From Lashes to Legacy: Unpacking Huda Beauty's Strategic Innovation and Global Expansion in the Modern Cosmetics Arena

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Abstract.

This case study critically examines Huda Beauty. Initially launched with a focus on high-quality false eyelashes, Huda Beauty has since evolved into a leading global cosmetics conglomerate renowned for its innovative product offerings and strategic market positioning.

The case study begins by evaluating the major players in the UAE cosmetic market, focusing on competitive dynamics, market influence, and key barriers to entry (regulatory constraints and competitive pressures). Next, it takes a more in-depth look at Huda Beauty and its product strategy, innovation, market differentiation, and consumer engagement. The case study also explores how Huda Beauty incorporates cultural sensitivity into their branding by examining the relationship between cultural norms and product preferences.

Finally, it discusses the potential future directions that Huda Beauty could pursue to expand its product lines and leverage new market opportunities. This discussion aims to enhance our understanding of Huda Beauty's strategic positioning and growth trajectory within the evolving beauty industry.

Keywords: Huda Beauty; Modern Cosmetics; UAE; Strategic positioning; Global expansion.

Introduction

The beauty brand Huda Beauty emerged in 2013 when makeup artist Huda Kattan founded it, and it now ranks among the top beauty brands in both Dubai and the USA. As the brand's iconic face, Huda started her career by blogging beauty tips and finishing a prestigious makeup training program in Los Angeles, USA. She identified an untapped market for premium false lashes and persuaded her sister to invest $6K in her business plan for creating superior quality false lashes. Huda used her background in social media content creation and blogging and her technical makeup expertise alongside her existing client base to expand her presence in the false lash industry. The introduction of her false eyelash line to Sephora Dubai (2013) and the USA (2015) through a major global beauty retailer initiated the success of Huda Beauty. Huda Beauty has expanded its product range into beauty categories and continues to strengthen its market position. Together with her sisters Mona and Alya Kattan Huda aims to turn Huda Beauty into a major beauty conglomerate similar to industry leaders Estee Lauder and L'Oréal.

Huda Beauty's mission statement declares that they strive to establish a beauty world which celebrates all individuals so you can discover your unique magic (Huda Beauty, 2018). Their vision demonstrates their dedication to enabling people to show their authentic selves no matter their background while establishing that beauty comes from the confidence it produces instead of financial costs. The website explains its fundamental purpose as empowering people to express their desired identity regardless of their origins or identity. For us, the ultimate goal remains that beauty should be measured by confidence instead of the cost of products.

1. What Are Consumers Seeking?

Huda's social media supremacy combined with her influencer-consumer bond and electronic word of mouth substantially affects her followers' interactions with her. Her audience looks for products that enable empowerment as well as opportunities for self-expression and confidence building. Social acceptance remains a primary goal for them while their self-esteem becomes adversely affected by unrealistic images and photoshopped content. These consumers rely on real-time feedback from social media platforms to make product purchases that match their personal values and unique identities. The beauty industry faces current demand for products with organic/clean formulas and sustainable manufacturing that undergo cruelty-free testing which consumers use to enhance their self-confidence.

2. How Do Beauty Brands Engage with These Consumers?

The beauty industry reaches its target consumers through product feedback spread by social media influencers which represents one of the sector's primary marketing strategies. This marketing strategy yields effective results because of social media influencers' authenticity and openness which allow them to connect personally with consumers. Influencers cultivate consumer connections by sharing their personal experiences which build trust and credibility that guides consumer choices through their product recommendations. Traditional celebrities have lost their previous level of credibility in brand-building efforts.

3. Who Competes with Huda Beauty?

Multiple beauty brands operate in the industry while competition remains distinctly partitioned. Huda Beauty maintains its unique brand identity by having Huda Kattan represent the brand in every launch event, advertisement campaign, product demonstration, and on social media. The main competitors to Huda Beauty consist of celebrity-branded beauty brands such as Rihanna's Fenty Beauty, Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty, and Kylie Jenner's Kylie Cosmetics. Before Huda Beauty came into existence Huda Kattan lacked widespread recognition which makes this comparison valid. The Instagram pages of these three rival brands do not include influencer product reviews. Product-centric images or videos alongside gifs appear as the main content on the posts while concise product descriptions appear as captions.

The Instagram presence of Huda Beauty employs relatable content while strategically creating connections with its brand followers. The content includes varied topics such as skincare guidance and hacks combined with self-care DIY methods and makeup tutorials alongside educational posts about major world events. The main content of the account includes reposted tutorials from influencers who demonstrate Huda Beauty products. The captions use warm and genuine comments to acknowledge influencers while including questions designed to provoke follower interaction. The brand maintains a strong connection with its followers with Huda Kattan appearing in roughly one out of every three posts. Kylie Cosmetics uses the well-known name of Kylie Jenner connected to their brand together with Kardashian family support to gain market advantages.

4. How Does Huda Beauty Embrace This Approach?

Huda Beauty fights against the negative effects beauty standards have on consumers by opposing unrealistic expectations. The brand responds to customer needs through deep connections and forward-thinking while promoting authenticity and self-love. Although Huda Beauty uses the SMI strategy it ensures that each post and product launch maintains high levels of authenticity and sincerity. The fundamental principle of the brand focuses on developing real relationships while ensuring authentic communication with its audience. This is evident through the following:

- Huda Kattan operates as an influencer and thought leader by merging her business persona with that of her brand. Through her personal and business social media accounts she forms bonds with her audience by sharing personal stories and experiences. She regularly holds live sessions on social media to maintain an active connection with her audience.

- From the start of her business venture Huda has preserved an unchanging identity and cohesive narrative. She maintains her blog writing practice while testing competing brand products and gives product recommendations including her own based on price and skin compatibility and shares valuable beauty tips she discovers that extend beyond traditional beauty topics. Huda remains the prominent brand representative. Her followers receive regular reminders about her journey and accomplishments through her product launches which inspire and empower them.

- Huda is outspoken about her views. In March 2021 she started a petition along with an online movement to eliminate beauty standards while criticizing the use of Photoshop filters and Facetune tools. She demonstrated her dissatisfaction with beauty brands that use modified images for advertising without clearly revealing those changes.

5. Strategic Triumph: Huda Beauty's Social Media Mastery for Sales and Global Outreach

Huda Beauty effectively used social media platforms as their main marketing tool to increase sales and expand their consumer base. The Dubai-based company achieved increased sales across the nation and throughout the Middle East according to Ismail's 2018 report. The majority of the company's social media deployment occurs on Instagram under the Huda Beauty page which connects with 25.9 million followers and indicates a large audience actively following the brand. The official Instagram page of Huda Beauty features product videos and

images with people demonstrating their use while Huda herself appears regularly to engage customers directly (Baramidze, 2018). Huda Beauty uses multiple approaches to boost product sales via their social media channels.

6.1 Huda Beauty Marketing Strategy

Huda Beauty initially targeted a female audience. The company shares product-related photos of influential female beauty figures on Instagram to reach its audience. The objective is to build a meaningful relationship with the target audience to persuade them to use the products. Multiple females demonstrated Huda Beauty's Easy Bake powders on Instagram during their recent launch which triggered a substantial increase in powder sales especially in Dubai. The brand successfully integrates Dubai's beauty influencers into its marketing strategy with Huda Kattan as a key figure to expand its worldwide user base (Radcliffe & Lam, 2018). The target audience widened to encompass males as cultural norms evolved throughout time. Huda Beauty displays male users in their Instagram photos where only their faces are shown using the brand's beauty products. The main emphasis remains on how to apply the product because face makeup constitutes the primary application area while targeting a wider audience.

6.2 Products and Services

The Huda Beauty Makeup brand delivers an opulent selection of products designed specifically for lips, face, body, eyes, and cheeks for everyone. The brand demonstrates its commitment to inclusivity through its launch of each product with extensive options and shades that work for every skin tone.

6.3 KAYALI

The Arabic word "Imagination" defines Kayali which is a premium Eau de Parfum & Perfume brand offering nine fragrance options. This sub-brand allows consumers to create individualized scents by mixing multiple fragrances and is managed by Mona, who is Huda Kattan's sister.

6.4 Wishful

The skincare sub-brand Wishful by Huda Beauty produces cruelty-free beauty products that use natural ingredients. The brand's objective includes providing customers with natural skin radiance while treating skin issues like dryness hyperpigmentation breakouts and dull skin.

Huda Beauty provides a wide selection of beauty items which includes products like acrylics and lip liners as well as eyeshadow palettes. The way products are packaged combined with their strategic placement in stores helps companies to broaden their customer base and boost their sales figures. The company's services play an essential role in expanding their market reach.

The launch of Huda Beauty's Easy Bake powder stands as a prime example. The Easy Bake powder box packaging demonstrates meticulous design to create a visually appealing and eye-friendly presentation. The combination of colour, size and shape enables the packaging to grab attention without effort. The box illustration shows Huda Kattan mixing the powder in a bowl which emphasizes how simple the product is to use. Kattan is depicted holding several Huda Beauty products on a platter on the backside of the package. The packaging uses its images to draw customers in while delivering a specific message according to Mainali & Tantry (2022) and Rundh (2016). The packaging highlights how simple the product is to use for busy women who need fast makeup solutions. The product captures the concept of time-saving solutions which appeals to working and independent women. The product's image as simple to use and time-efficient successfully boosts its attractiveness for the intended market according to Huda Beauty.

6.5 Offering Exclusive Offers

Huda Beauty Cosmetics continues to present special exclusive offers for its Easy Bake powder since its launch. A contest advertised on Instagram has been actively running between July 2nd and July 6th. To enter the competition and win items like the Easy Bake powder Press box along with the Shop Huda Beauty collection participants need to follow both Instagram pages and like their posts while also tagging three friends. Huda Beauty uses exclusive offers to achieve the dual goals of elevating sales figures while drawing in new customers. The brand recognizes how consumers think about their spending power and these sales and offers are designed to meet their need for economical shopping options. Brand sales strategy benefits from promotions where customers receive a free brush or lip liner with the Easy Bake powder purchase and from offers that provide discounts on multiple products through two-in-one and three-in-one deals.

6.6 Advertising Campaign
Before the new Easy Bake powder launch, Huda Beauty Cosmetics ran an online advertising campaign that extensively used social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram along with their website hudabeauty.com (Parente & Strausbaugh-Hutchinson, 2014). During the Instagram campaign, multiple posts displayed the Easy Bake powder and highlighted Kattan's kitchen visuals to emphasize the product's simple operation. The campaign leveraged social media platforms to create excitement and awareness which built anticipation for the product launch.

The advertising campaign focused on broadening its customer base through product awareness creation strategies. After defining the target audience for the product release, it entered the market and rapidly built momentum. The effectiveness of advertising campaigns on social media platforms enables companies to extend their customer base through powerful advertisements.

6.   Enhancing Customer Value Perception
Huda Beauty understands how important it is to make customers feel valued and involved with their favourite brands and products. The brand establishes consistent communication with customers to demonstrate that their feedback is both essential and valued. Huda Beauty provides daily customer engagement on their Instagram page through regular postings of images and videos along with makeup tips and tutorials. Huda Beauty's use of Instagram creates an online community forum which keeps customers updated and actively involved (Turnbull, 2017). An effective strategy boosts sales while building brand loyalty. Loyal customers show a greater tendency to consistently choose Huda Beauty for their makeup needs. When customers develop trust in Huda Beauty's products and services they become brand ambassadors who recommend the brand to friends and family which helps expand the customer base (Lovelock & Patterson, 2015).

7.   Digital Marketing Strategy of Huda Beauty
Huda Beauty runs a genuine influencer marketing approach across Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter and their official site. Her Instagram following consists of 50 million people mostly aged between 18 and 44 years old with most followers between 20 and 24 years old. The majority of this age group consists of women who represent 73.2% of the demographic while 74.7% reside in the United States. The primary buyers of Huda Beauty products are members of both Gen Z and Millennials who have driven social media expansion and major societal shifts while highlighting mental health awareness. Members of these generations experience significant self-doubt along with diminished self-esteem. A study by The Body Shop about women's self-worth and happiness across 21 countries showed that half of the 22,000 respondents experienced more self-doubt than self-love in 2020 despite the impact of COVID-19. The Self Love Crisis phenomenon results in higher occurrences of anxiety and nervousness along with diminished confidence which directly affects self-esteem.

Huda Kattan started a self-love movement through her brand Huda Beauty to help followers achieve beauty confidence and comfort with their appearance. She champions self-love and inner authenticity while working within the beauty sector. She leverages both her cosmetic brand Huda Beauty and skincare line Wishful to help consumers feel more comfortable in their skin while understanding that makeup can be a beneficial tool for self-esteem enhancement but also carries the risk of misuse which can lead to abuse. Huda shares her journey of self-love, body acceptance, and confidence with her followers while clarifying that makeup should function as a way to express one's true self rather than act as a disguise.

Through her brand's social media channels, Huda actively shares her personal experiences and individual journey with her followers. She shares new information including teachings about NFTs along with insights from her life experiences as she navigated motherhood and leadership of a worldwide business enterprise. She builds relationships with her followers through sharing content and motivating them while interacting with influencers who provide product experiences and beauty advice.

8.   Unveiling Huda Beauty's Eco-Friendly Commitment
A survey of 2000 adults found that 54% of consumers prefer sustainable cosmetic products while 44% seek out cruelty-free options. The lack of eco-friendly labels on packaging and advertisements makes it difficult for 61% of consumers to determine if products are vegan cruelty-free or recyclable. Huda Beauty can expand its customer base through straightforward modifications to its product advertisements and product details.

May 2021 marked the debut of Huda Beauty's GloWish line which integrates skincare ingredients from Wishful and makeup elements from Huda Beauty. The GloWish line offers lightweight makeup products that provide skin benefits and shine in sustainability because it is vegan and cruelty-free with 90% naturally derived materials and entirely recyclable packaging. These sustainable qualities fail to reach customers

because they are neither adequately promoted nor advertised. The Instagram launch failed to emphasize sustainability features while the Huda Beauty website hides this information under the 'Common Questions' section. Fenty Beauty maintains a clearly defined section demonstrating their commitment to clean skincare products while embracing the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. Huda Beauty can establish itself as a market leader by using social media platforms to communicate the environmental impact of cosmetics and to promote the existing sustainability features of its products which appeals to eco-conscious consumers who consider sustainability in their cosmetic choices.

9. Recommendations for Huda Beauty

10.1 Adopting Innovative Technologies

The authors advise Huda Beauty to think about implementing cutting-edge technology for routine business activities, which could reduce expenses and boost productivity that has been identified in previous research (Gilani et al., 2023b; Gilani et al., 2024a). Al Jaghoub et al. (2024) provided evidence of this in their study, which showed how a machine learning (ML) program may improve organisational waste management. Regardless of industry, the use of machine learning (ML) or artificial intelligence (AI) has completely changed how companies operate (Aseer et al., 2024; Gernal et al., 2024; GM et al., 2024; Moussa et al., 2024; Subramanian et al., 2024).

The effective use of AI and ML in higher education to enhance students' learning and employability serves as evidence of this (Krupicka, 2024; Yasin and Gilani, 2022; Yasin et al., 2022). However, as Gilani et al. (2023a) and Khan et al. (2024) have shown, the leadership practices used in the company may have an impact on the adoption of innovative technologies. Research on MaxPro Fitness and by Gilani et al. (2024b) on women entrepreneurs, for instance, the business's success was attributed to the owner's drive and attitude, who was not afraid to try new and creative ways to expand and enhance the company. This shows a risk-taking leadership style (Golshan Sorour et al., 2024; Jaafri et al., 2023; Tantry and Singh, 2016).

10.2 Ensuring reliable infrastructure

The writers stress how crucial infrastructure is to the survival and expansion of businesses, particularly in remote and rural locations. For instance, firms with stakeholders in metropolitan regions may benefit from cost reductions, convenience, and enhanced communication if they have access to sufficient broadband infrastructure (Gilani and Faccia, 2022; Sulthan et al., 2022; Tantry et al., 2019). However, as Gilani et al. (2022) show, the rurality of commercial locations may have different infrastructure issues, as this is still not a widely accepted metric.

10.3 Partnerships with other businesses

The authors suggest that Huda Beauty form alliances with companies in other industries, which might increase the company's output and visibility. The results illustrate this, highlighting the advantages that businesses and universities derive from their collaborations. These advantages include enhanced staff knowledge and practice-based learning for students, which improves employability after graduation (Tantry and Puri-Singh, 2017; Yasin and Gilani, 2022).

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