

How can beauty brands safely
manufacture and market their products
that are targeted towards younger Gen Z
and Gen Alpha audiences?

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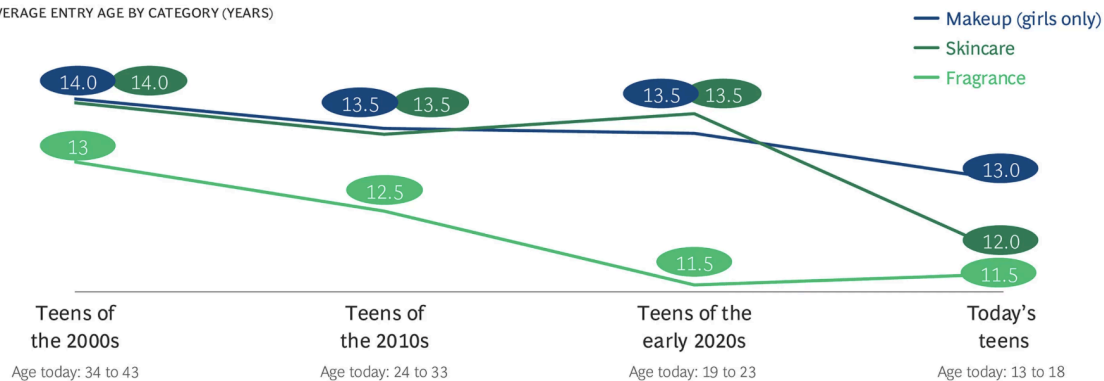
Introduction

Working as a camp counselor and teacher's assistant, I see how social media is integrated into daily life, especially in younger generations. Younger children are starting to use social media at a younger age, without controls or regulations, leading to unhealthy habits. Especially among young girls, social media has influenced the trend of using beauty products like make-up, skincare and fragrance at an increasingly younger age.

EXHIBIT 1

Teens are entering the beauty market earlier than any previous generation

AVERAGE ENTRY AGE BY CATEGORY (YEARS)



Source: BCG

The issue with younger audiences purchasing beauty products is that tweens typically buy products that are “trendy” rather than actually looking for products that are appropriate for their age and skin. Using the wrong beauty products just because they have gone viral on social media can have negative long-term effects: during my summer as a camp counselor, one of my campers came in one day with a really red face. I asked her what happened, expecting something about a sunburn, bad reaction to food, or a bug bite. Instead, she responded, “I just used the Summer Fridays sunscreen, I guess it didn’t work well with my skin.” Throughout the day, I kept giving her products to relieve the redness and swelling on her sensitive skin.

It became clear to me that there is a problem with the way beauty brands are marketing their products to Gen Z and Gen Alpha - current methods are ineffective and unethical, prioritizing viral moments over safety and responsibility for younger audiences. Through my research, I am exploring the gaps in beauty marketing today, making recommendations on safer marketing to Gen Z and Gen Alpha, and calling brands, consumers, and the beauty industry as a whole to take action.

Methodology

To validate that branding towards younger audiences is ineffective across the beauty industry, I first reviewed 4 separate brands and their “viral moments”.

Drunk Elephant

Viral Story: Alix Earle and other popular influencers popularized the Bronzing Drops during their “Get Ready with Me” videos mixed with moisturizer to give a glowy look. It became famous for its unique formula and results that it gave to consumers. This incident led to increased “dupe” culture, where drugstore brands started to replicate the original beauty products with a more affordable copy-cat version .

How The Brand Targets Gen Z: Drunk Elephant worked with many influencers, both very popular and micro influencers, for product activations when new products are released. Their aesthetic and bright packaging is appealing to younger audiences. They “try” to be clear about active ingredients in products, and created gift sets like “The Littles” which allows people to try out smaller versions of their products. Younger audiences in particular were drawn to the mini size of the product.

Why Are We Concerned? Gen Z and Gen Alpha have been known to blindly buy other products from Drunk Elephant without looking at active ingredients, due to the bright colors of their packaging. Drunk Elephant does not distinguish between products that are safe for younger audiences and those for adults only.

Bubble Skincare

Viral Story: While there are no specific viral stories, influencers like Hiram (known as a “skinfluencer” because he talks about different skin care products), Gen Z influencers, and many dermatologists on TikTok have popularized the brand among younger consumers.

How The Brand Targets Gen Z: Bubble makes affordable skin care, specifically targeted towards Gen Z by working with Gen Z influencers (who have audiences similar to their own age). Their products are considered very accessible (sold at large retailers like CVS, and Walmart) and are known for their bright packaging and “Slam Dunk” moisturizer.

Why Are We Concerned? Bubble seems to be targeted toward Gen Z and Gen Alpha on social media, but on the website, this is not clear due to mixed messaging through their marketing campaigns.. This brand is popular among “kidfluencers” who have a Gen Z and Gen Alpha audience.

Rhode Skincare

Viral Story: Rhode was founded by Hailey Bieber, who already has a cult following and a large audience. She is known to have the “clean girl” aesthetic who always looks effortlessly cool. She

popularized her own products obviously, but one product that was particularly unique was the Glazing Milk. This has a unique formula and she marketed it to her audience with the “glazed donut” aesthetic to show that using this product gives people glazed skin, encouraging her audience to aspirationally want this type of skin.

How The Brand Targets Gen Z: Rhode markets itself as affordable luxury with minimalist, aesthetic packaging, following the clean and cool girl aesthetics that audiences want to emulate. The brand relies heavily on social media to market their products. and utilizes waitlists and exclusive drops to create hype around the brand. Rhode works with micro and macro influencers to reach a larger scope of audiences as well as works with celebrities among Gen Z and Gen Alpha like Tate McRae and Alex Consani.

Why Are We Concerned? It is unclear whether Rhode Skincare works with all skin types and whether it is really for Gen Z and Gen Alpha because their marketing, although effective, does not have a clear target audience. Is it millennials who are closer in age to Hailey Bieber herself? Or is it Gen Z and Gen Alpha, who are greater users of social media platforms like TikTok?

Glow Recipe

Viral Story: Major influencers like Mikayla Nogueira (known as a beauty influencer and makeup guru) and Katie Fang (young lifestyle influencer) popularized the Watermelon Dew Drops during Get Ready With Me videos. This product is known to make skin look glowy and almost “wet.” Similar to other viral brands, Glow Recipe is very aesthetic and uses PR packages and brand deals to engage influencers to market new products.

How The Brand Targets Toward Gen Z: In the past, Glow Recipe has utilized influencers like Katie Fang to do partnerships and brand activations like Katie Fang’s product kit known as the “Get Glowing With Me” kit. They have used trend integration by making products based on current trends like the dew drops for the glazed skin trend. The packaging is visually appealing by being colorful yet minimalist, and is considered an affordable luxury.

Why Are We Concerned? Once again, who is the target audience? Are these products clearly being marketed toward Gen Z through the use of social media? Or is it just a marketing strategy in the age of new technology?

Based on the case studies of these brands, I saw some clear problems with the beauty industry’s marketing. These included unclear ingredients, mixed messaging in the advertising and brand campaigns, misleading packaging, and no clear guidelines around what teens should use (what they are doing is just based on what they see on social media). Each of these brands had strengths and weaknesses when it came to these different components, some doing well on ingredients, while others did well with their marketing. To try to remedy this situation and help brands solve these problems, I explored different possible solutions and incorporated my recommendations in the form of (1) an infographic suggesting changes that beauty brands

should be making going forward and (2) a mock campaign demonstrating how beauty brands can market their products to a younger audience.

Infographic (*pg. 7*)

The infographic includes different aspects of beauty brands' products and marketing that need more attention to be fixed. Specifically, packaging, audience, ingredients, social media use, and long-term solutions are what is included on the infographic. This infographic can be beneficial to almost everyone in the beauty space: consumers, brands, and retailers.

Mock beauty campaign (*pg. 8*)

The mock campaign includes a fun, interactive, and inviting section for teens to shop in Sephora, buying more products that are trendy, yet beneficial for their skin. This section can work hand-in-hand with the already prominent "Clean at Sephora" section. The parameters of getting the "For Teens" sticker will be similar to the clean beauty one, needing clean ingredients and practices when making the products. Products in the "For Teens" section may include more skincare and less heavy makeup than the normal products at Sephora because of their clear target audience.

In conclusion, the impact of brands incorporating these changes will be beneficial for many reasons. Firstly, if they start to adapt to younger audiences by working to be put in the "For Teens" section at Sephora, they will gain more publicity from retailers like Sephora alone as well as gaining new customers, thus promoting their revenue. Although adapting to younger audiences could be beneficial for all beauty brands, it could be especially favorable for possibly up-incoming or struggling brands that are looking to find their audience and niche. This will also be super impactful because it will follow the new societal trend of inclusivity and self-love. This value has become very relevant in the past few years with the prevalence of social media, and this is especially important for teens. Furthermore, with brands following these solutions, it will allow for teens to enter the beauty space safely with products that will promote healthy habits, rather than creating bad ones. This topic can definitely be researched further, but the most urgent topics of inquiry should be specifically what ingredients *should* be in products for teens, what entices teens to want to be in the beauty space, and what will the long term effects be if brands start to adapt to this newfound audience of Gen Z and Gen Alpha consumers.

Infographic

MARKETING BEAUTY TO GEN Z GEN ALPHA



Gen Z and Gen Alpha are using beauty products at a younger age than previous generations. Beauty brands are not tailoring their marketing to consider the needs of younger audiences, leading to teens purchasing products that may not be age-appropriate. The recommendations below highlight how beauty brands can adapt their marketing to safely market their products to this new audience.

PACKAGING

Brands should clearly state a product's active ingredients and their intended target audience on their packaging



AUDIENCE

To help teens understand what is made for them, beauty brands should use age-appropriate models in their advertising, and retailers should clearly state what products are for teens.

INGREDIENTS

Brands should have cleaner ingredients in their products overall which will be safer for a younger audience



SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Brands should be cautious and strategic around social media use - everyone has access, and large Gen Z / Gen Alpha presence

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

1. Retailers can introduce a "For Teens" sticker and section, and have brand activation events for these products by bringing in Gen Z and Gen Alpha influencers and providing product samples.
2. Beauty industry regulators can educate their audience with a documentary covering the issues faced by Gen Z and Gen Alpha because of ineffective marketing.
3. If problem persists, regulation around age limits for certain ingredients



Mock Campaign

