

The Effects of Social Media Makeup Marketing on Adolescent Girls' Self-Confidence

Meghana T. Tadala

Did you know that teenage girls are the easiest consumers to sell to because cosmetics are similar to a necessity for them? According to an article from Chain Drug Review, teenage girls from ages 13 to 19 have spent over \$9 billion on cosmetic products (“Cosmetics”, par. 1). Social media is an online platform where creators can promote, advertise, and sell products. Makeup is a form of cosmetics which can enhance and can alter one’s appearance. The constant use of cosmetics impacts both a girl’s self-esteem and their consumerism. These problems are directly interlocked due to the tendency to hide their imperfections. According to Anthonieta Looman Mafra, 78% of women spend more than an hour on how they look every single day (Mafra, par.2). Teenage girls have a tendency to compare themselves to others. This, in turn, results in the deterioration of one’s confidence and self-esteem. On the other hand, makeup enhances their features and increases their self-esteem in the moment. In the long run, makeup can give individuals psychological issues. Makeup is one of the most advertised items on social media, but what social effects does makeup really have on adolescent girls?

The research seeks to answer the question of how the constant marketing of makeup affects the self-confidence of an adolescent girl. The different positive and negative effects of makeup include increased over-consumption, mental illnesses, and adolescent sexualization. This study brings light to the social effects that teenage girls have to endure while and after using makeup products.

Social media and society can implement pressures that affect the overconsumption of cosmetics for teenage girls. Sutinah Putri, an individual who specializes in sociology, believes that “[m]edia encourages many people, especially teenage girls, to put aside rational thinking and consume these things that should not be a necessity”(par. 5). She also suggests that, “[t]he media often shows images of beauty through visual advertisements that shape people’s thoughts about beauty standards”(par. 3). Advertisements and social media influencers persuade teenage girls to buy certain products. Media influence is one of the biggest factors in shaping adolescents’ thoughts on beauty and is the primary pressure for overconsumption. Social media reveals unrealistic beauty standards that young girls believe that they need to have in order to fit in. Given this information, we can conclude that social media has immense control over what adolescents purchase. The creation of new beauty standards have the ability to make a teenage girl spend all of their money for a trend that will merely last a week. For example, when a trusted influencer promotes a brand, more individuals are more likely to buy it, allowing bloggers to be extremely influential on social media. “Teenagers often want to resemble trendy people in their social circle. These social pressures cause overconsumption by teenagers to avoid discrimination and feeling different from others”(Putri, par. 4). The most influential people in an adolescent’s life are the people they surround themselves with. Receiving validation from friends or people they look up to can drive them to make expensive purchases. The use of beauty products could improve their social status among their friends. Adolescent girls compare themselves to one another and they feel that they need to be more attractive in order to fit in and be ‘popular’. Teenage girls take their appearance seriously as it paves the way for their social life. Given the evidence, it can be assumed that adolescent girls purchase expensive beauty products as they feel the need to fit in. The fear of being bullied also connects to why teenage girls want to fit in. They believe that if they don’t have a high enough social status, they’ll get bullied. As a result, teenage girls feel the need to blend into everyone else, so

they don't get picked or pointed out. Media and social standards have an enormous impact on how teenage girls act, buy, and consume. Adolescents are young, naive individuals that feel the need to fit in. This causes them to develop an over-consumptive behavior.

The use of makeup can help elevate an individual's self-esteem for a short period of time, but in the long run, it can lead to mental and psychological effects. Marcos Veçoso, an expert in the pharmaceutical and health industry suggests that "[t]he application of makeup modifies the appearance, helping the individual to cope with self-image, emotions and mood. Makeup has been shown to provide supporting effects on the mental health of women affected by serious mental illnesses"(par. 6). When a young woman or adolescent girl tries makeup for the first time, it opens a new window. In the beginning, makeup can improve one's self-esteem and provide support for one's mental health. Makeup enhances an individual's facial features, and has an immediate positive impact on one's mood. This short bliss, unfortunately, does not last for long. Introducing makeup to non-frequent users can leave them feeling addicted and not being able to live without it. According to Anthonieta Looman Mafra, a specialist in psychological studies explains that "[a] recent experimental study compared women's self-perception without makeup and with professionally applied makeup and showed that made up women considered themselves more feminine, attractive, more satisfied with appearance" (par. 5). Women who use less makeup and spend a short amount of time on their appearance have a higher self-esteem while women who use more makeup and spend an extended amount of time on their appearance have a lower self-esteem (Mafra, par. 2). Teenage girls who feel the need to use more makeup are usually more insecure, they feel the need to cover their face because they are not pleased with how they look. Makeup and skincare use can become obsessive, in a short period of time, putting on makeup will feel like a necessity throughout the day. The overutilization of makeup comes along with a number of psychological and mental illnesses such as, but not limited to, depression and anxiety. Young women and teenagers start thinking they are truly ugly without makeup and descend into a dark hole which is difficult to climb out of. Beauty standards that the majority of girls follow can lead to eating disorders, social isolation, and much more. The evidence here leads one to infer that makeup is similar to a drug to teenage girls, they get addicted to it and feel like they can't function without it. Regrettably, the after-effects are not pretty; older adolescents start losing money financially while younger adolescents suffer with self-confidence issues. Adolescents who feel comfortable with their body and have a higher self-esteem tend to spend less time scrolling on social media while others with low-self esteem spend more time on social media.

The promotion of cosmetic ingredients through social media marketing can create the societal pressure for young adolescent girls to sexualize themselves. According to Marta Evangelist, a writer who obtained her PhD and studied journaling justifies how people have "[m]ore empathy for young women today, they are such targets of commercialism and have so much added pressure in terms of what they are supposed to look like, and what they're supposed to say"(par. 5). The use of makeup has resulted in teenage girls feeling the need to essentially "sell themselves". In many advertising companies today, women are seen as objects to please the viewer's eyes. Young adolescent girls are under the impression that they have to cater to society's expectations as well. According to Dr. Kristine Blair, a specialist in social sciences, explains that "Through self-objectification, adolescents disconnect their bodies from their persons, and sometimes internalize this perspective and start evaluating and treating themselves as mere bodies, highlighting the visual assessment"(par. 26). Given this information, we can conclude that teenage girls apply makeup because of societal norms. In today's society,



it is normalized for women to be seen as objects by the male gaze. Adolescents start seeing themselves as objects rather than young girls who are not expected to cater to society's expectations. Teenage girl's self-respect and dignity declines as society pressures them to look and present themselves the best they can. Contrary to the inclusivity marketed by lots of cosmetic companies, young girls work so hard to fit into an undefined standard rather than working with their unique features and finding a solution that works with them. Society views adolescents as objects in this world especially when they start to wear makeup. Society also views makeup as a cry for 'attention', so as soon as young girls start wearing makeup, their only purpose is for the male gaze.

In conclusion, makeup and skincare products can truly disrupt one's mental health by wanting to fit into the highest social circle or following all the latest trends. Initially, Makeup has a positive impact on an adolescent's mental health, but it goes downhill from there. Once teenage girls start comparing themselves to one another, they start to think they are ugly without makeup, and cannot live without it anymore. Not only can makeup give adolescence mental health issues, but it also deteriorates their self-worth. Teenage girls have started to view themselves as objects rather than human beings due to societal expectations. Therefore, makeup has an everlasting negative social impact on adolescent girls.

Works Cited



- Blair, Kristine. "Selling the Self: Women and the Feminine Seduction of Advertising." *Women And Language*, vol. 17, no. 1, spring 1994, pp. 20+. Gale In Context: High School, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A16617838/SUIC?u=j043905002&sid=bookmark-SUIC&xid=f2e970b4. Accessed 9 Sept. 2024.
- "Cosmetics - Courting Teenagers Can Create Customers for Life." *Chain Drug Review*, vol. 22, no. 5, 13 Mar. 2000, p. 33. Gale General OneFile Custom, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A61242951/GPS?u=j043905002&sid=bookmark-GPS&xid=05e0bc3e. Accessed 8 Sept. 2024.
- Evangelista, Marta, et al. "Usage Patterns and Self-Esteem of Female Consumers of Antiaging Cosmetic Products." *Cosmetics*, vol. 9, no. 3, May 2022, p. NA. Gale Academic OneFile, dx.doi.org/10.3390/cosmetics9030049. Accessed 8 Sept. 2024.
- Mafra, Anthonieta Looman, et al. "The Contrasting Effects of Body Image and Self-Esteem in the Makeup Usage." PLoS ONE, vol. 17, no. 3, 25 Mar. 2022, p. e0265197. Gale In Context: Science, dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265197. Accessed 8 Sept. 2024.
- Putri, Sutinah, and Nabila. "Consumptive Behavior of Urban Adolescent Girls in Using Skincare Products." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4, July 2024, pp. COV1+. Gale Academic OneFile, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A803788454/AONE?u=j043905002&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=756d0338. Accessed 8 Sept. 2024.
- Veçoso, Marcos C., et al. "Effect of Makeup Use on Depressive Symptoms: An Open, Randomized and Controlled Trial." *Dermatology & Therapy*, vol. 14, no. 3, Mar. 2024, pp. 777–91. EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13555-024-01128-w>.