

## Makeup



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### Synonyms

[Adornments](#); [Cosmetics](#); [Makeup](#)

### Definition

Makeup is a general term that refers to visible cosmetic products that are normally applied to the face with the goal of increasing facial attractiveness. Makeup is primarily worn by women. Cosmetics is a broader term referring to beauty products. It includes makeup as well as skin care creams, hair care products, perfumes, and personal hygiene products.

### Makeup

#### History of Makeup

Evidence for the use of pigments applied cosmetically to female face dates back at least 5000 years, with the discovery of a clay female head bearing red pigment on the lips and cheeks at

the Niuheliang burial site in China (dated to the Hongshan Neolithic period, LPICRA, 1986; Mai et al., 2016). Evidence of makeup applied for the express purpose of increasing a woman's attractiveness to prospective mates is at least as old as Ancient Rome. The Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso (nee Ovid, 43 BC – 18 AD), encouraged women to apply cosmetics to boost their attractiveness to men in his poem *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* (Johnson, 2016). The global makeup industry is currently worth about US\$37 billion, comprising about 12% of the overall cosmetics market (Fortune Business Insights, 2021; the cosmetics market also includes skin care and hair care products, perfumes, and personal hygiene products). Makeup impacts both mate attraction and female intrasexual competition, via its respective effects on a woman's apparent mate-value and perceived behavioral intentions.

#### Makeup and Mate Attraction

Facial luminance contrast is the difference between the lightest and darkest features of the face – typically comparisons of the eyes and lips with the immediately surrounding skin. Facial contrast is higher in female than male faces (Russell, 2009) and decreases with age (Porcheron et al., 2013, 2017). Higher contrast female faces are also perceived as younger (Porcheron et al., 2013), healthier (Russell et al., 2016), and more attractive (Russell, 2009). Makeup increases facial luminance contrast (Russell, 2009) and this likely accounts for much

of its generally positive impacts on perceived attractiveness (Etcoff et al., 2011; Batres et al., 2018; Sulikowski et al., 2022).

For women, apparent (perceived) mate value is heavily tied to physical appearance. This is because youth and fertility are key components of female mate value, and both contribute positively to facial attractiveness (Maestripieri et al., 2014; Pflüger et al., 2012). Hence, by increasing facial attractiveness, makeup potentially plays a role in mate attraction via changes to a woman's apparent mate value. Men appear to respond to make up in a manner which accords with higher perceptions of the wearer's mate value with waitresses receiving higher tips (Gueguen & Jacob, 2011), and women in bars being approached by male suitors more often (Gueguen, 2008), when wearing makeup than when not.

Women may also use makeup as a signal of behavioral intent. The quantity of makeup women report wearing is linked to their own self-reported socio-sexuality – more makeup is worn by less restricted women (Wagstaff, 2018). Women wearing makeup are judged to be more likely to pursue casual sex (Kellie et al., 2021) and to be more promiscuous (Mileva et al., 2016). Considering the extra attention paid by men to made-up women (Gueguen, 2008; Geugen & Jacob, 2011), makeup may function as a signal of sexual availability.

Promiscuity in women would not typically be associated with prestige in the mating arena, but men also perceive women wearing makeup to be more prestigious than women not wearing makeup (Mileva et al., 2016). These positive perceptions do not extend to a workplace context, though, with made-up women perceived by men to be less competent leaders (James et al., 2018) than women without makeup. It is likely that the amount of makeup worn and the skill and style with which it is applied are important determinants of how it impacts perceptions of the wearer (Aguinaldo & Peissig, 2019, 2021). Attempts to summarize the impacts of makeup as a binary variable (made-up or not) on judgements of the wearer may therefore be at least somewhat oversimplified.

## Makeup and Female Intrasexual Competition

Women who are higher on intrasexual competitiveness espouse more positive attitudes toward makeup (Wagstaff & Sulikowski, 2022), wear makeup more frequently (Wagstaff, 2018), and spend more money on makeup (Mafra et al., 2020). Makeup also elicits jealousy in other women (Mileva et al., 2016). This makes makeup a likely vector of female-female intrasexual competition.

Makeup also impacts women's perception of other women. Women perceive other women wearing makeup to be socially dominant (Mileva et al., 2016), but this is moderated by attractiveness. Attractive women wearing makeup are perceived to be more interpersonally aggressive, while unattractive women wearing makeup are perceived to be more competent leaders (Sulikowski et al., 2022). Even when makeup has been applied in such a way that it hasn't increased the attractiveness of the wearer, high mate-value women who view attractive, made-up female faces, lower their self-reported facial attractiveness (compared to when they viewed those same attractive faces without makeup, Sulikowski et al., 2022). These findings implicate makeup as a signal of intrasexual competitive intent, shared most readily between high mate-value women.

## Cross-References

- [Enhancement of Appearance: Mate Attraction Tactics](#)
- [Intrasexual Competition Strategy](#)
- [Self Promotion: Attractiveness](#)
- [Self-Promotion: Mate Attraction Tactics](#)

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