

More Brands, More Product, But Where is the Diversity?

As of 2019, the makeup community on and offline is the most diverse it has ever been. Women, men, trans and nonbinary individuals and people of all sexual orientations and racial backgrounds are all taking part in starting and wearing beauty trends. YouTube and Instagram have created a community of makeup lovers and artists of all different backgrounds who come together over the love of product and artistry. But the industry still needs to catch up in terms of diversity to match their audiences and the influencers who are popping up organically, finding success, and even creating their own content, brands, and products to fill in the gaps.

Currently, two of the most popular and most subscribed gurus in the beauty community on YouTube are actually men. Jeffree Star and James Charles are both hugely successful beauty YouTubers and product creators. James Charles is a 19-year-old YouTuber, who identifies as a cis gay man. James posts primarily makeup tutorials, challenges, and collab videos which each average 100 million views. His collaboration with Morphe on his recently released James Charles Artistry Palette is one of the most feened after products and has sold out on multiple occasions in both Ulta and Morphe's online and brick and mortar stores.

Jeffree Star is known for his androgynous and luxurious style and his honest product reviews where he determines if products are "Jeffree Star Approved". When he posts his esteemed review videos of approved products, they almost always sell out, like E.L.F's Putty Primer, which is still off the market three months since his review was posted. Recently, Jeffree's warehouses for his brand Jeffree Star Cosmetics were broken into leading up to the launch of his highly anticipated Magic Star Concealers and Powders and his Blue Blood collection, consisting of an all blue themed eyeshadow palette, liquid lipsticks, and liquid highlighters. His unreleased products ended up on the Black market.

These two stars' success proves there is a place for people besides women in the beauty industry, yet there is still a lack of representation in cosmetic brand marketing and product development. While the industry is starting to see strides toward diversity, a lot of progress still needs to be made. The industry needs to send the message makeup is no longer designated just for white women.

Only recently have men, trans, and nonbinary people been included in campaign images. James Charles was actually the first male "Cover Boy" of CoverGirl cosmetics in 2016. Since, CoverGirl, MilkMakeup, Glossier, Morphe, Jeffree Star Cosmetics, and Maybelline and others have been at the forefront of showing more gender diversity in their advertising. Yet white women, and even now white men, are at the forefront of the beauty industry. Even in terms of product, white women are still clearly the target audience.

In 2018, Beautyblender, the original creator of the most popular beauty sponge, released a range of Bounce Foundation that was not inclusive of all shade ranges. The community attacked the brand online when a photo of their shade range was released showing only 8 of 32 shades for people of a darker skin tone. They were called out for not creating a product people of all skin tones could use, an issue many other brands have perpetuated. The beauty community started paying close attention to this issue when Rihanna set the standard in 2017 with her launch of Fenty Beauty. Fenty's Pro Filt'R foundation line consisted of 40 shades and has since expanded to 50 with full representation of the spectrum of skin tones.

While there is an obvious progression in the industry, the diversity of the beauty community is still not fully represented by major cosmetic brands, whether luxury, indie, or drugstore. To see a monumental change in the industry, brands need to embrace diversity of gender, race, and sexuality in all aspects of their business, from product creation and development to campaign marketing and advertising. This change also needs to be brought by individuals in the community who have the ability to create representation by starting their own brands or doing product collaborations. Nikita Dragun, a transwoman of color and YouTuber just launched her own brand Dragun Beauty. It is one of the first mainstream trans owned cosmetic brands and their products cater to everyone. Influencers seem to be at the forefront of this movement toward diversity and inclusivity because they are tapped into the community.

They understand makeup is a medium for expression and artistry and it should not exclude anyone because of who they are. This sentiment needs to be adopted by other leaders in the industry. If the beauty industry giants continue to ignore the diversity of the community, consumers will likely turn to the newer brands who cater to their diverse audiences with both their advertising and products. The community continues to applaud and celebrate inclusive brands. It is exciting to start to see these changes in the industry, but all of those with influence in beauty and cosmetics need to keep pushing forward to achieve full inclusivity.