

# A Study on Self-Image of Young Women in Chennai in Relation to Makeup

K. Monica

*M.Sc. Student, Department of Visual Communication, Loyola College, Chennai*

**Abstract:** Makeup industries all over the world depend upon the female insecurities and self-doubt to sell their products. As quoted in an article in The Guardian, cosmetic industries mostly run on the assumption that, “that maybe she’s born with it, but probably not, so buy this concealer!”. Makeup operates with the function that its meant to “cover flaws” or “unsightly blemishes” that people usually want to cover. The society, stereotypically, wants our women to always look beautiful, flawless and clean, and women believe that. Women automatically assume that only if they wear a mask completely filled with makeup, they will be accepted by the society, and when told “society” it could be their partners, their peer group or just people they would want to impress. Self and self-image, particularly in women, gets affected to a wide extent when it is being influenced by the variety of makeup products they use. The purpose of this research was to find out the reasons for using Makeup, whether it has any relation to women’s self-image and whether makeup helps them fit into their perceived ideal self. The sample size for this research was 100 females. The methodology used to collect the data was questionnaire method. The results indicate that women started wearing makeup from a very young age, mostly during their teens. Women define self-image in various terms, for some it is individuality, while for some it means confidence with their body and skin tone, for few it’s their abilities, appearance, for others it’s the way one carries oneself and various other answers. Ideal-self is defined in different ways for every respondent.

**Keywords:** Self-Image, young women, makeup

## 1. Introduction

As quoted by Roman playwright Plautus, “a women without paint is like food without salt.”

Shakespeare’s Hamlet was less keen but just as rude, “I’ve heard all about you women and your cosmetics too. God gives you one face, but you paint another on top of it. You dance and prance and lisp; you call God’s creations by pet names, and you excuse your sexpot plays by pleading ignorance.”

Today’s generation teaches “look your best in order to impress the opposite person.” It is a society where outer beauty plays the most important role in judging a person, whether that person wears good clothes, look presentable and looks extremely eye-pleasing. To procure this statement, women today are ready to invest all possible to achieve the perfect beauty. They are ready to invest huge amounts of money if there’s any product out there which falsely promises that it will make them look a lot younger than their age. In this race of looking the most prettiest, young girls and women stand first. If

a women feels that she is nothing like her ideal-self, she changes her appearance with the help of makeup.

Makeup covers facial flaws and unwanted scars, with in-turn enhances a women’s self-confidence and that positively boosts their self-image. An individual’s self-esteem, self-perception and self-confidence plays a very vital role in their personal motivations, achievements and their social relationships. A women having a positive self-image will be seen as a more confident, accomplished and self-efficient person than a women with a low or negative self-image about herself.

Makeup helps create a positive change in a women’s appearance, makes them feel much secure and confident in their skin which will boost their perception about themselves. Once a women is aware that she is being evaluated for her appearance before her character, a significant amount of effort is taken to accomplish a good appearance. In a city with almost 40% of people residing are women, the cosmetic industry takes all routes possible to enlarge their market.

## 2. A brief history of makeup

Makeup was first invented and utilised by the ancient Egyptians. Cleopatra used lipstick that got hue from ground carmine beetles, while other women used clay mixed with water to colour their lips. It was believed that the Egyptians used makeup made out of lead ore and copper. Out of all their inventive makeup products, kohl was the most popular ones. Kohl was used by both men and women, which was usually a mixture of metal, lead, copper, ash and burnt almonds, painted all around their eyes. These circles of black kohl was meant to ward off evil eyes and dangerous spirits. Not only these, berries were used to darken lips, the ashes of burnt matches were used as to darken eyes, and young boys’ urine was used to fade their freckles.

The ancient Greeks and Romans too painted their faces with powders made from crushed minerals and stones. In those days, makeup was less colourful in the eyes of the beholder. It was considered that only prostitutes and lower class women would have dared to use makeup on their lips, cheeks and eyes.

In this generation, makeup is considered as a weapon in the hands of a soldier. It’s a tool of empowerment for women, which boosts their inner and outer self. Makeup is gift that makes women bold and beautiful. It acts as a form for self-expression and character.

### 3. Makeup and self-image

According to Lisa Elridge, the author of Face Paint: The Story of Makeup, “After 20 years working as a makeup artist I can say quite confidently that women wear makeup for themselves. There are many different roles makeup can play in a women’s life. There’s the playful and creative aspect – who doesn’t enjoy swirling a brush in a palette of colour? Then there’s the confidence-building aspect – why not cover a huge red blemish on your nose, if you can? Finally, there is an element of war paint and tribalism. Makeup can make you feel more powerful and ready to face any situation. Makeup is a mask you hide behind that gets you ready to face the world, or something you deploy as a weapon, to attract a partner, to intimidate, to shock or amaze.”

Evolutionary psychologists say that; the desirable qualities a man looks for in a women are said to enhanced by makeup. It is also repeatedly seen in studies that men are more attracted to women who wear makeup, who look attractive and presentable. The present generation are encouraged to aspire the kind of “unnatural natural” beauty, as in the words of Calvin Klein, “the best thing is to look natural, but it takes makeup to look natural.”

According to the magazine, The Guardian, when it comes to makeup, we are own worst enemies, believing that the world wants to see us in a certain way when the actual fact is we are fine just the way we are. When asked why do women wear makeup, the best answer is, “it’s a pinch of patriarchy, a dusting of sex, a smattering of fun, and a whole, caked-on layer of insecurities.”

### 4. Research methodology

The objectives of this study are as follows:  
 First, to study the reasons behind the usage of makeup.  
 Second, to find whether they find themselves most desirable with or without makeup.

Third, to study the understanding of self-image and the ideal-self and whether or not they are satisfied with their present self.

The method used for this research was Survey Research Method. A sample size of 103 females within the age of 18-25 was taken as the target group for data collection. The tool used to collect the data was Questionnaires. The questionnaires were divided into three sections. The first section consisted of the details and demographics of the respondents. The second section consisted of questions related to makeup, makeup products usage, and the like. The third section consisted of questions related to self-image and ideal-self. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions to gain more knowledge and answers related to the research.

### 5. Findings

Objective 1: To study the reasons behind the usage of makeup.

This question was an open-ended question as ‘other’ along

with the above mentioned options. The above mentioned number respondents who have responded have chosen the options given to them, while there were many answers in the others section as well. The reasons behind the usage of makeup is predominantly answered as, to feel pretty or confident. After that is when the reason of caring about their appearance is chosen. Other response given by the respondents behind the reasons to usage makeup is also quite similar like, to pamper themselves, or just for fun, or to boost their self-esteem and self-confidence. While there were a majority of positive responses, there were negative response too, which is indirectly related to poor self-image.

Reasons behind Usage	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
To Cover Flaws	5	4.8
To Fit in	1	0.9
To feel pretty/confident	33	32
Because I have to	4	3.8
I care about my appearance	10	9.7
Because I feel self-conscious or unattractive without it	2	1.9
Others	48	46.6
Total	103	100

Objective 2: To find whether they find themselves most desirable with or without makeup.

The first question given was, when they are presented in front of a mirror without makeup, how would they feel. This was an open-ended question given along with an “other” option to gain more perspective about the same. The most dominant response given was that the respondents feel confident-9.7%, proud-4.8%, content-4.8% and beautiful-25.2%. It was indicated that majority of the female respondents have a positive self-image about themselves, and makeup acts as an addition to their boost of confidence. In the others section, respondents with low self-image have given answers as ugly, sick, tired, and naked. Clearly, these answers indicate a poor perception of self in these respondents.

A direct question related to desirability was asked in the survey to the respondents. There were biased results; out of the 103 respondents, 78 of the women find themselves very desirable with both, with and without makeup. 12 out of 103 women find themselves the most desirable only with makeup on themselves. Desirability and self-image are two interrelated factors. The rest, 13 women find themselves the most desirable without makeup. This can indicate positive self-image but also connected with masking.

Objective 3: To study the understanding of self-image and the ideal-self and whether or not they are satisfied with their present self.

To understand the respondents understanding of self and ideal-self, open-ended questions were asked to get a wider perspective of their understanding of the terms. Variety of answers were received for the same. According to the respondents, self-image or self is simply their personality, a

person's appearance, the understanding of oneself, how they perceive themselves, confidence with their body and skin, inner beauty, the way a person carries oneself, and most importantly confidence, both inner and on self.

Ideal-image or ideal-self was mainly linked to the respondent's thoughts of how they would want themselves ideally. Responses were, Confidence in yourself, ideal-image would be a role model, not worrying about the societal rules of beauty but their own confidence, inner beauty, uniqueness and boldness.

To understand whether they are satisfied with their present self, a close-ended question asking do they fit in their definition of ideal-self was mentioned. 58 out of 103 respondents who have a good level of self-image clearly indicated that they fit well into their ideal-image. 4 respondents who might not yet be fitting in their ideal-image have clearly mentioned no, that they do not fit into that. The rest 41 respondents find themselves fitting in their ideal-image only at times. This question was linked to another question, asking if makeup helped them fit better in their perception of ideal self, and 52 of them absolutely think that makeup is an additional factor that helped them fit better to their ideal-self. The rest 51 respondents state that makeup cannot help them to fit in their ideal-self.

A closing open-ended question was asked related to makeup and defining an individual's personality, the answer given by all the 103 respondents was no and never. This clearly states that even though makeup acts as a confidence tool and a self-esteem booster, that solely cannot define an individual's personality. Makeup is just the outer mask that helps them to portray the better of themselves, and not the individual's character.

## 6. Results and conclusion

The results of the survey was that, women do feel more confident and put together when they wear makeup. Makeup is like a paint brush, women can be as colourful as they wish to be. As seen in the findings above, the primary reasons for women to wear makeup would be to make themselves feel more prettier and confident, and that's not to impress the opposite person, but to feel good about themselves. As the saying goes, "you look good, you feel good." Although, majority of females who responded indicated that they were self-satisfied, there were two female respondents who chose the option of using makeup because they feel unattractive or self-conscious without that. This can be linked as reason of poor self-image. People with poor self-image or negative self-image about themselves often hide their real self away from the society. They fear that they would not be accepted. These respondents use makeup as a tool to get accepted in the society. When it comes to

desirability, 75% of the respondents find themselves very desirable, both with and without makeup. This is directly associated to positive self-image, as they want to feel good, there is a strong desire to follow the makeup trends and try them out on themselves. While 11.6% of the females find themselves most desirable only with makeup. It is an indication that these people have poor self-image and they use makeup as tool to transform their insecurities and inferiority complex into something positive. The rest 12.6%, although they find themselves desirable without makeup, they use makeup as a masking tool that does not show their real, natural face to the society. Masking is term used when you are portraying a different person which is different from the actual person. Self-image and ideal-image are inter-related. In the interpretation, we found that the females are in their image of ideal-self almost all the time. Makeup is used a tool that helps them fit in a much better manner in their image of idealist. Only persons with a positive, confident and self-sufficient self-image can always fit in their ideal-self.

Makeup, as a beauty tool, has definitely increased self-beauty perception of individuals. Using makeup has definitely helped them fit better in their versions of ideal-self. Makeup definitely improves a person's confidence, self-esteem and perception of themselves. It is also seen that makeup alone, in itself, can never define a women's personality. It is a weapon given through which women make themselves more bold and confident. Just like the way we have been told to never judge a book by its cover, you can judge a women just by her look alone. For people with a positive self-image, makeup has a definitive effect by making them more independent, and confident women are always seen with awe. For the people with a struggling self-image, makeup helps them feel more secure, removing their insecurities and makes them confident to face the society. Makeup can change how a person look on the inside which drastically changes the way they feel on the inside, making them feel better about themselves on the inside.

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