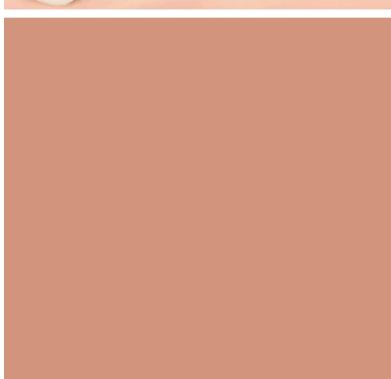
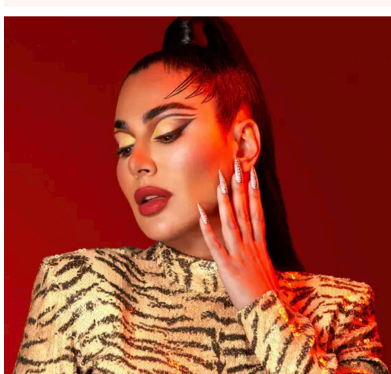
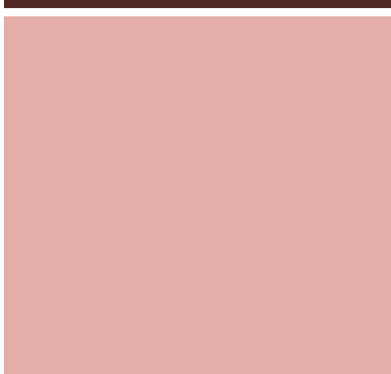
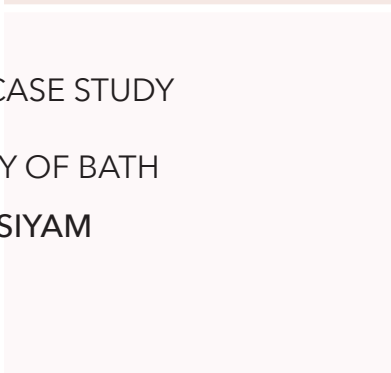
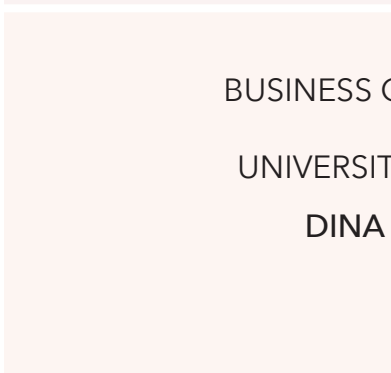


HUDA BEAUTY

BUSINESS CASE STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

DINA SIYAM

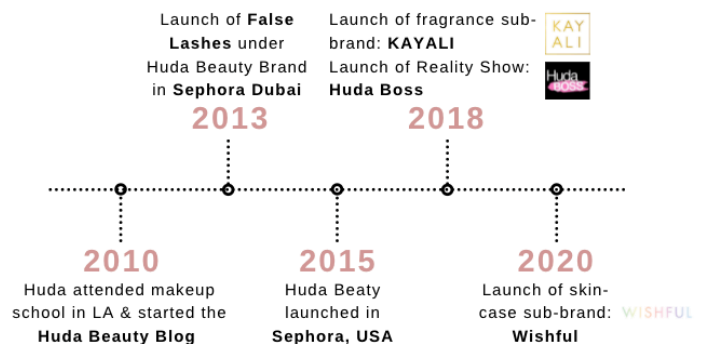


WHAT ?

Huda Beauty is the **#1 most popular beauty brand** based in Dubai and USA, founded in 2013 by make-up artist Huda Kattan to fulfill her lifelong passion for beauty. Huda, the face of the brand, started her beauty career by sharing beauty tips through writing blogs and completing a prestigious makeup training course in LA, USA. Through her time as a makeup artist, she noticed a gap in high-quality false lashes and thus was not content with what she offered her clients. As a result, she used her passion and high standards for the industry to create her own false lashes using a \$6K investment from her sister. She used her clients to build her market and share her product. Her existing experience with social media content creation, make-up application, and blogging gave her perspective into all angles of the industry. She then launched her false eyelashes product line in Sephora Dubai and USA, one of the largest global multi-brand beauty retailers, in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Ever since, Huda Beauty launched multiple sub-brands including **beauty and makeup, fragrance, and skincare** in collaboration with Huda's sisters Mona and Alya Kattan, with a goal of becoming a conglomerate to compete with global brands including Estee Lauder and L'Oreal.

Huda Beauty (HB) Blog

The HB Team publishes **daily** blogs on the brand website to keep the brand fans up-to-date with **beauty, skincare, hair, body, fragrance, health** and **wellness** news. These articles generally include tips and tricks, new products Huda tried and liked from other brands, product recommendations for all budgets, and new trends to look out for! Moreover, the blog is used to **empower** and **motivate**. Huda shares blogs about the use of poetry as a form of self-expression, she honours Black women, she tackles social issues such as menstruation taboo, shares eye-opening stories, and raises awareness of period poverty.



Huda Beauty Makeup

The Huda Beauty Makeup is a luxurious and inclusive brand with products focused on **lips, face, body, eyes, and cheeks** that are suitable for all skin tones by providing an inclusive range of options and shades per product launch.



KAYALI

KAYALI - Arabic for "Imagination" is a luxurious Eau de Parfum & Perfume brand with 9 existing fragrances. The product line encourages consumers to combine multiple fragrances to create a unique note. This sub-brand is managed by Huda Kattan's sister, Mona.



WISHFUL

Wishful is a skincare sub-brand launched by Huda Beauty, focused on providing cruelty-free products with naturally derived ingredients to give consumers a natural glow and to help tackle skin concerns including dryness, hyperpigmentation, breakouts, and dullness.



Huda shares her own experiences and personal journey on her brand's social media channels. She shares new knowledge, such as by teaching her follower base about NFTs, and by sharing lessons from her life journey, like being a mom while running a global business. She connects with her followers by sharing, encouraging and connecting with influencers who share their experiences with her products or other beauty tips and tricks.

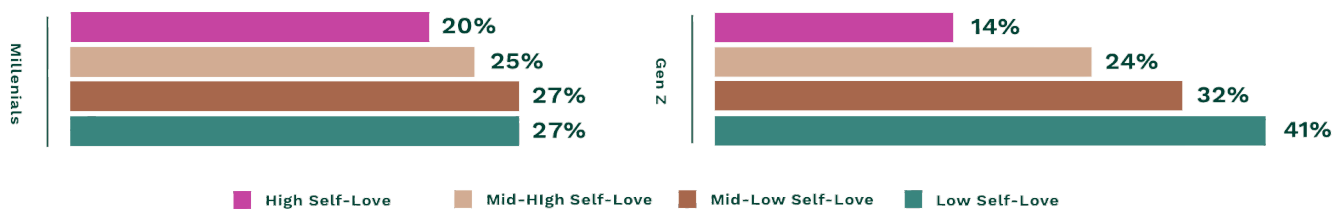
W H Y ?

Who Are The Consumers?

Huda Beauty follows an authentic social media influencer marketing approach using Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and her own website. Her 50M Instagram audience are 18-44 year-olds with a **majority between 20-24**, 73.2% of which are women, and 74.7% are based in the US [1].

Huda Beauty consumers are Gen Z (population born between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (1980-1996); both of which are the drivers of the social media boom and the social disruption highlighting the importance of mental health [2]. They are the generations with **high levels of self-doubt** and **low level of self-esteem** [3]. The Body Shop conducted a 'Self-Love Study' by asking over 22,000 women in 21 countries about their self-worth and happiness [3]. This has uncovered that 1 in 2 people experienced more self-doubt than self-love in 2020, irrespective of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome is now known as the **Self Love Crisis** [3]. This crisis increases the frequency of anxiety, and nervousness, lack of confidence; all of which are indispensable drivers of self-esteem [3].

***"Women are more likely to compare themselves to others, particularly celebrities, models, and people on social media."** [3]*



Why Is the Self-Love Crisis Critical to the Beauty Sector?

Women are exposed to self-objectification, body standardization and dissatisfaction, sharing beauty ideals through models and celebrities, idealising small waists and thin bodies, using unrealistic images, and manipulating appearances [4,5]. Glorifying those beauty ideals creates a toxic environment on social media platforms [4]. This is especially obvious in the beauty industry, where brands such as L'Oréal previously created misleading makeup ads by their altering their Lancôme Paris foundation line photos using 'airbrushing' effects to falsify flawless skin appearance [6]. Although this ad was banned in countries including the UK, digitally altered and retouched photographs in advertisements or social media are commonly found in the sector [6]. Although this may have been tolerated at a certain period, Deloitte's latest analysis of Gen Z and Millennials has shown incredible results proving that tolerance to such ideologies is no longer accepted due to the nature of the generations [7].

Gen Z and Millennials are **resilient** and **vocal**.

They hold themselves and others accountable, call out discrimination, take action to persist on improving any conflict with their personal values, believe in creating change, and embrace responsibility [7]. This, of course, includes the environment, social equality, and beauty stigma: three crucial aspects of any beauty brand [7].

W H Y ?

What Do The Consumers Want?

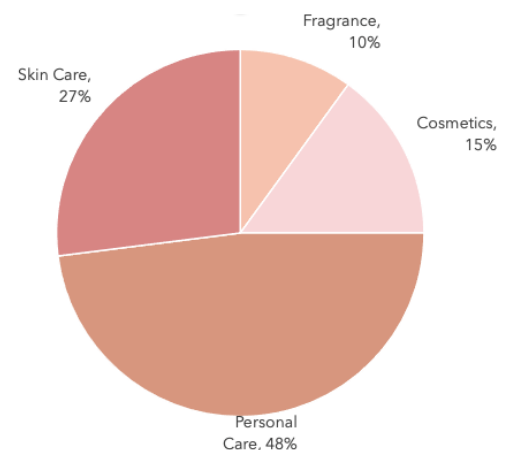
The social media domination, Huda's target consumers' strong connection with influencers, and the resultant electronic word of mouth has a heavy influence on her connection with her followers [5,8]. Her consumers want to feel **empowered**, to **express themselves**, and to be **more confident** [8]. They also seek social acceptance, so seeing unrealistic images and photoshopped content has an evident effect on their self-esteem [8]. As a result, these consumers take purchase decisions based on real-time social media feedback that connects with their individuality and values. In the beauty sector, consumers currently seek beauty products that are made of organic/clean formulas, are sustainable, and are not tested on animals with a purpose of using these products to increase their self-confidence [8].

Huda Kattan took initiative to start a self-love movement and used Huda Beauty to help her followers feel beautiful and comfortable in their own skin [9]. Although she is in the beauty industry, she is an **advocate of self-love and embracing who you really are** on the inside [9]. She treats her brands, both cosmetic (Huda Beauty) and skincare (Wishful) as additional tools to help her consumers feel even more comfortable in their skin [9]. She is aware of how makeup can be a tool to make people feel good but it can also be misused and abused [10]. She doesn't hide behind makeup, she shares her personal struggle with self-love, body acceptance, and confidence very openly with her followers.



Understanding the Market

The beauty market is divided into cosmetics, fragrances, personal care, and skin care, with cosmetics being the priority focus of this study. The **global cosmetic market is currently valued at \$638.6b** and projected to value **\$758.4b by 2025** [11]. The market is largest in the US (~20% market share), China (13%), and Japan (8%) [12]. Huda Beauty is established in the cosmetics segment and has more recently expanded into the fragrance and skincare. Her products are sold online and in over 2000 retailers around the world, however, Huda Beauty is not sold in China due to animal testing laws; China requires all beauty products imported into the country to be tested on animals, and as part of the values of Huda Beauty, none of the suppliers or manufacturers test the products in animals.



Worldwide revenue share in 2020 [13].

W H Y ?

Who Are Huda Beauty's Competitors?

With hundreds of brands in the beauty industry, competition is very specific to sections of the business. In the case of Huda Beauty, the key unique aspect of the business is the presence of Huda herself at the face of the brand, at every launch, advert, product packaging, and on every social media platform. As a result, Huda Beauty's key competitors are brands launched by well-known celebrities: **Fenty Beauty by Rihanna**, **Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez**, and **Kylie Cosmetics by Kylie Jenner**. For this comparison, it is important to note that Huda Kattan was not well known when she launched Huda Beauty.



Out of these three competitors, **none repost influencer reviews of their products onto the brand's Instagram page**. The posts are heavily product-related images/gifs/videos with a straightforward product description as a caption. As described in the next section of this study, Huda Beauty's Instagram posts are very relatable and targetted at connecting with the brand followers. The posts vary from skin-care tips & tricks, DIY self-care techniques, make-up application tutorials, and awareness posts to educate the followers about major world events. Mostly, the account is filled with influencer reposts for any tutorials that contain Huda Beauty products. The captions are heart-warming and genuine comments, complimenting the influencer and asking the followers questions to maximise engagement. Moreover, **Huda Kattan herself appears in an average of 1 in 3.3 posts**, thus maintaining her close connection with the followers. Fenty Beauty is heavily focused on the inclusivity of black women, Rare Beauty promotes finding comfort in imperfections, and Kylie Cosmetics is in advantage with Kylie Jenner's well-known name associated with the brand along with the support of the Kardashian family.

	HUDA BEAUTY	FENTY BEAUTY BY RIHANNA	Rare Beauty BY SELENA GOMEZ	KYLIE COSMETICS™ BY KYLIE JENNER
Instagram Followers	50 M	11.2 M	3 M	25.5 M
Founder Appearance on Instagram	1 in 3.3 posts	1 in 18 posts	1 in 14.5 posts	low to no posts
Approximated Annual Revenue	\$200 M	\$570 M	\$50 M	\$200 M
Product Segments	Face, Eyes, Lips, Skin, Frangrance	Face, Eyes, Lips	Face, Eyes, Lips	Face, Eyes, Lips, Skin, Baby Haircare

SMI Cosmetic Brands Comparison [17-19].

H O W ?

How Do Beauty Brands Reach These Consumers?

The product feedback that these consumers follow is shared by **social media influencers (SMI)**; one of the most prominent marketing strategies in the industry [20]. The **authenticity, honesty,** and **approachability** of these influencers are the key factors that build the connection with the consumer [20]. This includes sharing daily experiences, building credibility and trust, thus impacting consumer decisions by sharing product endorsements and advice [20]. Traditional celebrities are no longer the most credible sources to assist in building brands [21].

How Does Huda Beauty Adopt This Method?

Although Huda Beauty does follow the SMI approach, the business focuses heavily on ensuring the authenticity and honesty of every post and product launch. The brand revolves around **connecting and being real with its followers.**



This is evident in the following:

1. **Huda Kattan herself is an influencer.** Consumers do not differentiate between Huda Beauty and Huda Kattan, as she herself is the brand too. She connects with her followers via both her personal and business social media account, shares her stories and life experiences, and frequently hosts live social media sessions to engage with her followers.
2. **Huda maintained her identity** and storyline from the start of her business journey. She still frequently writes blogs, trials new products launched by her competitor brands, recommends products (including hers and others') according to price range and skin suitability, and shares educational tips and tricks she has come across or learned (beauty and non-beauty related).
3. **Huda remains the face of the brand.** With every product launch, her followers are reminded of her story and passion, and are empowered by her achievements and perseverance.
4. **Huda is vocal.** For example, in March 2021, she launched a petition and online movement to eliminate beauty standards, use of photoshop, filters and facetune by expressing her anger at beauty brands who promote their products using photoshopped images without disclosing that they are edited [22].

STRATEGY

Huda Beauty ranks on top of competitors including Kylie Cosmetics, Anastasia Beverly Hills, and MAC cosmetics **as the most searched for and purchased brand** [23]. Huda Beauty's initial purpose in 2013 was to fill the gap in the supply of high-quality false eyelashes suitable for all eye shapes. This decision came from Huda Kattan's experience as a makeup artist being unable to provide her clients with exactly what they need, even though they might have not known that they need better, more flattering lashes at the time just yet.

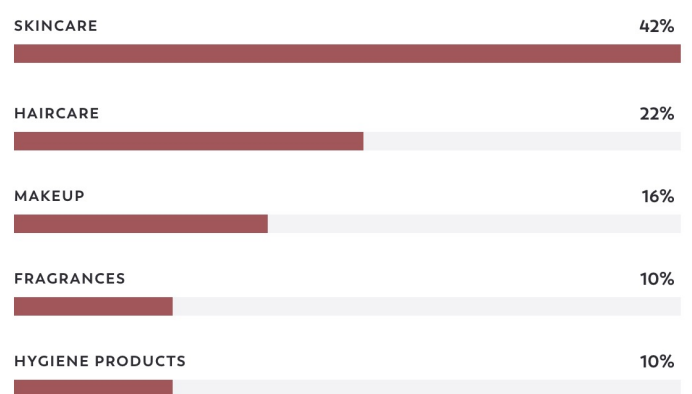


The beauty industry has now grown to be more complex with hundreds of established players in the market, however, all decisions impacting the industry and its success come from the consumer mindset and the shifting source of influence. As a result, the sector has become a race of which brand(s) will be the first to identify, develop, and deliver a product meeting the next trend in the fast-changing environment and desires of the target consumer. **How will the brand then compete with all other cosmetics brands that launch similar products in the same timeframe?** This is targeted using direct and indirect communication strategies [24].

Current rise of social media allows beauty brands to engage with their audience and design products based on customer preference information gathered from audience engagement and through crowdsourcing [24]. As a result, **product decisions can be driven by the customer-brand relation** and the customers' contribution to the brand environment [24]. This acts as a leverage for brands to co-create their products and utilise their followers to determine market needs. For example, more recently, consumers have perceived cosmetic products as an investment, and have also leaned towards the **skin-care sector, making it the current most prominent and fast-growing segment in the world** [24]. Huda Beauty pays very close attention to what customers want now and will want soon [25]. This is mainly evident through her constant perseverance to feel **a deep and rich connection with her Huda Beauty community** [25]. As described earlier, this is Huda Beauty's major competitive advantage over other brands. This connection with the brand identity forms trust and loyalty, and this significant and positive relationship keeps Huda Beauty's products in the mind of the consumer [26].

As a result, **Huda Beauty has more freedom to explore new products**, innovate, and compete with other brands while continuously forecasting the customer needs and wants without hindering their loyalty [26]. This is heavily built by Huda Beauty's strong digital communication strategy. Therefore, the brand jumped on the opportunity to expand onto the skincare segment and launched Wishful in 2020 – Huda Beauty's skincare sub-brand. The launch was strategically placed, meeting the consumer desire for natural beauty, thus further endorsing the no-photoshop/no-filters movement, and of course taking the business growth opportunity given the rise in the skincare market segment [27].

Breakdown of the market by business segment* (in %)



STRATEGY

Huda does not only collect feedback about her products, but she has also always looked at the beauty market as a whole: body, face, hair, skin, and fragrance. This is evident in her beauty blog where Huda and her team constantly evaluate market trends and review products launched by other brands. As a result, the business is **always up to date with new trends and beauty products**, making Huda Beauty familiar with and ready to enter a new segment of the market, such as hair care, whenever the business is ready. More so, sharing such information with the follower base allows her to understand their perspective on the products in the various segments and identify the improvement opportunities.

In summary, beauty brands have had a negative influence on consumers by setting unrealistic beauty guidelines and expectations, making makeup a tool to hide from the world rather than a tool to feel more empowered. **Huda Beauty takes beauty decisions by listening to her consumers, connecting with them deeply, and forecasting their needs, all while ensuring that the brand is vocal about being real about beauty, self-acceptance, and self-love.**

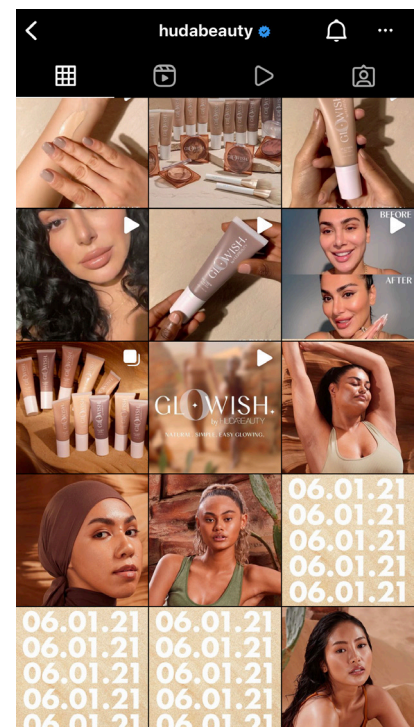
CRITIQUE

What Can Huda Beauty Do Better?

Sustainability: Advertise It Better!

A poll of 2000 adults estimated that **54% of consumers prioritise purchasing sustainable cosmetic products** and **44% value cruelty-free products** [28]. **61% of these said they struggle to identify if a product is vegan, cruelty-free, or recyclable** due to the absence of an eco-friendly mark on the packaging or ad [28]. Huda Beauty can attract more customers by adopting simple changes in the product advertisement and description.

In May 2021, Huda Beauty launched GloWish line - an intersection product between skincare (Wishful) and makeup (Huda Beauty) [29,30]. The line consists of light-weight makeup products with skin benefits. This product line is very sustainable: it is vegan, and has never been tested on animals. The product packaging is 100% recyclable and the products themselves are made from 90% naturally derived material [29]. This all sounds great but is **not clearly communicated** or advertised. During the launch of the line on Instagram, **no post described the eco-friendliness of the product**, and on the Huda Beauty website, sustainability information is not well displayed and is hidden under the 'Common Questions' section. On the other hand, Fenty Beauty - Huda Beauty's competitor - has a well-defined section describing how they ensure their skin-care products are clean, defining cosmetic materials that they avoid, and clarifying how they embrace the 3 R's - reduce, reuse, recycle [31]. Huda Beauty can take lead amongst her competitors by **using the social media platform to share more about the impact of the cosmetics sector on the environment**, and actually **advertise the existing sustainability of her current products more effectively**, making them more accessible to consumers who prioritise sustainability in their cosmetic product selection.



C R I T I Q U E

Improve Product Division on Online Selling Platforms

Beauty trends involving full-glam make-up have been left behind in 2019 at the start of the body-positivity, self-care, and natural beauty movement. Consumers have also been pushing for the 'no-makeup makeup' products using natural ingredients and providing sheer coverage just to even skin tones and slightly cover imperfections. Huda Beauty is known to provide heavy, full coverage makeup products with bright colours and shimmery powders, however, after the launch of Wishful and GloWish, the product line was more diverse with products suitable for both the full-glam and the natural/light makeup lovers. This, however, is not clearly divided on the brand website. As a result, consumers who are familiar with her makeup products between 2013 and 2020 may be unfamiliar with the light-weight makeup options. As a result, the **website and social media platforms can be improved by having a dedicated section to GloWish**. This can allow consumers to find the entire light-weight makeup line more easily.



Continuity of the Brand

The brand heavily revolves around the chairwoman and founder, Huda Kattan. Every product launch, every movement, and at every event, **Huda is the face of the brand**. Each product has a direct relation to her, clearly expressed in the launch. For example, the foundation line was inspired by her desire to cover up her skin imperfections as a 12-year-old, and so she created the perfect product that younger Huda would have wanted. Moreover, the Wishful skincare line is directly linked to her self-love crisis when she felt uncomfortable in her own skin, no longer loved herself, and was no longer proud of her looks. Every product relates to Huda's journey and is created by her with full passion.

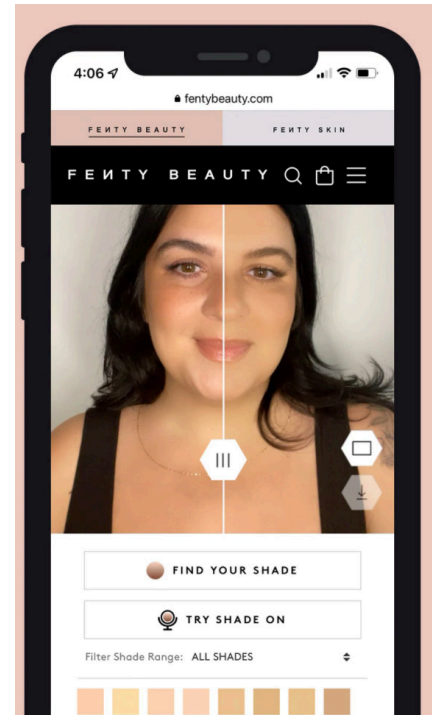
So, what happens when Huda leaves?

Surely, she will not run the company indefinitely and will be unable to remain as the face of the brand at a point in the future. This transition will need to be pre-planned, as the brand could take a massive hit in case of the absence of the main influencer and face of the brand. Huda Beauty is not thought of as a brand or a product, it is a second name for Huda Kattan. This can be compared to The Oprah Winfrey show, where the show and business completely revolve around Oprah. When Oprah was no longer able to contribute further to the growth of the show, it ended in 2011. **How can Huda Beauty outlive Huda Kattan?** It is important that Huda Beauty as a brand starts communicating the vision for the next timeline, with set goals and long-term plans. This can be supported by Huda's vision of the company becoming a beauty conglomerate. Another solution would be to start creating other beauty lines with empowerment stories of women that Huda is inspired by. This can still maintain the consumer's strong relation and deep connection with the brand while still ensuring that they feel inspired and empowered using Huda Beauty products.

C R I T I Q U E

Use of AI/AR Technology

Huda Beauty can also consider getting ahead of the competitors in terms of **tech trends in the beauty sector**. The use of AI/AR technology can help **boost e-commerce** by providing consumers with a facilitated online shopping experience and higher satisfaction. An example of this is using a 'Try-On' screen to apply filters showing the make-up effect on the consumer's face. Huda Beauty has a wide range of lipsticks and lipliners, and **online customers can struggle to envision the shade on their faces**. This is an established concept in other beauty brands including Fenty Beauty and Charlotte Tilbury. Fenty Beauty includes a Virtual Try-On feature on its website in which consumers can try on different foundation shades, lipsticks, and concealers [32]. Charlotte Tilbury uses a similar feature named Charlotte's Magic Mirror available on mobile browsers where consumers can shop different shades of cheek, eyes, lips, and face products by virtually trying them on [33]. Huda Beauty does not have this feature available. It would be a great benefit to the business as it can **increase e-commerce sales** via Huda Beauty's website directly, **decrease the number of product returns**, and **increase consumer engagement** with the brand [34].

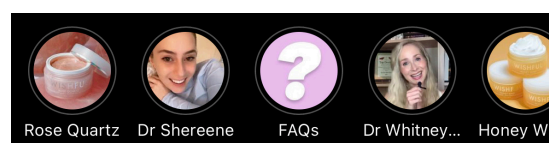


Breaking Into The Skincare Segment

Huda Beauty has taken a leap and launched skincare products under a newly created sub-brand, Wishful. It however has not been an active brand on social media. Firstly, it was introduced on Huda Beauty's Instagram, and soon after, the sub-brand was advertised on its own Instagram user, **@WishfulSkin**. The account has a **0.7% engagement rate**, in comparison with 6% on Huda Beauty's main brand account [35]. **Consumers are not interacting with the posts**, as seen by the **0.68% like rate** and **0.02% comment rate**. Since its launch in February 2020, the account has only gained a total of 556K followers [35]. This can be due to the following reasons:

1. **The brand does not post consistently** and frequently enough on the social media page with an average of 3 posts published per day.
2. **The posts are not interactive**. They rarely include influencer reviews, and they do not engage the consumer to comment opinions or answer any questions.
3. Skincare brands require a high level of trust from the consumer. Why should a consumer use a skincare product developed by a makeup brand rather than a skincare product developed by a licensed dermatologist? **What makes the product safe?**

Wishful has included dermatologist testimonies on the Instagram story highlights, however, consumers need to be able to interact with and trust the brand. One solution could be **creating Wishful pop-ups** with guest dermatologists and sample products to **educate the consumer about the ingredients of the skincare products, the suitability to skin types, and the best application methods from a professional opinion**.



C R I T I Q U E

Huda Beauty had previously hosted a make-up pop-up event in Covent Garden, London, giving her consumers an intergalactic experience in a passionate, memorable way to promote the new Mercury Retrograde eye-shadow pallet [36]. Consumers had access to limited edition products, had a chance to meet Huda Kattan, and of course, had a unique experience. Carrying out a similar event for Wishful could be a great stepping stone to **improving the electronic word of mouth** and **building trust in the sub-brand**. Moreover, Wishful is currently not on TikTok. This would be a great opportunity to **join the new social media platform** and attracting consumers by inviting skincare influencers that are active on TikTok along with certified dermatologists to the pop-up, and creating a unique, educational experience that can be shared on social media via the influencers.



Overall, Huda Beauty has many growth opportunities that can be achieved by improving the promotion of product sustainability, refining the online user experience by creating an inclusive and easy-to-navigate platform to find products based on customer preference, and by leading the digital transformation of the sector by facilitating the online shopping experience through the use of AI/AR technology to try-on products. Moreover, the brand can fulfill the goal of becoming a conglomerate by improving its position in the skin-care segment and ensuring the continuity of the brand in case of the absence of Huda Kattan.

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