertisements, emphasizing that anyone can wear makeup.

It gives numerous examples of different companies using men, even cis-gendered, heterosexual men, as the face of certain products, eluding that makeup is not and should not be gendered.

Intner, K. (2021). A brief history of MAC's iconic Viva Glam campaign. BAZAAR.

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/beauty/makeup/a38573019/john-demsey-mac-viva-glam-interview/>

MAC Cosmetics was actually created by two men, Frank and Frank, and it is one of, if not the most famous cosmetic brands in stores today. This article talks about the history of their campaign entitled "Viva Glam" with RuPaul as the face of it. This was the first beauty campaign starring a drag queen, so I want to use this article to explain how this campaign expanded the drag community and inspired other men to start playing with makeup.

Matlin, J. (2020). The next wave of genderless beauty brands are here. BAZAAR.

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/beauty/makeup/a34050232/gender-neutral-beauty-brands/>

This article talks about how not only makeup, but general self-care such as skin care, has been gendered for so many years. It talks about how hygiene products marketed towards men often used stereotypical masculine language, and nowadays, pronouns are being removed from brands' marketing. The article mentions various genderless brands that have been popularized through the media, some owned by famous male beauty influencers.

Men in Makeup. (2021). Humanist Beauty. <https://www.humanistbeauty.com/men-and-makeup/>

This article dives into the origins of men wearing makeup, dating back to as early as 3000 BC. It emphasizes that makeup was not always seen as "feminine", and some of the highest men in power wore makeup as a symbol of wealth. The article talks about how makeup on men in different cultures symbolizes different things, and in Western society, men wearing makeup was once seen in an alternative, goth light.

Oliver, D. (2022). Men are trying out makeup — and its no surprise, experts say. USA Today.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2022/02/18/men-straight-lgbtq-makeup-tiktok/6788662001/>

I want to use this article to talk about how many male influencers who promote wearing makeup are actually straight. Wearing makeup does not take away from an individual's masculinity, and it should not be treated as such. This article explains that during the Age of Enlightenment, gender roles and attitudes towards makeup completely shifted, and in the present day, we are working to change that.

Piacenza, J. (2019). As beauty norms blur, one-third of young men say they'd consider wearing cosmetics. Morning Consult. <https://morningconsult.com/2019/10/28/as-beauty-norms-blur-one-third-of-young-men-say-theyd-consider-wearing-cosmetics/>

My goal is to use the information in the article to explain how social media has drastically altered society's, specifically men's, perception of makeup. What was once seen as "girly" is now shifting to be seen as something that enhances one's appearance. The stigma around makeup has made many people believe that wearing makeup means putting bright, loud colors all over your face, but many people wear makeup without others even noticing.

Shapiro, B. (2017). His eye makeup is way better than yours. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/style/his-eye-makeup-is-way-better-than-yours.html>

This article dives into the backgrounds of different male beauty influencers who have greatly paved the way for young boys getting into makeup influencing. It talks about how they have allowed boys to openly be interested in makeup at younger and younger ages, as the times are changing. They share their stories regarding discrimination and/or bullying they faced as men in the beauty industry and how they are working to change this.

Tran, K. (2020). The history of drag and its modern-day influence. New Face Fashion Magazine.

<https://www.newfacefashionmagazine.com/post/the-history-of-drag-and-its-modern-day-influence>

I will use this article to talk about the origins of drag and how it has progressed throughout history. I want to use this information specifically to talk about how drag has been practiced for so much longer than we know, even when it was considered illegal in some parts of the world. I also want to talk about how many makeup trends and techniques are derived from drag queens.

Image Links:

<https://www.gq.com/story/the-long-history-of-men-and-makeup>

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