

An Analysis of Women's Lipstick : Beauty Enhancement to Sexual Implication

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Abstract

Lipstick is one of the cosmetic products that has been scorned, rejected, and accepted from the past to the present. Though it is a tool used to enhance beauty, actually people use it for more than one purpose. Thus, this paper investigates 1) how lipstick is used both consciously and unconsciously from beauty enhancement to sexual implication and 2) how it is considered the most indispensable item in women's makeup bags. The results showed that women wear lipstick with the purpose of keeping their beauty alive to have confidence with direct and indirect messages of sexual implication while keeping their roles and themselves recognized within society. Lipstick is additionally represented as a symbol of power, sophistication or rebellion, courage, optimism, and plenty of more looking on the intended purposes of the wearer. More aspects will be discussed.

Keywords : lipstick, beauty enhancement, bodily function, and physical pleasure sexual implication

Introduction

Lipstick has been the most popular beauty making tool for decades and there is no evidence that this will change any time soon. From the past to present, the little tube has played as a significant item included in cosmetic consumption despite the increased or declined of economic situation. Particularly, looking at a woman's makeup kit, lipstick is one thing that could not be excluded from her beauty bag. A tube of color has been purchased regardless of their tight budget. This could be seen from the Great Recession of 2007-2009. During this time of economic hardship, it was found that sales of cosmetics continued to increase (Schaefer, 2008 and Allison & Martinez, 2010). The reason is that lipstick, one of cosmetic products, could help them (cosmetics consumers or women) feel better and overcome all events and obstacles they have encountered. In addition, for some women, lipstick is not just a lipstick; it is a source of strength, creativity, and expression. It seems like a powerful magic wand that could make the wearers full with a variety of feelings; beautiful, attractive, strong, confident; as well as they could be a great warrior in different situations. And that is why a report from Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reveals that there are over 400 lipstick shades for women to choose from and from over hundreds of registered and recognized brands available all over the world (Elboghdady, 2012). This paper is; therefore, to explore how lipstick is used both consciously and unconsciously from beauty enhancement to sexual implication and how it is considered the most essential item in women's makeup bags.

General Features of Lipstick

If you are asked to choose only one cosmetic item to bring for the day, which one will you choose? Surely, there might be various answers

but the greatest proportion of women's answers is 'lipstick', because lipstick is irreplaceable in women's makeup and you might raise another question in your mind that, why do women wear lipstick? For a long history of lipstick, women try to apply lipstick on their face for different purposes such as to present their confidence, freedom, and also to attract opposite sex. Some says about the relation of women and lipstick like "Women without lipstick is like the bulb without light." Especially, when women are trying to make a good impression on someone or for their work, lipstick can be a good tool to do that. Lipstick was used by teen girls until women in all ages. Because of its need and importance to women around the world, thus there are huge varieties of brands and colors of lipsticks nowadays. Also, lipstick is one of the few cosmetic products out in the makeup market that actually come in multiple finishes and colors. The lipstick finishes are absolutely not the same. Its formulas are very various that could help the product have a shiny, matte, semi-matte, or glossy finish. There are lipstick products that could be seen in the traditional lipstick tube form or in a form of liquid in a tube package used with a makeup wand for applying it onto the lips as well (Berkeley, 2016). In addition, according to Grandviewresearch (2019) that presents a market research report about an analysis on lipstick market and segment forecast 2019-2025, it was found that the global lipstick market size was valued at USD 11.5 billion in 2018. One of the key drivers expected to the increased value is the rising consciousness regarding personal grooming and appearance among young female consumers across the world. Moreover, the product's demand in the near future is expected to be made by increasing purchasing power of the woman population due to rising female workforce.

As aforementioned, lipstick presents different general features with different purposes that align on the consumers' needs and its development to be more practical used product. The increasing demand of lipstick obviously shows how it is remarkable cosmetic item which has been and will be one of a necessary beauty tool for the global women as well. So, it is undoubtedly that why lipstick is a must go-to item in women's bags.

History of Lipstick

Over 3,500 years in the ancient city of Ur near Babylon, human crushed and smeared semi-precious stones on their lips as lipstick and also ladies in the Indus Valley civilization used to apply red color on their lips. 'The kiss of death' came to be known when the ancient Egyptian women squeezed out purple-red color from iodine and bromine, unfortunately, it lead to be a poison to women. And at that time, Cleopatra made her own lipstick from carmine beetles and pestle which worked with pestle gave a strong red color pigment. Additionally, ancient Egyptian used ant's eggs, henna and fish scales as an ingredient of lipstick. In the 10th century, lipsticks became quite popular in England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I. She introduced the trend of chalk white faces, teamed with blood red lipstick. In that period, most lipstick was made from beeswax and plants. However, wearing lipstick is not widely accepted at that time. Finally, in 1770, England had set a law against lipstick and did not accept women who made-up in society. Later, in a period of Queen Victoria, that law was cancelled. After World War II, women's roles were changed which women were raised in the workplace, lipstick then was accepted and used widely (Allen 1981; Ragas, CohenKozlowski & Vienne, 1998; Pallington 1999).

Nowadays, Thorkelson (2019) suggests that lipstick is considered a symbol of twenty-first-century feminist revolution across the gender spectrum since it comes in a rainbow of shades and finishes-from social red to nuclear green. Therefore, lipstick does not play an important role for women but also men and even LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning). For example, Oprah wore shimmering futuristic metals lipstick as she played as a godlike alien in 2018 film entitled “A Wrinkle in Time.” Likewise, Sengupta (2019) claims that according to a survey, on an average, more than US 3,500 dollars has been spent on lipstick by women in U.S.A. Another significant milestone in the history of lipstick was recently marked when the youngest of Kardashian, Kylie Jenner has launching her lip kits—a combination of nude lip liner and matte lip cream combos—on Instagram and Snapchat. Amazingly, the initial stock of her launch sold out in less than minute. Additionally, in recent years, some bigger name brands have started producing genderless campaigns for cosmetics and lipstick is a must item of LGBTQ’s makeup items. Grey, a genderfluid artist, and musician and one of LGBTQ influencers, said “When I started using makeup I found that I could sort through my shit with an eyeshadow palette and lipstick. It gave me a way to navigate through the world when I was at my weakest point, and I realized through makeup that I could be whatever character I needed to be in order to make it through; in order to be myself” (Radin, 2018).

All in all, lipstick has come a long way from grounded stone and iodine to advanced formulas available now all over the world for all women. However, one thing that keeps it virtually constant across the world is its power for enhancing beauty and coloring happy feeling to the wearer.

Roles of Lipstick in Society

Lipstick has a significant influence on women in society for a very long time. Schaffer (2006) reveals that nearly 100% of American college girls wore lipstick, and 98% of American women do. From Schaffer's statistics, wearing lipstick can be contributed to high-powered women, fashion models, such as Queen Elizabeth I, Elizabeth Arden, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. According to Anker's review (1997) on "Theories of occupational segregation by sex : an overview," he illustrates the stereotyped characteristics of women and their expected effect on occupational segregation by sex. His study shows that attractive physical appearance is a common stereotyped characteristic of women which helps qualify women for occupations and also physical appearance helps attract and/or please customers. The examples of typical occupations affected are receptionist, salesperson, and shop assistant. Nobody disagrees with his illustration. When we go shopping or contacting with those people, all of them wears make up and expressing themselves with cosmetics to attract customers. Also, some jobs needs a good looking woman for many purposes such as promoting product and he also illustrates that in other situations, sex appeal is used to attract male customers, such as barmaid or prostitute. Consequently, throughout the time, lipstick has been popular and taken important role to women in society.

Scruton (1986) identified that 'sexual desire,' like the human person, is a social artifact and it can be built in many ways. From the statement, it could assume that wearing lipstick is the one of the many ways to present themselves as a social artifact to attract the opposite sex. Its purpose of the sexual desire for women wearing not merely for sex relation but it could be motivated men to consider their roles in society.

For the previous case, when female teenagers would like to be accepted from different sex, they wear lipstick to present their confidence and freedom. However, in the case of prostitute women, it can be implied that whenever they wear lipstick, their purpose is to be sexual desirable. As Gahring (2003) talks about the origins of lipstick in C.E.2-Longinette that in Latin text regarding Ancient Rome, there was also the “Guild of Prostitutes” because it was openly discussed almost of sexual matters. An interesting part of this is his description of the Guild’s member jobs as professionals fulfilling their customers’ satisfaction. They had to perform and attend to what facilitated a good performance, it as a message to tell that a women’ lips swell and flush from the rush of blood driving sexual arousal. One of the ways to satisfy the customers is the use of their lips to lick at any parts of the customers’ body. Of course, prostitutes wore lipstick to be sexual desirable in that case.

To insist the Scruton’s theory, Gill (2007) stated that the portrayal of women as sex objects to the portrayal of women as active and desiring sexual subject. She focuses on the sexual desirable in media on TV and magazines when a cosmetics company chooses a perfect beauty of models to present their products, especially for cosmetics. Garner (1997, cited in Kesselman, McNair, & Schniedewind, 2008) indicated that attitudes about attractiveness are applied differently to each sex. Both male and female desire similarly to look good, thus they use cosmetics in this case, especially lipstick.

If you are in the old age, you cannot imagine that how and why men wear lipstick. Men’s appearances should be strong and really smart in any situation. But when you look through media as TV and magazines, you might be surprised with this matter; actors, boy bands, male models, male advertisers, and MC all apply cosmetics at least a lipstick. The next

question raised here is how lipstick and men go together. Edwards (2006) shows the expansion of interest in matters of men's fashion and appearances in five different ways; one of the matters is the potential growth of various markets related to men's style and appearances including cosmetics and grooming products, plus the rise of spas, treatments, and similar services including cosmetics surgery. This evidence can be indicated that men considered their look and have a similar need with women, attracting opposite sex.

For the idea of lipstick colors as codes and part of a uniform, Sookprasert (2006) found 14 domains of meaning directly signifying 'color' being adapted the most as lipsticks color terms. She analyzed the name of lipsticks and then she grouped the meanings of them by using Nida's theory (1975, cited in Sookprasert, 2006). She classified them into three groups that are abstract names, things, and situations. She had collected 664 names from lipsticks' websites. Surprising results is the reason why lipstick has many shades. Usually, color can be a representative of reflection of awareness feeling emotion and also the culture of a person who are using it (Sookprasert, 2006). Thus, to serve the need of a consumer, the lipstick agents are willing to produce different shades which the consumers can pick and use to express themselves.

Aucoin (1997) was an American make-up artist and photographer who defined and gave a color of lipstick in his book 'Making face.' The followings are the examples of his definitions. If you wore pink, you often associated with love gentleness, girlishness, femininity, and romance. If you are a girl and would like to be an owner of the first lipstick tube, you choose pink. As recent, there is a TV advertising of two girls try to attract a boy by using lipstick. For the girl who wears a pink lipstick and shows her mouth like a kiss, the boys fall in love with her and would like to be

her boyfriend. Unlike, for the other girl without lipstick, she cannot attract the boys. For working women, brown and nude might be committed steadiness and stability, and also make them perfect for work. These shades connote nature, being “grounded” and “down to earth.” For each color there has been variety of shades. Nevertheless, red lipstick has a significant for women who wear it. According to a recent study of Stylist on June 14, 2009 “Does red pink mean more sex and better job,” the research said that women with bright red have better career prospects, while it revealed that those with bare lips usually lack confidence and feel less sexy than those who wear statement colors. It might be true for some careers such as women politicians. When they would like to give a speech or do a debate because red lipstick could make them feel more confident, as Poppy King, a creator of Lipstick Queen says that putting on a red lipstick make you feel more capable than you do anything without it. However, in the past, we have learnt that only prostitutes wore a red lipstick. The purpose of wearing was to attract men and it used as a sign of prostitution. Later, after World War II, the women’s role had changed. They are accepted in a society, not only to do housework. They could work outside also in military and they had more freedom and confidence. The red lipstick was representation of these concepts as well. Thus, women wore red lipstick to express their roles in society such as Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, they are representing the red lipstick as an actress who were sexiest stars and wore red lipstick to attract male audiences.

Consistently, from the previous evidences, it can be seen that lipstick has played a significant role in society from beauty enhancement to sexual implication, and it is considered the most indispensable cosmetic item for women. Applying lipstick helps attracting opposite sex

as well as presenting the wearer's (women) status and power in society. Also, different shades of lipstick could be something meaningful. Lipstick is not only a tool of beauty make-up; it is also a sign of feelings including sexual desire of human being.

Lipstick with a Bodily Function in Giving Physical Pleasure

You might be familiar with this expression 'eyes are windows to the soul'. You can read something from your interlocutor and guess their feelings. Human really agree with that, you can never hide your feelings and emotions. But your lips and mouth have different ways to express human feelings. For instance, when you want your friend to look at other who you do not like, you might point to him/her by using your lips. Moreover, for the bodily function, lips and mouth are as an aperture that connects to physical pleasure such as kissing, licking, oral sexing and other mouthing activities as Goldstein cited in Hoeveler and Schuster (2007),

"It's because the female body has for so long been identified as an erotic object, canonized in the modes of high art and the sex symbols of popular culture, that effort to locate and describe alternative images became a paramount goal of the feminist movement and (therefore) of the culture at large."

According to Goldstein, we have seen in lip shock advertising, most of the models have to perform their lips and mouth with oral exposure and voluptuous. They are symbols of erotic object and attracting men to interest them. Many of lips shock advertising agencies present a tube of lipstick close to a mouth. They might be communicating that lips tube refers to a male genital. Women can imagine themselves then if they wear lipstick, they might be attracted from men.



Figure 1 Lipstick Advertising
(www.google.com, 2019, online)

To insist of the previous belief, Wolf (1991) stated in her book “The Beauty Myth” that women must possess an immutable quality, ‘beauty’ in order to be successful and attract to men. She also stated that the beauty is the central measure of women’s worth. From her statement, it is not exaggerated and it can be strongly believed that most women agree with her statement. The evidences to support her idea can be proven by wearing lipstick of every woman’s aged and every ethnic. However, with a similar purpose if we studied the long history of lipstick, Cleopatra in ancient Egypt was very good at making up to attract both Julius Caesar and Anthony. Asking other purposes for wearing lipstick might be a dull question but others can give different answers. Your answer may be just for looking good, confidence, freedom, and so on.

However, there are some hidden reasons behind women’s lipstick. Moaveni (2005) describes the situation of Iranian woman in her book “Lipstick Jihad.” She pointed out that in the past 20 years, Iranian women born into middle class, religious families and they were forced to

live under the strict rules. One part of her book indicates that wearing lipstick in Iran is illegal because it is not merely lipstick but it might be a communicate tool to express women's voice in politics. She questioned readers that if this is a serious situation and illegal why the girls still wore lipstick. Her question might be answered by Wong, Hernandez-Avila, Berger, and Clifton as follows:

“Images of beauty vary across ethnic group, demonstrating how racism and sexism interact to shape expectations of women, describe the effects of stereotyped nothing of beauty on Asian-American, Latina, Jewish, and African-American women. As these selections demonstrate, such standards create anguish and confusion for most women, and particularly for women of color, who are outside the prevailing ‘norms’ of beauty (p.111).”

Absolutely, from the above statements, women around the world like to have and keep their beauty as long as possible to pleasure opposite sex. It is not surprising that there are many cosmetic companies produce a variety of cosmetics for skin, health, eyes, face, hair, and so on. It is a confirmation that under the culturally conditioned and regulation, Iranian women wear lipstick for what purposes; it is for sexual attraction or others. Additionally, some current topics news from Livelihood.com (2019) wrote about “Women wearing lipstick and powder.” The news reported that women leaders in the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), a political party in India, are mentally bankrupt and that they cannot think of anything better and they should have been used language more dignified. As mentioned earlier, it describes that Indian women parliamentarians and women across the world wear lipstick and make up. It assumed that when they wear lipstick, it does not only make beauty to their lips and mouth but they have to say and think cleverly with beauty.

Moving to another perspective of lipstick; as a phallic symbol, it could be linked to Freud's (2014) theory 'Penis envy.' According to Freud (2014), penis is as a phallic symbol which men can do things and sometimes take advantage. Also, they can have many wives. All of their actions have never been wrong. Women are losers and cannot protect themselves. To against Freud's theory, women try to overcome men by working hard, making up, flirting, and doing sexy things. The most interesting way to attract men to fall in love them is wearing lipstick, for instance, Mia 2018, the popular Thai drama, portrayed the main protagonist as a housewife turned to be a sexy woman with colorful lipstick because she wanted to overcome her husband since he had an affair with other woman. Being a sexy woman who wore bright lipstick when she went to many special occasions was her tactics to attract many men around her and also got revenge her husband.



Figure 2 A protagonist in Thai drama, Mia 2018
(www.google.com, 2019, online)

Additionally, a lawyer that appeared in Thai drama, Barb Rak, was presented as a cunning woman who always wears dark red lipstick when she encountered to her opponents. When she appeared on TV each time, her look was smart and confident and always wore red lipstick. She could manage everything instead of the main character that was presented as

inferior woman in the drama. Everything about her was graceful and confident : from her appearances to her opinionated views. Like Poppy King, a creator of Lipstick Queen, says “Red lipstick is a source of female strength.” Thus, men cannot look down on her anymore and also need to follow her needs. In other words, women, who are without penis, apply lipstick to conquer and to eliminate men’s insidious.



Figure 3 A lawyer in Thai drama, Barb Rak
(www.google.com, 2019, online)

Since lips and mouth can be considered as a bodily function connected to physical pleasure, applying lipstick on one’s lips could bring that one and others enjoyment or satisfaction. Women could turn themselves to a new look by choosing any lipstick colors to apply and use their lips and mouth to express or present different feelings and thoughts to others. With lipstick, they could be able to conquer the world, especially men. Whenever their appearance can be attractive to others, it means that their physical pleasure is provided. Their life can be full of happiness and enjoyment as mentioned example from Thai drama, Mia 2018.

Conclusion

Despite its positive or negative associations, the act of wearing lipstick has pursued. The use of it has signified different purposes, from beauty enhancement, society role expression, and bodily function for pleasure to sexual implication. As active and desiring sexual subject women have to keep beauty and look good to attract opposite sex and also for other purposes. Not merely for women, lipstick also matters of men's fashion such as actor, singers, male and models in order to attract the audiences or customers. Because of different purposes of wearing lipstick, there are also some hidden meanings in lipstick colors. When women wear pink, she may be falling in love or has a happy life. Whenever women wear bright red lipstick, you can be implied that she is very confident or she works as a prostitute. In addition, since lips and mouth can be connected to physical pleasure, human try to present their lips in different ways such as painting and doing a sexy manner. However, the reasons of women in every religion for wearing lipstick is to be sexual attractive. Additionally, lipsticks are accepted as a phallic symbol in society as mentioned earlier.

Therefore, lipstick is used by women both consciously and unconsciously in the society and almost all women cannot live without it. As you can see from this paper, women wear lipstick with ultimate purpose of keeping their beauty alive in order to gain confidence with direct and indirect messages of sexual implication while keeping their roles and themselves recognized in the society. From the paper, lipstick is also represented as a symbol of power, sophistication or rebellion, courage, optimism and many more depending on the intended purposes of the wearer. That is why lipstick has existed along with human society since in the preceding days. Furthermore, as there are a lot of sources and

information to support the study, it can be concluded that women's lipstick, one of cosmetic items, takes an important role in many aspects. Thus, it is quite interesting to study more about cosmetics business and other influential makeup tools of women since they are considered essential parts for women and has been rolled along with them in the society.

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