

Do It Your self. Cosmetics

DIY Practices in the Cosmetics Industry

Self-Making as a Response to Industrialized Beauty

Exploring what happens when we move
beyond simply buying beauty products
and begin making them ourselves

Lily Chinn



*“Creativity does not have to
be perfect to be beautiful.
Every project is progress,
every try builds confidence,
and every handmade piece
tells a story.”*

-Jennifer Maker

Designer, maker, crafter, teacher

Graduation Report

DIY Practices in the Cosmetics Industry:
Self-Making as a Response to Industrialized Beauty

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DIY Practices in the Cosmetics Industry: Self-Making as a Response to Industrialized Beauty

Beauty has long been a form of self-expression, yet we have become increasingly disconnected from the products we use every day. This thesis explores how DIY cosmetics can encourage a more conscious, creative, and personal relationship with beauty through embodied knowledge and hands-on creation. It responds to the growing physical and metaphorical "gap" between consumers and production processes within industrialized beauty systems. As ready-made beauty products have become increasingly abundant and accessible, we have become more disconnected from how they are designed, manufactured, and ultimately disposed of.

Throughout this research, I discovered that making cosmetics is about much more than the final product. By creating cosmetics yourself, you can better understand ingredients, reduce packaging waste, and reconnect with the materials and processes behind everyday beauty products. DIY practices encourage creative agency, continuous learning, and transparent making processes, shifting users, like you and me, from passive consumers to active creators.

My exploration of this field has resulted in an accessible, beginner-friendly platform designed to support experimentation, mindful consumption, and a more personal approach to beauty. Whether you are here out of curiosity, creative endeavors, or simply a love for beauty, I hope this thesis inspires you to learn, create, and enjoy your next beauty creation.



Abstract

DIY Practices as a Means to Support Conscious Cosmetic Creation & Consumption

This thesis investigates how do-it-yourself (DIY) cosmetic practices can support more conscious, participatory, and sustainable relationships with beauty products. Situating DIY cosmetics within a historical context of self-making, apothecary practices, and embodied material knowledge, the research explores how cosmetic production has shifted from localized, skill-based making to increasingly industrialized, consumer-driven systems, creating a growing gap between consumers and production.

The research combines historical analysis, literature review, semi-structured interviews, workshop-based prototyping, and participant co-creation to explore the opportunities and challenges of DIY cosmetics. Drawing on theories of design, prosumption, consumer behavior, sustainability, and DIY, it examines how tensions between convenience and autonomy, personalization and standardization, and self-expression and overconsumption shape contemporary beauty consumption.

Insights from the interviews informed the design of two hands-on workshop interventions that enable

participants to formulate their own cosmetic products while engaging directly with ingredients, packaging, and production processes. Findings suggest that DIY cosmetic making can strengthen curiosity, confidence, creativity, and agency while increasing awareness of ingredients, formulation, and product lifecycle considerations. Participants particularly valued opportunities for personalization, social learning, and guided knowledge transfer.

The thesis concludes that DIY cosmetics are not a replacement for industrial production but an alternative practice that restores participation, knowledge, and choice within contemporary beauty systems. By framing users as active creators rather than passive consumers, the research proposes a Design-for-DIY approach through a self-making intervention supported by a viable business model that positions designers as facilitators of accessible, safe, and meaningful making experiences. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on sustainable consumption, democratized design, and active participation within the beauty industry.

Do-it-yourself Cosmetics · DIY Practices · Prosumer Practices · Prosumption · Productive Consumption · Sustainable Consumption · Beauty Industry · Participatory Design · Consumer Agency · Cosmetics Industry



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Because of you all, I have reconnected with the beauty domain in entirely new ways. This journey has sparked my curiosity, strengthened my making abilities, refined my communication skills, challenged me to place myself in unfamiliar contexts, and taught me more than I ever imagined. Above all, this master's has validated the systemic way I naturally approach design and has given me the confidence to embrace it. I hope to continue approaching complex problems with curiosity, care, empathy, and a holistic perspective throughout my career.

I can't wait to see what the future holds!

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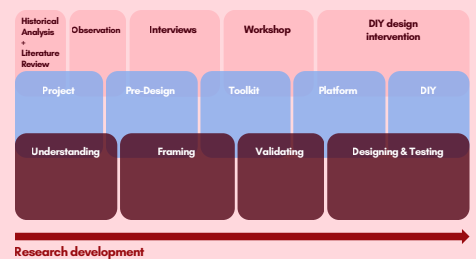
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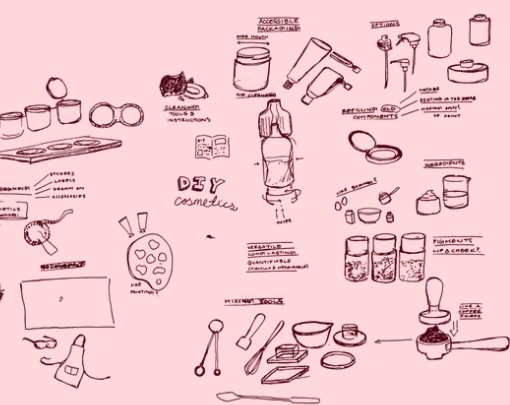
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by.you



Beauty made by you

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DISCOVER BY.YOU

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Introduction

When was the last time you made something yourself?

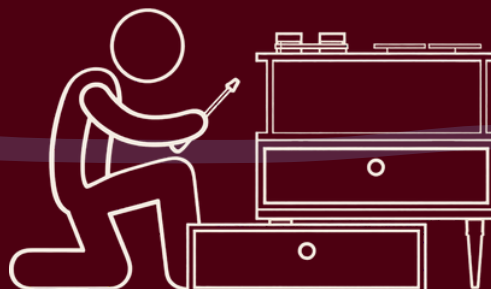
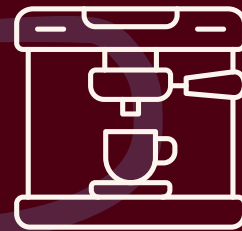
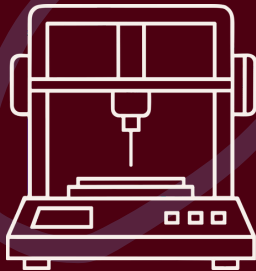
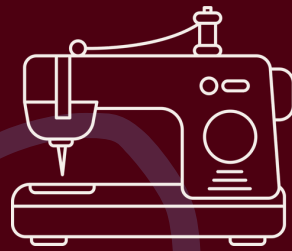
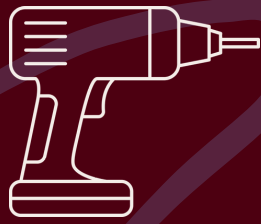
Maybe it was in the kitchen, fixing a part on your bike, or making an art piece for your home. Actually, our perception of what Doing-It-Yourself (DIY) is has been permanently altered since the industrial age, to the point where access to ready-made products and parts is something we take for granted. The popular act of “DIYing,” or doing it yourself, refers to individuals actively contributing to the creation of a product (Bonvoisin, Galla, & Prendeville, 2017; Hoftijzer, 2024). This is an especially valuable practice today because it offers an entry point into more localized and embodied forms of making from which people have become increasingly disconnected since the Industrial Revolution (Hoftijzer, 2024).

It was the Industrial Revolution that marked a shift from making one’s own tools, formulas, and products to purchasing them ready-made through systems of mass production. With this behavioral shift came a widening distance, literally and metaphorically, between producers and consumers, as knowledge, skills, and tools moved out of the home and into factories (Hudson, 2008; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Kelly, 2011b; Hoftijzer, 2024). Hoftijzer (2024) describes this as an industrially induced gap between maker and user that has led to a detached and unsustainable human-product relationship. This is a result of industrial machinery reducing the personal investment, knowledge, and creativity involved in creating things for oneself, a phenomenon known as deskilling (Brugger & Gehrke, 2018; Morris, 2007; Nieuwenhuys, 1969). While this switch toward ready-made available products has granted us many opportunities, we often fail to recognize what it has taken away from us.

There have been many attempts to recover some of those lost skills and forms of knowledge through the increased accessibility of smaller-scale tools and machines, such as sewing machines, power tools, and rapid-prototyping tools like 3D printers. These

developments have contributed to the democratization of production processes by making forms of design and fabrication more accessible to non-experts (Atkinson, 2006; Hoftijzer, 2024; Tanenbaum et al., 2013). More recently, it is also the interactivity through social media that has sparked a resurgence of DIY information, practices, and tools, making self-making more tangible and accessible and expanding what users can access, design, and create (Cova & Dalli, 2009). This globalization of digital resources for DIY practices continues to grow, to the extent that tutorials, guidance, and inspiration are much more widely available in a range of formats that are easier to digest and execute (Kozinets et al., 2017).

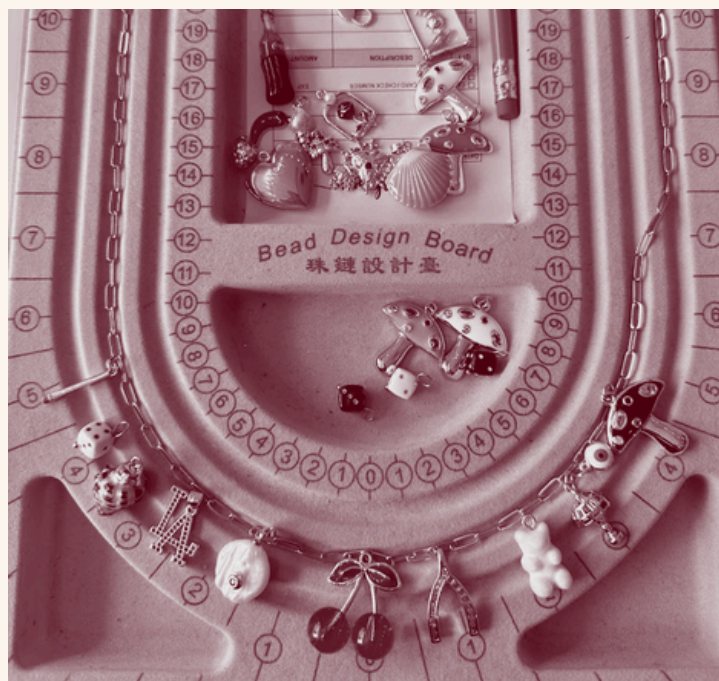
These digital media-based learning formats open up opportunities for users to become more involved in the making process, re-inspiring people to design and produce their own products. This kind of involvement is valuable not only because it can support more thoughtful and potentially lower-impact consumption, but also because it can contribute to social and emotional development. Hoftijzer (2024) argues that DIY supports self-development, awareness, pride of authorship, care, and product attachment. Similarly, research on the “IKEA effect” suggests that when people invest labor into making something themselves, they often value it more highly and develop a stronger sense of ownership toward the outcome (Norton et al., 2012). It is important to note that this kind of small-batch making doesn’t always lead to more environmentally sustainable outcomes, as one-off production comes with inefficiencies in material usage, tools, and experimentation (Mota, 2011). Yet it does promote mindful behavior, such as understanding what you need and producing it. By making them intentionally, you are encouraged to treat those items with more care because they have a higher perceived value, extending the product’s life and serving as an alternative to investing in the mass-consumption market (Mugge, 2007; Schifferstein, 2008).



IKEA Effect:

The tendency for individuals to assign greater value to products they have helped create themselves because of the effort invested in the making process

(Norton et al., 2012)



1 Project Scope

1.1 Framing

This project is situated within the research field of democratizing design through DIY practices, as outlined in Jan Willem Hoftijzer's PhD research (2024). The Design-for-DIY framework (Figure 1), proposed as a result of his research, informs how the project is carried out by outlining a non-linear method that enables designers to facilitate self-making for laypersons through project and pre-design cycles, toolkits, platforms, and guided DIY processes (Hoftijzer, 2024). Through this thesis project, I apply this framework to the wicked problem of the cosmetics and beauty sector, a domain in need of more thoughtful forms of production and consumption. Laypersons in this context are defined as people who lack specialized, professional, or expert knowledge in the field of beauty production.

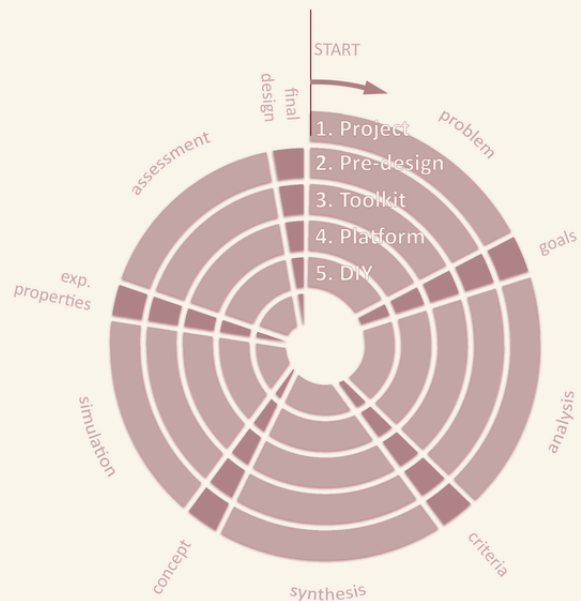


Figure 1 : Design for Do It Yourself Framework

DIY integration through personalization and customization has already been recognized by major players in the lifestyle industry, such as Nike, Uniqlo, and Kiko Milano, to name a few (Image 1).



Image 1 : Nike By You Campaign, uniqlo embroidery, Kiko milano lipstick engraving

However, as Hoftijzer (2024) notes, mass customization (Pine & Davis, 1999) should not be confused with deeper forms of DIY participation, since many customization systems still operate within predetermined industrial choices. Moving beyond surface-level customization, shared maker spaces and workshops have meaningfully contributed to self-making culture. Places such as FabLabs, ceramics studios, and other makerspaces provide creatives access to tools, materials, and machinery that would otherwise remain inaccessible, allowing more people to engage in personal creation and experimentation (Hoftijzer, 2024).

From a broader theoretical perspective, this project is also supported by prosumer theory and the maker

movement. Toffler (1980) introduced the prosumer as a figure who merges the roles of producer and consumer, while more recent work has shown how DIY and making practices, alongside user-generated content (UGC), reconfigure that relationship in contemporary contexts (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). In the context of design, the maker movement has been associated with democratized access to tools, peer learning, experimentation, and the reclamation of agency over objects and systems (Anderson, 2012; Dougherty, 2012). These perspectives are especially relevant to this thesis because they help position DIY cosmetic-making not as a novelty, but as part of a wider cultural and socio-technical shift toward participation in production.



1.2 A Cosmetic Perspective

The cosmetics industry already feels like a DIY experience in many ways; there are various shades, formulas, and methods for applying and wearing makeup. Yet the cosmetics industry is also entangled with a particularly complex combination of need, desire, and self-expression. While doing your own makeup is a personal act and an accomplishment in itself, the beauty industry still faces many of the same structural issues that distance users from ownership, creativity, and embodied knowledge.

Historically, cosmetics were not experienced solely as finalized industrial products. Beauty practices developed through domestic routines, local knowledge, craft, hygiene, pharmaceutical practices, and theater before becoming standardized, branded, and globally distributed through industrial systems (Jones, 2010). The modern beauty industry transformed these earlier practices into mass-produced consumer goods, which contributes to widening the distance between users and the processes of formulation and making.

Today, this problem gap stems from the epistemic knowledge of ingredients, production, and application being largely removed from the user's field of vision, leaving users only able to select from predetermined products and putting their full trust in brand identities. Makeup brands produce excess product to cater to a wide range of needs, generating large volumes of plastic packaging and contributing to short use cycles and overconsumption. It is estimated that the beauty industry produces 120 billion units of packaging each year. This excessive production, alongside social media advertising and fast-moving trend cycles, has caused an imbalance between the products users buy and the products they actually use (Liu, 2025). Sustainability research on the cosmetics sector identifies packaging waste,

overproduction, and the complexity of end-of-life systems as significant challenges within the industry (Bom et al., 2019; Gatt & Refalo, 2022; Rocca et al., 2022).

At the same time, the creative nature of makeup encourages experimentation, testing, and variation. Users routinely mix colors, layer formulas, and repurpose products, which are techniques learned from peers and digital media. In this sense, small forms of prosumption are already present in the beauty domain. Research on Brazilian DIY cosmetics, for example, shows that users do not only make products for personal use, but also share practices, circulate knowledge, and help legitimize alternative market behaviors outside the mainstream industry (Morais et al., 2018). This suggests that the desire for participation already exists, even if it remains informal and under-supported.

Bringing prosumption into this project is difficult because, respectfully, people have varying skill levels, knowledge, and skin characteristics to consider. Alongside technical barriers is the inaccessibility at the level of close proximity to production, ingredients, and design choices. We still operate under the constraints of mass-market consumption, and due to time, safety, and accessibility constraints, we will not be able to source ingredients in their rawest form, establish precise production methods, or design from scratch. As the topic currently stands, there is still very little imagination for the possibilities of DIY cosmetics as a structured design opportunity, and there are also social and emotional barriers to consider. DIY in beauty can still be perceived as childish, unprofessional, unsafe, or unrealistic, even though the industry itself celebrates experimentation, personalization, and self-expression largely at the level of application.

1.3 Research Questions & Aims

As a designer, I believe it is important to begin facilitating these DIY experiences through low-threshold entry points that inspire users and increase their involvement, effectively shifting consumers toward more prosumer-like roles by increasing their participation in creation and decision-making. This graduation project therefore focuses on challenging the current operational norms of the industrialized production-consumption pipeline by investigating the capacity of DIY cosmetic-making to increase user agency and creativity and offset current passive consumption behavior.

As both researcher and designer, I will investigate, create, facilitate, and test self-making processes that challenge users of varying levels of experience with makeup to creatively approach and contribute to the creation of their own products. Specific emphasis will be placed on how this process makes them feel, and what emotional and physical requirements give users the most confidence in the process, therefore instilling agency in users within the beauty domain by co-creating their own definition of beauty through their beauty

products. Hoftijzer's (2024) research is especially relevant here because he frames DIY not only as a productive act, but also as an experience tied to the deeper human needs described by Max-Neef (1992) and Maslow (1998). Some relevant needs identified are participation, understanding, and creation (Max-Neef, 1992), which Maslow (1998) has expanded on with his Attributes of Being, including uniqueness, playfulness, and self-sufficiency. These characteristics of human need relate directly to the practice of DIY and to the opportunities individuals have to be involved in decision-making in their own lives while expanding their knowledge and tactile-making skills. Hoftijzer (2024) sees this as an opportunity to bridge the gap between producers and consumers, as DIY can mend the relationship between making and using and between humans and nature. By shifting the relationship between the consumer and the product, and between the user and the producer, there is potential to raise awareness of current consumption habits and to affect the way people engage with and connect to the world (Sennett, 2008).

Therefore, the goal of the project is to design the experience, components, and longer-term participation interactions that allow users to begin creating their own cosmetic products at some capacity. Rather than proposing that users must fully replace industrial cosmetics, this project investigates what kinds of interventions, such as toolkits, workshops, ingredient guidance, or participatory platforms, could meaningfully reintroduce agency, embodied knowledge, and creativity into cosmetic-making to reclaim authorship and, as a result, make more informed choices contributing to sustainable goals.

This research, guided by the Design-for-DIY framework, aims to answer the following questions (Table 1):

Main research question		
How can designers facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that give users agency over ingredients, packaging, and making processes to increase transparency, support identity expression, and reduce passive, mass-market consumption?		
Sub-question 1	Sub-question 2	Sub-question 3
How have prosumer practices appeared in the cosmetics industry historically and contemporarily?	How and why have interventions succeeded or failed in reconnecting users with cosmetic production processes?	What forms of self-making could meaningfully reintroduce agency, inspire creativity, and proactive transparency into cosmetic-making?

Table 1: Research Questions

These questions will be explored through a combination of literature review, historical analysis, an observational study, user interviews, prototyping, and testing. Hoftijzer's (2024) Design for DIY Framework will be applied while also developing the additional necessary background knowledge of the beauty domain. For this exploration, fields such as sustainable consumer behaviour, cosmetic formulation processes, and prosumer making strategies will be considered.



2 The Rise of the Cosmetics Industry

From Controversy to normalcy

**HISTORICAL
CONTEXT**

THE WIDENING GAP

**SOCIAL
CONSEQUENCES**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSEQUENCES**

ETHICAL IMBALANCE

**DIY
POTENTIAL**



Do your lips feel DRY?

...try this Hollywood

LIPSTICK

Here's a new lipstick created by Max Factor Hollywood that is an answer to your every lip make-up problem. Just note these four amazing features...

1. Lip-like feel of your lips
2. non-drying, but tooth-like
3. safe for sensitive lips
4. eliminates lipstick line

It's called TRU-COLOR LIPSTICK, and it's created in color harmony shades to add the correct color allure to the lips of blonde, brunette, brown and red-head. For a thrilling new lip make-up experience try Max Factor Hollywood Tru-Color Lipstick today... \$1.00

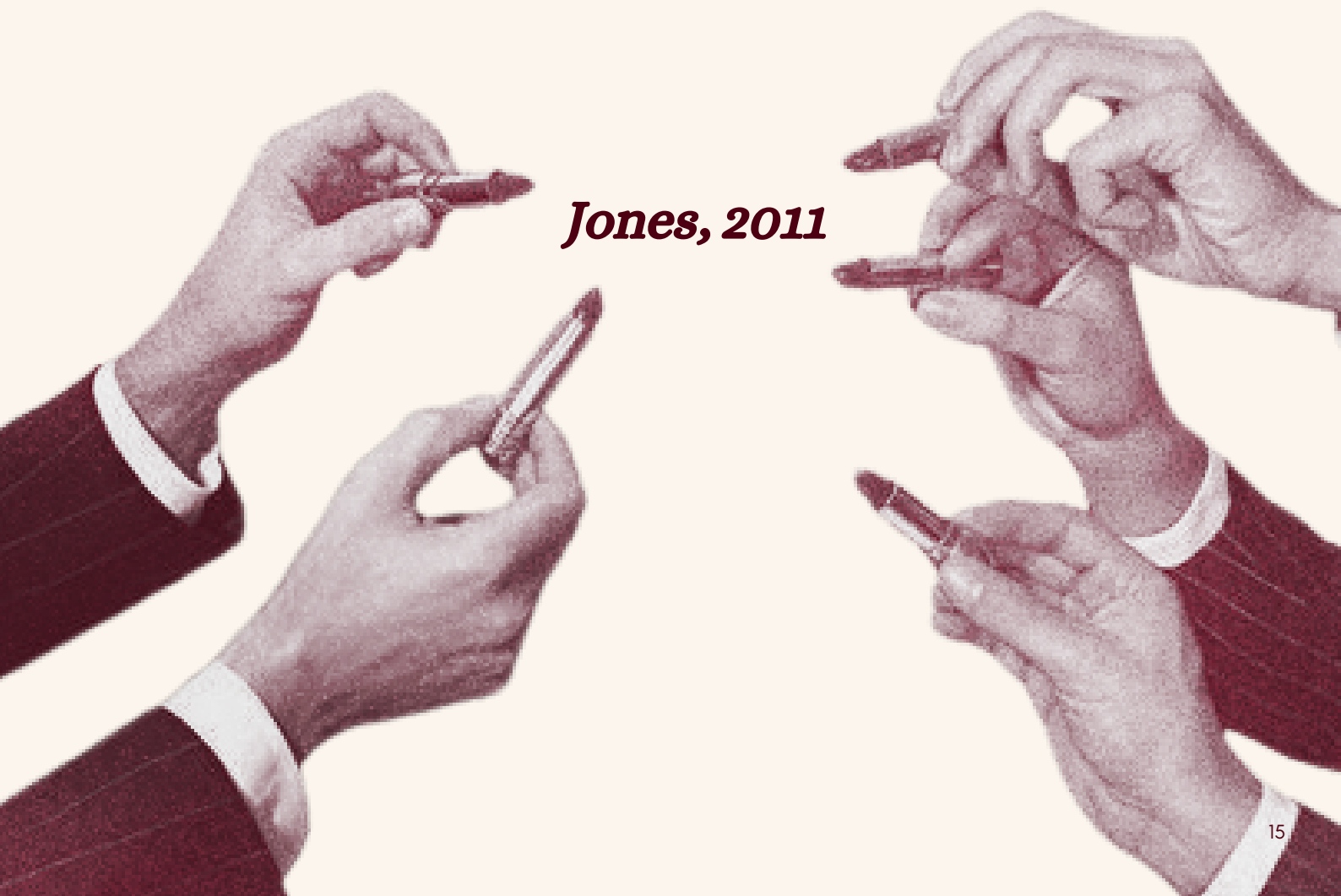


Elizabeth Arden
Eight Hour Cream



“Charles Darwin had observed in 1871 that there was no universal standard of beauty. But Darwin had studied biology, not marketing. By 1914, he might have changed his mind.”

Jones, 2011



COSMETIC INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT



2.1 Historical Context

The beauty and cosmetics industry we know and consume today evolved from local practices rooted in apothecary and perfumery and has grown to become one of the most profitable global consumer industries (Jones, 2011). The origins of cosmetic production occurred primarily in the home and medical contexts, where individuals mixed ingredients over stovetops or behind pharmaceutical counters. Cosmetic creation was defined by embodied knowledge and material familiarity that connected the makers directly to the ingredients used and their direct outcomes. It was non-traditional actors who defined the pre-industrial cosmetics industry, including “witches,” chemists, apothecaries, and artisans who crafted, traded, and sold scented oils, soaps, powders, and creams through small-scale, localized exchange networks. While cosmetic use is often considered aesthetic or symbolic nowadays, at the start it was primarily motivated by health and hygiene rather than beauty or attraction (Image 2).

Color cosmetics were not always widely accepted socially and took a long time to evolve into the various colors, textures, and shades we now use to express ourselves. Rendering oneself as presentable was originally associated with cleanliness, medical care, and

social acceptance, rather than trying to achieve visual perfection. Over time, cosmetic practices became further and further entangled with identity formation and personal evaluation, a shift that feminist scholars argue has contributed to intensified self-criticism, fluctuating levels self-esteem, and the normalization of aesthetic



image 2: advertisement for perfumed soap for the United States, 1897.

labor in everyday life (Elias, Gill, & Scharff, 2017; Wolf, 2002).

The industry grew steadily and expanded quickly. Cosmetic production really began to flourish alongside social and technological developments, shifting from a



Image 3 : 1930 Filling jars with Elmo Cucumber Cream

localized practice to a standardization of ingredients, formulation, and packing (Image 3) . Before the globalization of shared practices via advertisements and the internet, there was no global standard of what it meant to be beautiful (Jones, 2011). As cosmetic products were developed in different regions, people enhanced their appearances through

various cosmetic aids, hairstyles, and fashion choices, representing local aesthetics. It was industrialization that enabled the cosmetic market to scale into a global consumer industry focused on standardization, transforming cosmetics from a handmade or small-batch goods practice into reproducible products suitable for large-scale distribution (Jones, 2011). It was hygiene products such as soaps and creams which gained acceptance first, encouraged by associations with cleanliness, health, and wellbeing, while decorative or color cosmetics initially remained controversial due to links with deception, promiscuity, or theatricality (Image 4).



Image 4: 1928, heavy lined and mascara eye for a dramatic movie star look



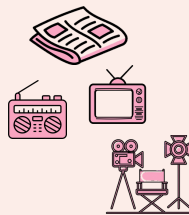
womens role in society changing



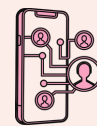
department stores



globalization of beauty markets



print media, radio, tv, film



globalization through digital media



Image 5 : Vintage Maybelline Ad



Image 6 : Max Factor Hollywood Ad

The interest in color cosmetics increased during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following World War I, the United States was home to the world's largest cosmetic market, bringing American brands to prominence in consumers' eyes. Taking control of one's appearance to become more attractive, alongside the social importance of smelling and looking "clean" became the Western norm and quickly spread to international markets and consumers (Jones 2011). And as women gained greater social and economic independence, cosmetic advertising increasingly emphasized choice, framing

beauty consumption as an expression of individual freedom in both purchasing decisions and visual self-expression. Advertising moved away from a strict focus on appearance and instead romanticized lifestyle, freedom, and choice. The driving concept for ads revolved around the idea that every woman had a responsibility to herself and to those around her, to be in control of her appearance, to be her beautiful, most successful self (Scott, 2005). The practice of putting on color cosmetics, once associated solely with stage performers and marginalized figures, became more normalized as women's roles in society shifted and became publicly visible, a practice which spread through mass media.



Image 7 : Max Factor demonstrating application techniques on Hollywood actress

Entrepreneurs such as François Coty, Helena Rubinstein, Elizabeth Arden, and Max Factor played a key role in branding cosmetics as tools for confidence, self-expression, and identity formation, expanding both the market for cosmetics and their social legitimacy. Max Factor, in particular, helped legitimize color cosmetics through his association with Hollywood and the development of "color harmony," which framed makeup as systematically tailored to individual features such as skin tone, hair, and eye color. By adopting the theatrical term "make-up" for everyday use, he contributed to a cultural shift that redefined colored cosmetics as a respectable practice associated with professionalism, beauty, and modern identity rather than impropriety (Jones, 2011).

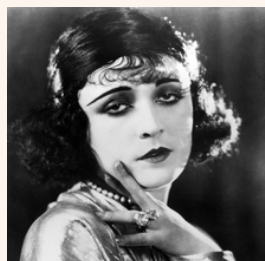


Image 8: Pola Negri wears very dark shadow for the stage

Technological developments, including print media, radio, cinema, and later television, accelerated the beauty industry's expansion by further legitimizing colored cosmetic use and widely diffusing beauty ideals. These digital infrastructures enabled Western norms of appearance to circulate globally, shaping aspirations and generating new markets for profit (Jones, 2011). As cosmetics

became mediated through advertising and celebrity culture, they increasingly shifted from participatory practices toward consumable symbols of identity, transitioning away from user-driven making toward passive consumption. Cosmetic advertising leading to cosmetic use was not a seamless integration. There was growing skepticism during the 1930s about the wastefulness and deceptiveness of advertising practices, alongside reports of cosmetic poisoning that prompted public concern and demands for regulatory oversight (Reichert, 2003). This kind of backlash marked a moment in which the beauty industry became institutionally recognized and formally regulated by the Government (Image 9).



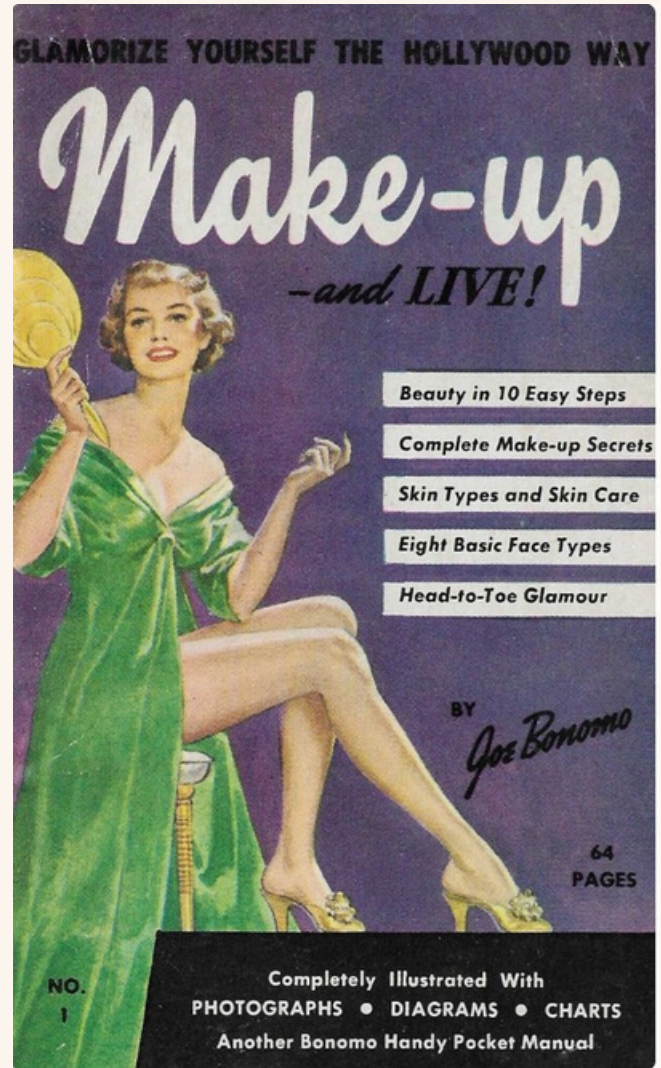
Image 9: 1938 Congress passed the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic (FD&C) Act, which expanded FDA's authority to regulate cosmetics.

At the same time, Western media and advertising infrastructures continued to standardize the use of beauty products by promoting aspirational lifestyles rather than material transparency, embedding cosmetic consumption into everyday routines across cultures while obscuring the industrial processes, ingredient formulation, and decision-making structures behind cosmetic production



Image 10: 1950 advertisement for Coty face powder

(Jones, 2011). Although these developments were initially framed as efforts to democratize beauty by making products, routines, and methods more widely accessible, the resulting centralization and exclusivity associated with production and branding ultimately created an epistemic distinction between those who produce cosmetic goods and those who consume them, creating the growing distance between users and the material literacy of cosmetic-making.



"Glamorize Yourself the Hollywood Way...Make-up-and LIVE!" 1953 beauty tip booklet



Max Factor Hollywood Ad



"1940 The New Art of Make-Up" booklet - Max Factor

for your **EYES**
Brilliance ~ Expression ~ Charm

Sparking brilliance when your eyes are open—soft, shadowy, inviting depths when they are partially closed—meaningful expression as your changing mood dictates—irresistible charm at all times! These attributes of alluring beauty are very easy to acquire. You need only frame your eyes in a beautiful fringe of dark, naturally long appearing lashes—and then you can do INSTANTLY with a touch of Maybelline. Millions of women have used them for years. Try this easy-to-use, harmless preparation. You will be most delighted.

Sold at Waterproof Liquid Mapheline—Black or Brown—7x at All Talc Cosmetics Counters
MAYBELLINE CO., CHICAGO

Maybelline

1920s vintage advertisement from Maybelline.

Touche of Loveliness
by **VIVAUDOU**

FOR that priceless comfort... for that delicate knowledge of perfect grooming throughout the day—like a blooming-scented shower of Vivaudou Mince Talcum. This fine Italian talc—pure—deodorant—pleasantly fragrant—keeps you feeling and looking amazingly fresh, the world's longest lasting talcum—because it is the world's finest!

VIVAUDOU

“Touche of Loveliness by Vivaudou” -1920s advertisement

Try **Maybelline Eye Shadow**

Dark, beautiful shades are essential to feminine beauty and Maybelline Eye Shadow is the choice of millions of women who desire the most perfect eye makeup. The perfect eye makeup is achieved only with Maybelline Eye Shadow. It is the only eye shadow that is so perfectly adapted to the eye. It is the only eye shadow that is so perfectly adapted to the eye. It is the only eye shadow that is so perfectly adapted to the eye.

Maybelline

“Try Maybelline Eye Shadow”. 1920s makeup ad

She has her **POWDER** made to order

and on her lips—**POND'S "LIPS"**—that stays on much longer

POND'S FACE POWDER
POND'S LIPSTICK

1940s vintage ad: Pond's face powder and lipstick.

NOW FASHION SAYS: "BE FEMININE"

POND'S answers with 4 soft **SUMMER SHADES**

1939 Pond's Ad: "Now Fashion Says: 'Be Feminine'".

SEE WHAT A DIFFERENCE **MAYBELLINE** MAKES

Vintage Maybelline Ad

Soprano over the Atlantic

1944 DuBarry advertisement.

AVON cosmetics

Gifts your friends will love

1954 Angel Face by Pond's

MODERN SCREEN

"It's THIS NEW MAKE-UP that is Hollywood's Secret of Attraction"


Max Factor Hollywood

1930s

Today's #1 make-up—in two glorious Summer shades!

Angel Face by POND'S

1954 Angel Face by Pond's



2.1 The Widening Gap

The industrial era provided the technological and organizational means necessary for large-scale beauty production, shifting the practice of making cosmetics from localized, homemade products to factory-based mass production. This transformation fundamentally restructured the relationship between cosmetic producers and users. Historically, cosmetic making relied on locally sourced ingredients, embodied knowledge, and iterative experimentation, creating transparent relationships between makers, materials, and users. As production became increasingly automated, industrialized, and geographically distant, consumers gained convenient access to beauty products while simultaneously losing visibility into their ingredients, formulations, production processes, and wider consequences. Branding increasingly outshone material literacy, encouraging identification with symbolic portrayals of lifestyle rather than engagement with the materials, processes, and outcomes behind cosmetic products (Jones, 2010).

As users' relationships with cosmetics have evolved alongside rapid technological and industrial developments, they have become increasingly detached from the products they use—both physically and metaphorically. These shifts have created two interconnected gaps between consumers and cosmetic production.

The Physical Gap:

The physical gap refers to the relocation of cosmetic production from homes, local communities, and small-scale makers to centralized factories and global supply chains. With the rise of industrialized manufacturing, cosmetic production has moved away from self-making and toward specialized facilities, physically separating consumers from the places where products are formulated and produced.

The Metaphorical Gap:

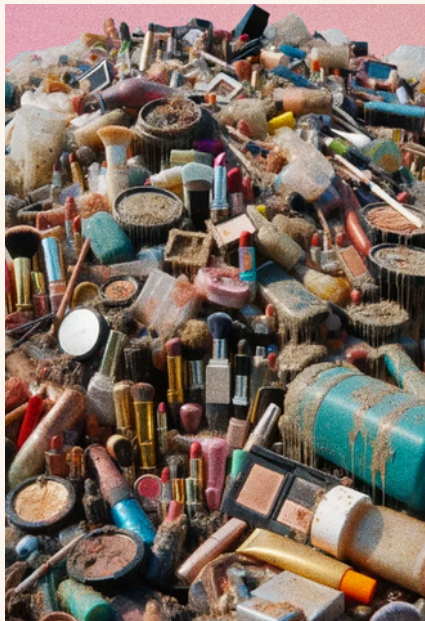
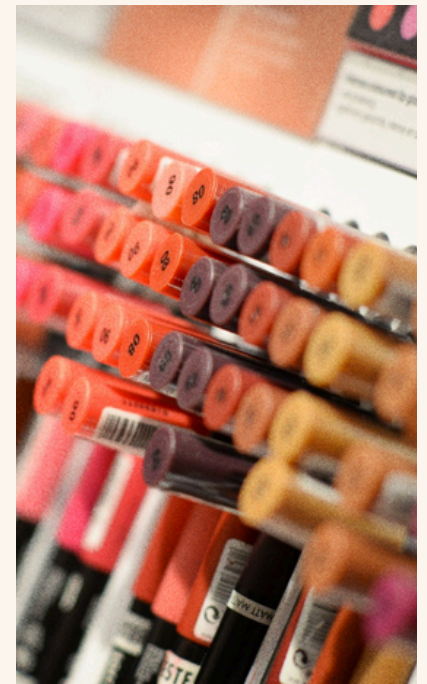
The metaphorical gap describes the growing loss of knowledge, understanding, and agency surrounding cosmetic production. As beauty products have become increasingly industrialized and readily available, consumers have become less familiar with the ingredients, formulations, and processes behind them, leaving many disconnected from how their products are made, what they contain, and the impacts they create.

Together, this industrialized system of mass production, distribution, and consumption has widened both the physical and metaphorical gaps between producers and consumers, leaving many users unaware of where cosmetic products come from, how they are made, and what they are made of.

2.2 SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

This separation has created significant social consequences. Putting blind trust in the industry has diminished our control as users and has eroded our inherent creative capabilities. When users no longer participate in making, they first lose control over production decisions, and what follows is a loss of agency and confidence in their own creative and technical capabilities. Hoftijzer (2024) describes this phenomenon as an “industrially induced bifurcation” between design and use, in which consumers are positioned at the endpoints of the system rather than being considered active participants. This outlook corrupts users’ sense of responsibility toward products and contributes to a broader cultural trend of detachment and disposability.

Now more than ever, consumers demand a wide range of shades, formulas, and functions across product categories. The cosmetics industry increasingly responds to social movements around diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, yet the response continues to be the production of more packaging. Understandably, makeup is deeply personal— skin tones vary, skin types differ, and bodies require different formulations and functions. As a result, requests for greater shade ranges, product personalization, and functional specificity are necessary and socially progressive responses to historical exclusion within the beauty industry (Jones, 2011). However, these socially driven requirements place additional strain on existing industrial systems.



2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Expanding product variations within a mass-production model typically results in stock accumulation, short product lifecycles, and large packaging volumes. As a result, a tension emerges between social responsibility and environmental burden. While efforts toward inclusivity and representation are essential, they are often pursued through strategies that accumulate excessive plastic waste. The current dynamic between industrial production and consumer demand has led to an unsustainable pattern in which cosmetic consumption far exceeds actual use, resulting in direct consequences for both people and the environment.

Single-use plastic is one of the industry’s most significant environmental burdens, as its use is continuously supported by infrastructure that offers limited plans for reuse, recycling, or disposal and involves layers of ingredient and functional complexity driven by aesthetic outcomes (Bom et al., 2019; Rocca et al., 2022). As a result, cosmetic consumption frequently exceeds actual use, leading to overproduction, premature disposal/replacement, and resource inefficiency (Rocca et al., 2022). Without greater awareness or education, change is unlikely.

2.3 ETHICAL IMBALANCE

From an ethical perspective, overconsumption in the cosmetics industry emerges from a broader cultural shift away from attentiveness, maintenance, and participatory practices, reinforced by structural imbalances in power and access to knowledge. Consumers are increasingly urged to act responsibly and make “conscious” purchasing decisions, yet lack meaningful access to the knowledge needed to understand ingredients, production processes, or environmental consequences (Rocca et al., 2022). An understanding of “aesthetic labor” helps clarify why ethical responsibility in cosmetic consumption is disproportionately placed on individuals rather than on industry structures.

Aesthetic labor alludes to the idea that maintaining an “acceptable” appearance requires continuous, often invisible work that is framed as personal self-care rather than as socially enforced labor (Elias, Gill, & Scharff, 2017). Within this framing, cosmetics function as tools that provoke ongoing self-evaluation and bodily maintenance, normalizing habitual consumption as an individual choice rather than as a structurally produced behavior. This helps explain why buying into cosmetic systems that prioritize novelty, speed, and trend alignment continues to displace practices of true self-care that depend on time, material familiarity, and sustained interaction, allowing overconsumption to persist without meaningful agency or transparency.





Potential of DIY

INGREDIENT TRANSPARENCY · TACTILE MAKING SKILLS · CREATIVE FREEDOM

Design-for-DIY offers an ethical intervention by redistributing knowledge and agency rather than simply offering alternative purchasing options. By enabling users to participate directly in the making of cosmetics, DIY practices can help shift the relationship from ownership to authorship, reconnecting consumers with the materials, processes, and decisions behind the products they use while re-centering care, transparency, and responsibility within production itself (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011). Hoftijzer and Keyson (2023) argue that designers have a responsibility to facilitate such participation by creating systems that enable clear, accessible, and safe involvement for laypersons. To work toward closing the physical and metaphorical gaps between producers and consumers, designers must move beyond reinforcing passive consumption of beauty and instead empower users to engage in cosmetic making, drawing on their natural desires for creativity, autonomy, and participation.

3 Theoretical Framework

BEING A PROSUMER

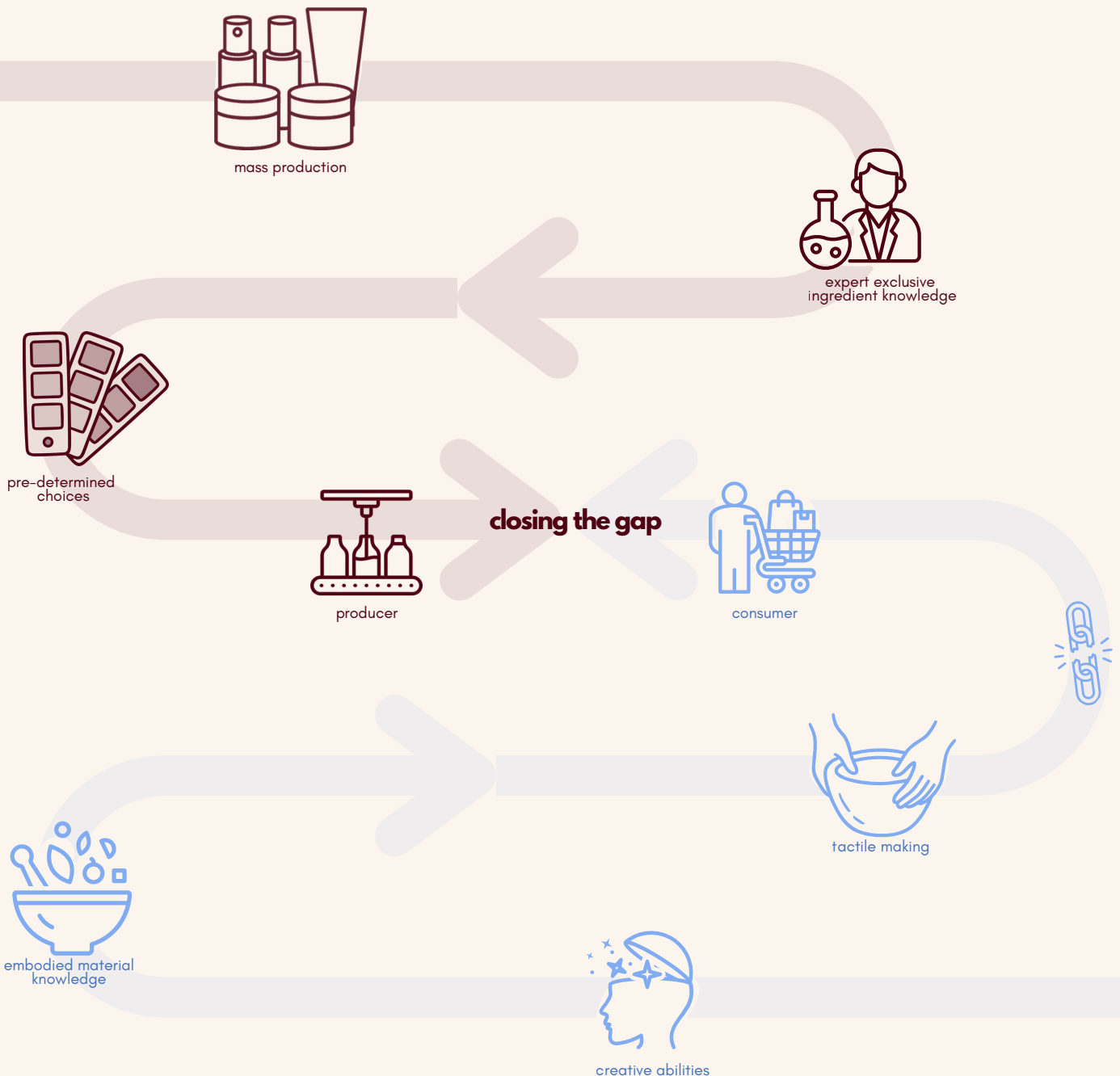
HOW COMPANIES ARE ACTING

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

MOVEMENT TOWARD "GREEN" / "CLEAN" BEAUTY

SOCIAL MEDIA & ACCESS TO WIDESPREAD INFORMATION

EVALUATING CORE NEEDS, VALUES, DESIRES



3.1 Being a PROsumer

The social, environmental, and ethical shifts reveal that the widening gap in the cosmetics industry is not only about overconsumption but also about the limited position individuals carry within the production system. Research on productive DIY consumption in cosmetics shows that this separation is not inherent to any specific product category, but rather the outcome of industrial and market-driven design choices that prioritize efficiency and scalability over user participation (Morais et al., 2018). As cosmetic-making became centralized, standardized, and branded, users became end-consumers rather than knowledgeable participants in the creation, maintenance, and evolution of products (Jones, 2011). Users are simply expected to purchase, use, and dispose of completed products, while production remains a distant, unclear, and professionally controlled concept (Marchowska-Raza, 2018). This fixed position has diminished users' agency, material literacy, and capacity to act responsibly at the point of purchase and throughout the product's end-of-life. The distance between production and consumption stands in direct contrast to the historical foundation of cosmetic-making. To examine how this gap might be addressed, this research turns to the concept of the "prosumer" (Toffler, 1980), shown in Figure 2, as a repositioning of the consumer to rethink and begin to merge the relationship between production and consumption in the cosmetics industry by reintegrating embodied knowledge, material literacy, and care into contemporary cosmetic practices (Hoftijzer, 2024).

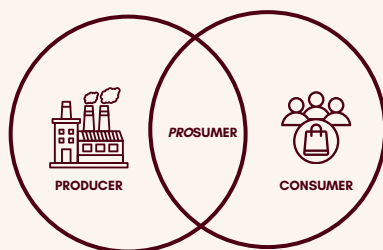


Figure 2 : Visualization of the role of the Prosumer

Being a prosumer entails bringing the practices of making and the habits of consuming into a single viewpoint. In design and making cultures that exist within consumption cycles, the prosumer is defined not just as a consumer who customizes or personalizes products. A prosumer is an active participant in processes of making, altering, and maintaining goods in relation to personal needs and contextual conditions. Prosumption, therefore, requires a deeper integration of production and material knowledge that can be brought into everyday use. This reframing of the consumer as the prosumer begins to close the gap by blurring the boundaries between the roles of the designer, the manufacturer, and the consumer (Hoftijzer, 2024). Rather than treating products as fixed outcomes or end results, prosumers view them as evolving systems they can influence.

The distinction between the passive consumer and the active participant is not just behavioral, but epistemic. Passive consumption is defined by a linear model in which products are designed, formulated, and branded prior to purchase, leaving users to engage only at the points of selection, use, and disposal. Knowledge about ingredients, formulation, and environmental impact remains largely inaccessible, an issue widely documented in sustainability analyses of the cosmetics industry (Bom et al., 2019; Rocca et al., 2022). By contrast, being an active participant (prosumer) means intentional decision-making, increased understanding of materials, and ongoing involvement with a product throughout its lifecycle. Prosumption requires this access to knowledge and the ability to act upon it.

Early cosmetic practices were fundamentally prosumer-based. Products were made by apothecaries, domestic practitioners, artisanal perfumers, and informal self-makers, often in the home or local community. Cosmetic products were locally produced and circulated transparently, so users understood the ingredients they contained, the limitations of their formulations, and the maintenance required to keep the products functional and safe. Because products were made in smaller batches more often, waste was also minimized, and excess was avoided.

It was the labor involved in making that created increased attachment, care, and responsibility, reinforcing the values found in more recent sustainable consumption patterns (Jones, 2011 & Norton et al., 2012). Design research on DIY systems further emphasizes that such involvement in processes does not depend only on technical expertise but also on access to understandable tools, methods, and materials that support meaningful engagement throughout the making process (Hoftijzer & Keyson, 2023). Findings from consumer psychology support this relationship between making and increased value. Norton, Mochoy, and Ariely (2012) demonstrate through the "IKEA effect" that individuals place significantly higher value on products they have partially or fully made themselves, even when those products are seemingly identical or slightly inferior to professionally produced alternatives. This increased value is associated not just with customization but also with the time and effort invested and the successful completion of tasks.

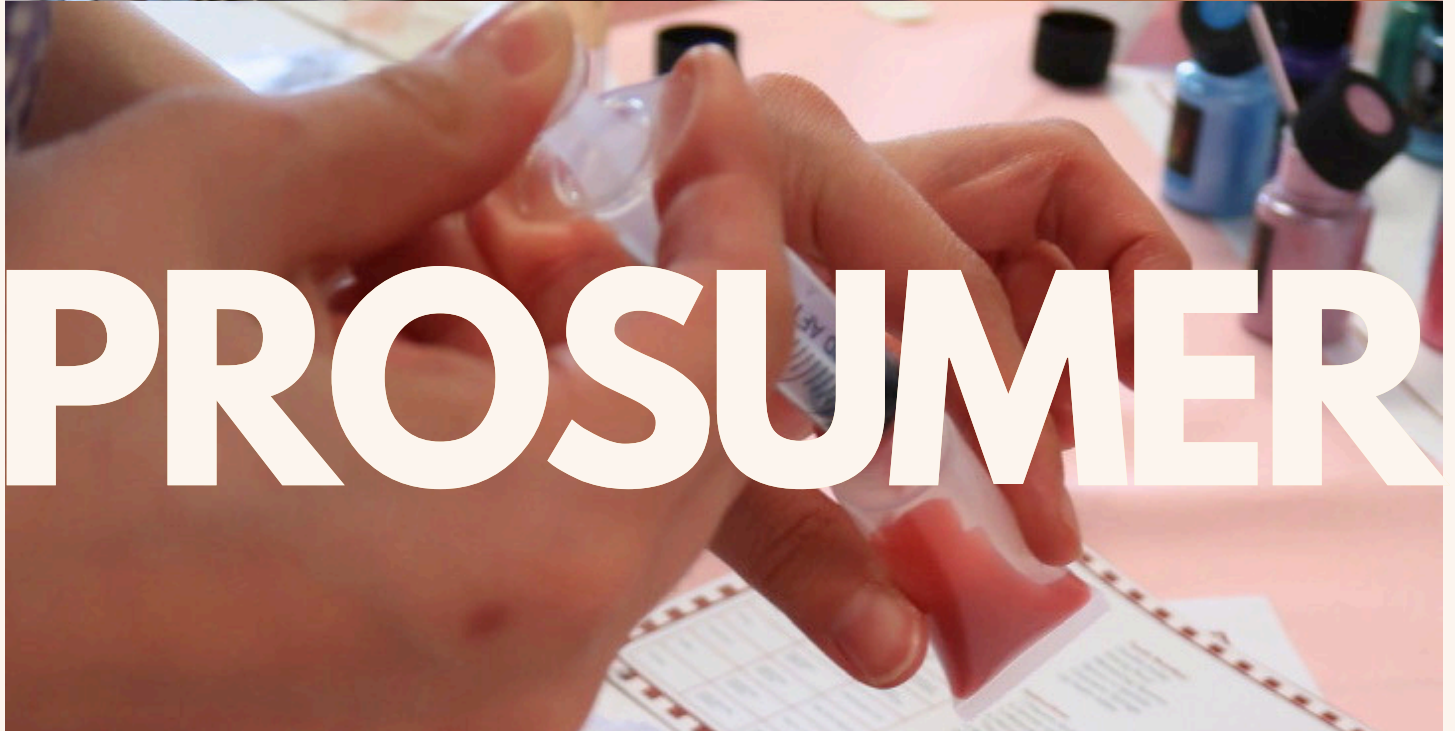
These findings suggest that participatory making increases competence, ownership, and responsibility. Yet it's not only about participatory engagement but also about exercising creativity, a historically defined innate human need and a desire not just to consume but to contribute (Sanders, 2006; Regan, 2006). These key characteristics that define the creative nature of prosumer engagement, when applied to cosmetics, have the opportunity to strengthen attachment, reduce product lifecycles, and encourage more mindful and sustainable patterns of production and use (Ehrenfeld, 2008 & Norton et al., 2012).



BECOME A



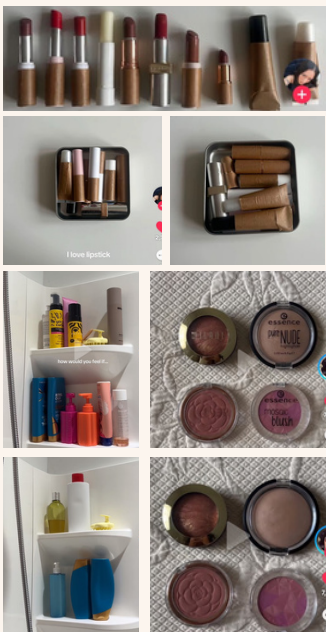
BEAUTY



PROSUMER

CONSUMER-LED DIY BEAUTY TRENDS

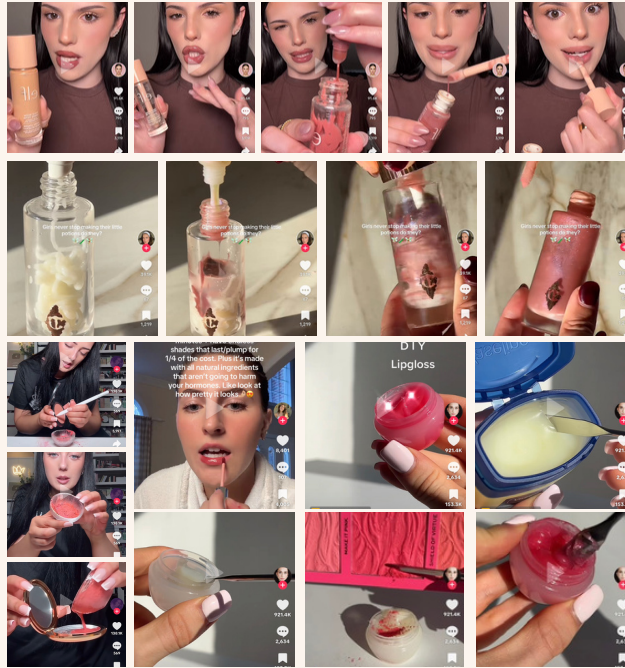
Bottom up DIY trends in beauty & what they mean for the future of DIY cosmetics



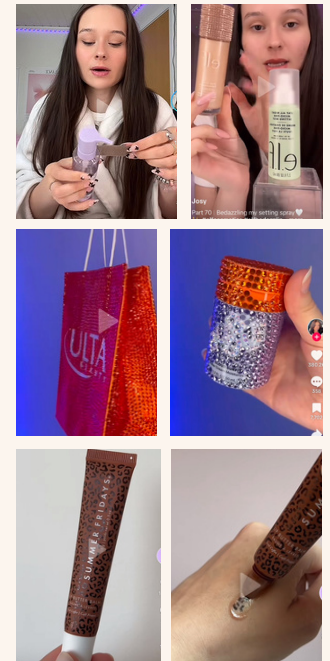
Visual Decluttering

Users are removing labels and reducing visual clutter as a response to beauty overwhelm, buyer fatigue, and an increasingly saturated market. This reflects a desire for simpler, more intentional relationships with beauty products beyond branding and trends.

Formula Customization & Mixing



Users are actively modifying existing products by mixing shades, ingredients, and textures to better suit their preferences. This demonstrates a desire for greater control over formulation and performance, indicating that future DIY cosmetics may move beyond personalization toward true user participation in product creation.

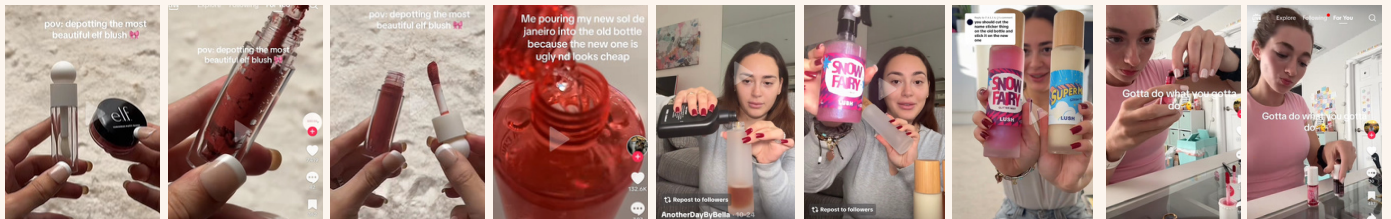


Aesthetic Customization

Users are decorating beauty products with gems and custom finishes to reflect their personal style. This highlights a growing desire for self-expression, creative authorship, and stronger aesthetic alignment with beauty products.

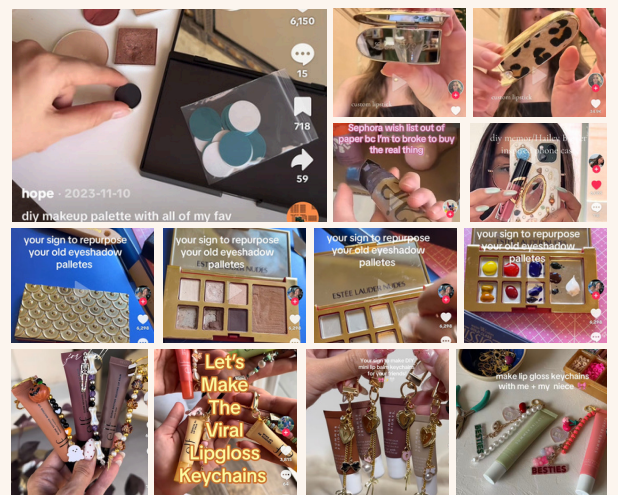
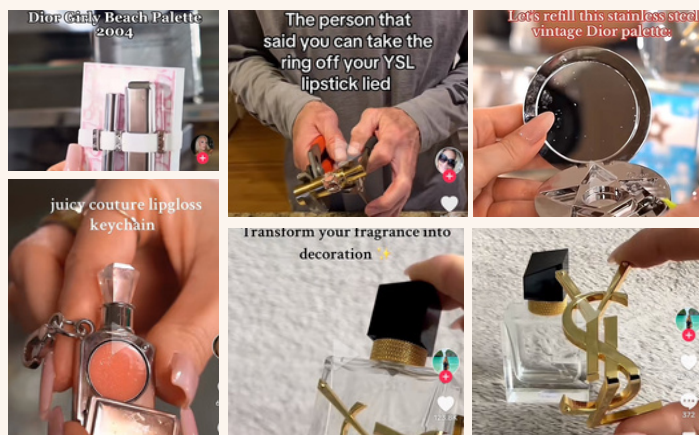
Re-packaging

Users are transferring products into alternative containers that better suit their routines, functional needs, and aesthetic preferences. This highlights demand for more flexible, refillable, and user-centered packaging systems.



Sourcing + filling designer products

Users are decorating beauty products with gems and custom finishes to reflect their personal style. This highlights a growing desire for self-expression, creative authorship, and stronger aesthetic alignment with beauty products.



Inspiring DIYs

Social media is encouraging hands-on beauty creation through customization, decoration, and repurposing. These practices reveal a growing interest in participation, self-expression, and learning through making.

3.1.1 Existing Prosumption

This trend analysis showcases the prosumption practices that already exist within the contemporary beauty industry, demonstrating how consumers are already moving beyond passive consumption toward active participation. Across social media platforms, users are repackaging products, mixing formulas, decorating packaging, transferring products into reusable containers, and creating their own beauty accessories.

While these practices may appear as isolated trends, the collective behavior and values they reveal indicate a broader shift in consumer expectations. Rather than accepting products as fixed and complete, users are adapting, modifying, and extending their life to better reflect their personal preferences, routines, and identities (Morais et al., 2024). From the perspective of creative trend research, these practices can be understood as “weak signals” and early manifestations of changing behaviors that, when observed collectively across media and material culture, reveal emerging directions for future innovation (Simonse, 2024).

These behaviors suggest that consumers increasingly value participation alongside consumption. Rather than viewing cosmetics solely as finished commodities, users are beginning to treat them as creative materials that can be altered, personalized, and authored by themselves. This reflects broader developments within DIY and prosumption research, where making becomes a form of self-expression, skill development, and personal authorship rather than simply an alternative mode of production (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011; Hoftijzer, 2024). DIY practices have been described as a convergence of production and consumption (prosumption) that reconnects users with the objects they create, fostering greater involvement, attachment, and meaning than passive consumption alone (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011).

While these practices are an area of opportunity, they also expose limitations within the current beauty landscape. Much of this bottom-up, consumer-led experimentation relies on fragmented knowledge exchanged through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and online communities, where learning occurs through peer-to-peer interaction rather than formal education. While these platforms have in many ways democratized access to cosmetic knowledge and encouraged participation, they often lack the structure, credibility, and embodied learning necessary to develop a deeper understanding of ingredients, formulation, safety, and production processes (Marchowska-Raza & Rowley, 2024). Many forms of customization remain possible only after purchase, requiring users to modify finished products rather than actively participate in their creation.

Collectively, these insights into emerging practices provide an important foundation for the future development of DIY cosmetics. The seemingly temporary social media “micro-trends”, begin to signal changing expectations of what beauty products can and should offer. Simonse (2024) argues that creative trend research relies on synthesizing multiple visual and behavioral observations into recognizable patterns that indicate future value, rather than interpreting individual examples. In this sense, the recurring appearance of ingredient customization, repackaging, embellishment, and collaborative beauty-making across platforms points toward a broader movement favoring participation, personalization, and creative agency within the beauty industry.

Research on productive consumption similarly shows that communities built around DIY practices not only resist the current beauty markets but actively influence and reshape them by legitimizing new behaviors, sharing knowledge, and creating alternative forms of value (Morais et al., 2024; Kjeldgaard et al., 2017). From a design perspective, these developments suggest that the future of DIY cosmetics shouldn't remain surface-level by providing more options or customizable products, but should be centered around designing systems that facilitate creation itself. As Hoftijzer (2024) states, contemporary DIY should be understood as a means of reducing the separation between production and consumption by equipping people with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to become active participants in creation rather than passive consumers of finished products. The current wave of user-led beauty practices therefore represents an early indication of a broader transition toward more participatory, widespread, and user-led forms of cosmetic production.

These bottom-up practices reveal an emerging desire for greater participation and prompt an important question: how is the beauty industry responding currently? As consumer expectations shift toward personalization, transparency, and creative agency, cosmetic brands have begun introducing new products and services intended to engage users more actively in sustainability and product use. However, although the initiatives acknowledge changing consumer values, they largely remain within predetermined industrial systems with conventional producer-consumer relationships, offering participation primarily after production rather than within it.



Image 11 : Hema Refillable Products

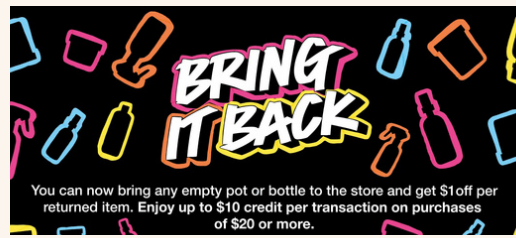


Image 14 : Lush Bring it Back model



Image 12 : E.L.F. Lip Balm Kit



Image 13 : Tarte key chain Mascara

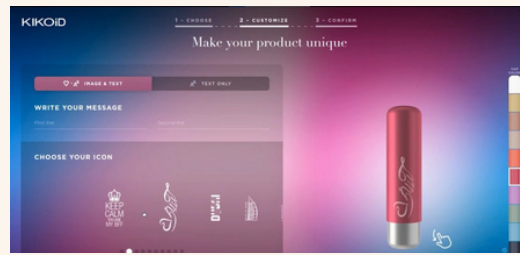


Image 15 : Kiko Milano Lip Stick/Glass Engraving



3.2 How Companies are Acting

In response to growing consumer demand for personalization, sustainability, and more meaningful engagement with beauty products, cosmetic companies have begun introducing strategies that invite users to participate within defined boundaries. Brands have moved beyond positioning cosmetics solely as finished products and increasingly offer refill systems, limited customization services, decorative accessories, and DIY-inspired kits that encourage consumers to interact with products beyond a static purchase. Examples include refillable lipstick cartridges and compacts, engraving services, interchangeable packaging accessories, decorative charms, and pre-portioned, pre-formulated lip balm kits that simulate the experience of making while remaining within the boundaries of a branded ecosystem (Images 11-15).

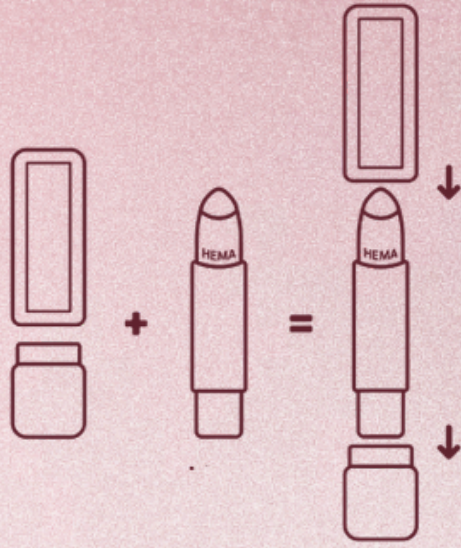
These initiatives suggest a shift in the industry's understanding of value. Rather than competing exclusively through product performance, companies increasingly recognize that consumers seek products that reflect personal identity, creativity, and individual lifestyles. However, this participation remains largely curated by the brand. Consumers may personalize packaging, select from predetermined colors or components, or refill an existing container, yet formulation, ingredients, manufacturing processes, and production decisions remain centralized. Participation, therefore, becomes an extension of consumption rather than a redistribution of agency, in which users are invited to customize products but not to author them.

Refillable packaging represents one of the most prominent examples of this shift, emerging as a key sustainability intervention in response to growing concerns surrounding cosmetic waste (Gatt & Refalo, 2022; Rocca et al., 2022). Compared to rigid single-use packaging, refill systems can reduce material consumption and transportation impacts, and studies

show that many consumers associate refillable cosmetics with lower environmental impact, particularly among women and more highly educated consumers (Barreto et al., 2025). While these initiatives encourage repeat use, user participation remains largely confined to post-purchase activities such as refilling, cleaning, and returning packaging.

Even with refill systems, consumer adoption remains limited in practice. Research identifies hygiene concerns, limited refill infrastructure, the additional time and effort required, and dependence on specific retail locations as significant barriers to continued use (Ngo Linh, 2021; Barreto et al., 2025). Additionally, refill systems often continue to rely on multilayer or composite materials that complicate recycling and remain dependent on centralized production infrastructure (Bom et al., 2019; Rocca et al., 2022). Responsibility, therefore, continues to be placed on consumers, who are expected to make more environmentally responsible purchasing and disposal decisions without fundamentally changing how cosmetics are designed or produced. As Rocca et al. (2022) argue, sustainability is consequently framed as the outcome of individual consumer behavior rather than systemic transformation.

While these initiatives undoubtedly represent progress compared to conventional single-use cosmetic systems, they largely reinforce existing producer-consumer relationships. They acknowledge growing consumer demand for personalization, participation, and sustainability, yet continue to position users as participants within company-defined systems rather than as active contributors to the creation of cosmetics. As a result, opportunities remain for design approaches that move beyond post-production customization toward participation in the act of production itself, enabling consumers to engage more directly with the knowledge, materials, and decision-making processes that shape cosmetic products, shifting their role from product owners to product authors.



3.3 Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Research on sustainable consumer behavior consistently shows that positive environmental attitudes/intention do not necessarily translate into sustainable purchasing or usage practices. This intention vs action discrepancy is commonly referred to as the “attitude-behavior gap”, which describes the difference between what consumers say they value and how they actually behave when given a choice (Bom et al., 2019 & Rocca et al., 2022). In the cosmetics sector, this gap in user behavior is very relevant because beauty consumption is entangled in routine, emotional regulation, and identity construction. A large-scale study examining consumer attitudes toward refillable and reusable packaging across 22 product categories provides clear evidence of this attitude-behavior gap in personal care and beauty products. Cosmetics and body products were among the categories with the largest total gaps, indicating that stated environmental concern does not reliably translate into sustained refill behaviors in beauty contexts. Even highly environmentally conscious consumers do not consistently maintain eco-conscious behaviors when sustainable alternatives require additional effort, time, or learning (Lakhan, 2025; Rocca et al., 2022). As a result, behavioral change is difficult to sustain, even when awareness and intention are high.

Habitual behavior and the “law of least effort” strongly shape unsustainable consumption patterns (Zdonek & Jaworska, 2024). Studies of sustainable consumption emphasize that habits formed through repetition and emotional reinforcement are resistant to change, particularly when alternatives introduce friction or uncertainty (Bom et al., 2019). In cosmetic practice, routines can provide a sense of reliability and control, which naturally discourages experimentation with unfamiliar products or systems, even if those products or systems are more sustainable.

Beyond just habit, cosmetic consumption is strongly shaped by emotional and identity-driven motivations.

Cosmetics, therefore, function as tools for self-expression, confidence-building, and a sense of control, which can complicate and override sustainability messaging. Consumers tend to prioritize perceived personal or social benefits over abstract environmental outcomes (Elias, Gill, & Scharff, 2017). Trend-driven novelty creates this dynamic between the user and the product, as frequent product launches encourage experimentation and the creation of new forms of self-expression. The trend-focused offerings contradict the goals of longevity and reduced consumption (Jones, 2011). Habit, emotion, and identity help explain why sustainability initiatives that rely solely on providing information or appealing to morals often fail to produce lasting behavioral change.

In the cosmetics industry, sustainability is typically framed as a choice between a more sustainable and a less sustainable product rather than as a call to restructure practices. Unsustainable cosmetic purchasing is not driven by ignorance or lack of concern, but by systemic friction that exists within industry structures (Hoftijzer, 2024). Even though consumers express a desire for sustainable options, they encounter barriers related to accessibility, time, cost, hygiene concerns, and compatibility with established routines (Rocca et al., 2022 & Ngo Linh, 2021). Consumers are encouraged to “choose better” products, such as those with recyclable packaging or clean formulations, within consumption systems that don’t support their intentions. This places uneven responsibility on users while distancing them from the systems that shape behavior and reinforce the attitude-behavior gap rather than addressing it. The gap between actionable environmental change and real behavior change is evident across broader patterns in sustainable consumption, where structural barriers continue to prevent well-intentioned users from acting consistently with their values (Rocca et al., 2022; Bom et al., 2019).





3.4 Movement Toward “Green” / “Clean” Beauty

The growing movement toward “green,” natural, and clean beauty reflects increasing consumer concern about the environmental, health, and ethical impacts of cosmetic products. Research shows that interest in sustainable cosmetics has risen alongside awareness of the environmental consequences of ingredient sourcing, packaging, and production processes, particularly in European and North American markets, where so-called “green consumers” actively seek products aligned with their environmental and social values (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015). There is demand from a segment willing to pay higher prices for products perceived as natural, ethically produced, and environmentally responsible, even if there are performance trade-offs (Amberg & Fogarassy, 2019).

The increasing desire for ingredient transparency drives this shift toward clean beauty. Consumers associate natural and organic ingredients with safety, reduced risk, and overall bodily wellbeing, especially with the personal nature of cosmetic use (Fonseca-Santos et al., 2015). Transparency also functions as a mechanism for trust and ethical credibility from brands (Royne et al., 2012). Regulatory analyses show that cosmetic products are not required to obtain mandatory pre-market safety approval by the FDA, placing responsibility on manufacturers and leaving consumers reliant on labeling and broad claims from the producers (U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2022).

This contributes directly to consumer demand for transparency. Studies note that when institutional safeguards are unclear or inconsistent, consumers seek alternative forms of reassurance, such as “clean” labels,

signs of ingredient exclusions, and natural/organic claims, as mechanisms for obtaining control and mitigating risk (Royne et al., 2012 & FDA, 2023). As a result, transparency becomes not only an environmental concern but a response to regulatory uncertainty and diminishing institutional trust.

This demand for ingredient transparency has clear historical parallels. Jones (2011) documents public resistance to early color cosmetics, which was largely met with suspicion because consumers lacked knowledge of ingredients, safety, and production processes. There were fears of ingredient toxicity, deception in advertising, and bodily reactions that led to backlash against cosmetics long before modern sustainability discourse emerged. Contemporary clean beauty desires mirror these earlier anxieties, indicating that ingredient transparency has long been a topic on which users seek knowledge and want greater control to gain reassurance about the products they use.

From a design perspective, these patterns suggest that demands for transparency are unmet desires for agency, understanding, and control rather than for information alone. Design-for-DIY and prosumer-oriented frameworks respond directly to this gap by shifting transparency from passive understanding toward active participation, enabling users to engage with ingredients, formulation, and functionality firsthand. DIY cosmetic-making can help to reframe transparency as a practice rather than a claim, offering a pathway to address ethical and environmental mistrust through shared knowledge and participatory production rather than consumption-based choice alone (Hoftijzer, 2024).

Cosmetic Symbols & Icons

How many do you know? 🙄🙄



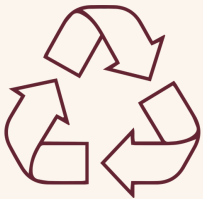
Green dot
shows that the brand contributes financially to packaging recovery and recycling programs



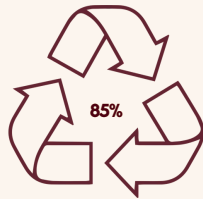
Hourglass
indicates that a product will last for X amount of months from the date of manufacture whether you open it or not



e symbol / Estimated sign
guarantees that the amount of product in the packaging matches the quantity listed on the label



Mobius loop
tells you that the packaging is recyclable or can enter a recycling stream in many locations



Mobius loop + %
percentage tells you how much of the packaging comes from recycled materials



Resin identification codes
help determine which polymer was used in the plastic, and thus allow recyclers to sort properly



Tidyman
a voluntary public reminder to dispose of the packaging responsibly and avoid littering



Further Information
look for a leaflet or printed insert inside the box. It may contain important details such as full ingredient lists, instructions for use, storage tips, or allergy guidance



Seedling logo
indicates that the packaging is industrially compostable according to European standard EN 134321



V-Mark
guarantees that a product is independently verified and certified as suitable for vegans or vegetarians. no animal-derived ingredients or byproducts were used in the item's production, and no animal testing was involved



V-Label International
an internationally recognized symbol found on packaging to certify that a product is either vegan or vegetarian. It guarantees that the item, and its production process, has been strictly verified to contain no animal-derived ingredients



Premium Body Care
contains no parabens, sodium lauryl sulfates, and over 400 other ingredients Whole Foods has deemed not up to par



“PAO” period after opening
tells you how long a product is good for once you open it



Leaping Bunny
brand does not conduct animal testing/ cruelty free symbol



Cruelty Free Bunny
brand is both cruelty free and fully vegan. no animal derived ingredients show up in the formulas.



Plastic in Product
indicates that the item contains plastic and should not be littered or flushed down the toilet



Flame symbol
warns that a product is highly flammable and must be kept away from candles, flames, cigarettes, and high heat



Forest Stewardship Council
verifies that the materials support sustainable forestry and protect animal habitats, indigenous rights, and workers' fair wages



EU's Cosmebio symbol
signifies that the product contains at least 95 percent natural ingredients and does not contain synthetic coloring, fragrances, preservatives, or petrochemical products, or genetically modified ingredients



COSMOS ORGANIC

COSMOS
stamp of approval from the Soil Association, confirming that the product has met the association's standards when it comes to organic products



COSMOS ORGANIC

Eco-cert
at least 95% of the product was manufactured using all natural ingredients



NSF symbol
the product is made with at least 70 percent organic ingredients



PARABEN FREE

Paraben Free
indicates that the product contains no parabens- synthetic chemicals long used as preservatives to prevent bacterial and mold growth. Used to assure consumers that they use alternative preservatives



GLUTEN FREE

Gluten free
signifies that a product is manufactured without gluten-containing ingredients like wheat, barley, or rye. It is a voluntary label assuring the product is safe from gluten cross-contamination.



SILICONE FREE

Silicone Free
means the formula does not contain synthetic silicones, such as dimethicone or cyclopentasiloxane. Brands use this to highlight "clean" or eco-conscious ingredient profiles

Social Media & Access to Widespread Information

Digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become central sites through which cosmetic knowledge is accessed, shared, and debated. These platforms function as forms of informal education, offering tutorials, product reviews, ingredient details, and DIY demonstrations that operate outside traditional institutional or corporate channels (Ferradino, 2017; Marchowska-Raza, 2018). Social media plays a unique role in the cosmetics industry, enabling peer-to-peer learning, in which users can share personal experiments rather than relying solely on brand messaging. At the same time, it is also a space for companies to share top-down information through well-known media figures, ensuring it reaches their audiences.

Development in mass media has significantly contributed to the globalization of beauty practices. Beauty routines, techniques, and aesthetic norms now circulate through user-generated content, allowing individuals to learn about products and practices beyond their local cultural contexts (Ferradino, 2017). As a result, access to cosmetic knowledge has become more democratized in many ways—users no longer require professional training or industry guidance to learn of new application techniques, formulation development, or alternative practices such as DIY. It is important to note that this visibility has positively increased awareness of making as a desirable practice. In contrast to mass media, which show consumption and usage as a linear, smooth pathway, the process leading up to final outcomes can instead be presented in a format that explains some successes and some failures.

Users who engage with this type of content on DIY cosmetics, ingredient breakdowns, and self-guided customization options are actively seeking to understand, modify, or recreate products rather than simply purchase them (Marchowska-Raza, 2018). This behavior aligns with prosumer logic, in which the boundary between producer and consumer becomes blurred through participation, experimentation, and shared knowledge (Hoftijzer, 2024). The rise of DIY cosmetic making, with varying levels of skill and involvement, reflects unmet needs for agency within the beauty industry.

However, social media-based learning comes with its limitations. Information on these platforms remains highly fragmented, inconsistent, and often lacks any kind of scientific grounding or safety oversight. Misinformation regarding ingredients, results, and formulation also spreads widely and quickly (Marchowska-Raza, 2018). While tutorials are a great form of media because of visual and procedural guidance, they cannot fully replace



embodied, material understanding gained through hands-on making. Watching and following a process does not always equate to developing embodied knowledge.

These limitations continue to highlight a persistent gap between access to information and meaningful participation. While social media lowers the barrier to entry into cosmetic knowledge, it often leaves users navigating complex pre-produced material systems without proper support, resulting in partial agency rather than full empowerment. As Ferradino (2017) notes in her analysis of YouTube beauty communities, participatory media can simultaneously create feelings of empowerment while reinforcing consumerist cycles. This is because learning remains embedded within product-driven ecosystems.

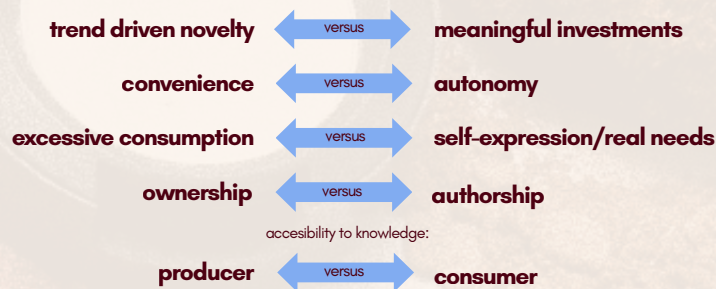
Although new tools and platforms, including desktop fabrication technologies (ex., 3D printing/ Cricut), DIY tutorials, and social media guidance, have sparked renewed interest in self-making, they still coexist alongside mass-market systems that continue to prioritize novelty, speed, and scale. This persistence underscores the need for intentional Design-for-DIY frameworks that help move beyond information sharing alone.

3.6

Evaluating core needs, values, desires

Across historical, industrial, behavioral, and media-based analyses, this research demonstrates a consistent shift in the cosmetics industry from participatory, knowledge-based practices toward standardized, intentionally complex, and consumption-driven systems (Jones, 2011). While this transformation has expanded accessibility, variety, and representation, it has also widened the gap between producers and users, positioning individuals primarily as consumers rather than as capable participants in the making, understanding, or maintenance of cosmetic products.

These findings together reveal the core human needs that remain insufficiently addressed, such as agency over ingredients and processes, trust in product safety and claims, transparency within complex production systems, and opportunities for self-expression and care that extend beyond surface-level consumption (Elias et al., 2017). These unmet user needs are reflected in the tensions that shape contemporary cosmetic consumption, including:

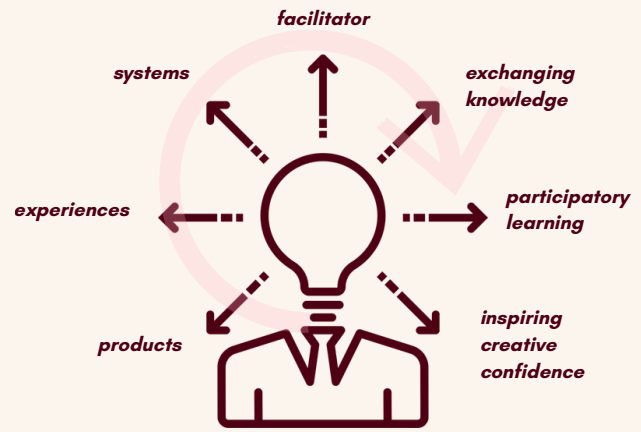


While social movements have rightly expanded inclusivity and personalization, these gains are often pursued through strategies that glorify overconsumption and produce waste rather than change practices. The existing system continues to reinforce the attitude-behavior gap in sustainability (Bom et al., 2019; Rocca et al., 2022).

It is evident that the core issue is not simply a lack of consumer concern but the limited role users have within existing production systems. The rise of clean beauty, DIY tutorials, and refill initiatives represents the desire to reconnect making and using, yet these efforts remain constrained by industry-dominated frameworks and limited access to knowledge. This research, therefore, argues that Design-for-DIY and prosumer-oriented frameworks are actionable responses, offering alternative pathways to reintroduce material literacy, embodied knowledge, and participatory agency. By shifting cosmetic practices from passive consumption toward active involvement, such approaches address environmental impact while restoring trust, autonomy, and creativity within everyday cosmetic use (Hoftijzer, 2024, Hoftijzer & Keyson, 2023).

4

Role as the “designer,”



“The responsibility for the relationship between industry and culture falls [...] on the shoulders of design.”

Design historian

Penny Sparke

(1987, p. 5)



The label/profession/role/responsibility of being a designer has evolved. At a precarious time like the present, it is important to reflect on the ways Western-oriented design has displaced those who have access to and the “ability” to design. In calling attention to sustainability, diversity, and inclusion, our assumptions about who is capable of creating become visible and contestable. It is therefore my responsibility, as someone in a designerly role, not only to create myself but also to facilitate more embodied making for others.

The beauty industry is heavily entangled with these issues of representation and is also an active contributor to unsustainable conditions in beauty, appearance, and the environment. This is one of the main reasons the sector interests me so much: there is immense room to grow, discover, and inspire new ways of approaching the wicked problem that is the beauty industry. I also believe in its capacity as a creative field to further inspire creativity and confidence in users, a potential that could be greatly strengthened through DIY.

It is difficult to think beyond normalized modes of production and consumption, but, as Hoftijzer (2024) emphasizes, designing and making products cannot remain limited by a “fixed solution space.” That observation is particularly relevant to the beauty industry, which often presents users with finished products and predetermined categories, leaving little room to imagine hybrid roles among consumer, maker, and designer.

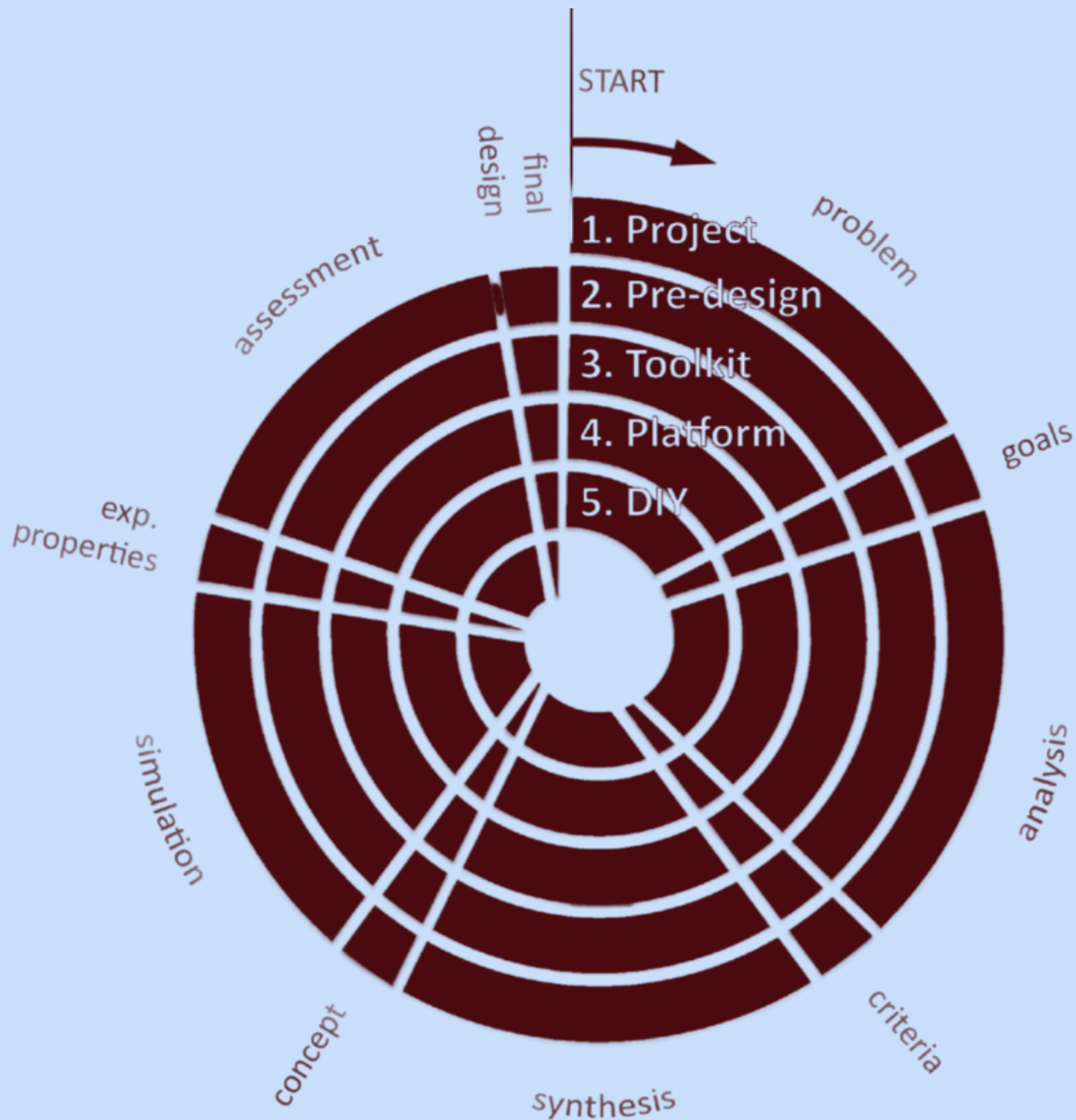
There is, of course, a wide spectrum of users to account for, and many of the characteristics of a final DIY cosmetic product

will be shaped by the user involved, including aesthetic choices, formulation preferences, and skill level. As the facilitating designer, I aim to act as a mediator: a role that curates and guides the interactions between laypersons and the tools, methods, and knowledge needed to achieve DIY cosmetic production. Hoftijzer (2024) explicitly argues for the designer’s role in reconnecting making and using by structuring support for laypersons through Design-for-DIY.

Traditionally, designers have often applied their work toward commercial success. However, the beauty industry requires much more than that idealized state; it requires designers to act as disruptive actors within the system. Design is increasingly being challenged to be more than the creation of things and instead to contribute to the wider socio-technical systems surrounding them (de Vere, 2023). Acting as a facilitating designer aligns with De Mul’s (2011) notion of the meta-designer, “shaping environments in which unskilled users can design their own objects” (p. 38), which is supported by Hoftijzer’s (2024) framework, making that role more concrete by detailing how supportive structures, platforms, and toolkits can be oriented to enable participatory making.

To be in the privileged position of a student who has the space to be critical, curious, and able to challenge current operating standards, this thesis project aims to represent the kind of voice I want to have in a dynamic industry that reaches far and wide and continues to shape future generations’ engagement with not only beauty, but also consumption and making culture.

5 Methodology & Methods



DESIGN RESEARCH
APPROACH

ADDRESSING THE
"GAP"

METHODS

5.1 Design Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative research-through-design approach to understand how designers can facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that increase user agency, transparency, and engagement. The study is conducted within the scope of contemporary cosmetic consumption, which (based on a combined historical analysis and theoretical perspective) continues to perpetuate the distancing between users and production processes, resulting in reduced knowledge of ingredients, manufacturing, and material literacy (Hoftijzer, 2024; Marchowska-Raza, 2023).

This research is guided by the Design-for-DIY framework developed by Hoftijzer, which provides a structured approach for how designers may facilitate DIY activities for non-experts. The framework was specifically created in response to the increasing alienation between people and the products they use, and it proposes a shift in the role of designers: from delivering finished products to enabling user participation (Hoftijzer, 2024).

The framework consists of five iterative design cycles:

- Project Cycle - defining scope, audience, and purpose
- Pre-Design Cycle - establishing constraints and design space
- Toolkit Cycle - developing tools, materials, and instructions
- Platform Cycle - designing the environment for engagement
- DIY Cycle - enabling user participation

These cycles intentionally operate as a spiral (Figure 3), representing an iterative process that integrates feedback loops, learning-by-doing, and continuous refinement (Hoftijzer, 2024). The historical analysis and existing theory together provide a contextual foundation for the design research by tracing the evolution of the beauty industry from embodied making practices to industrialized, globalized systems of production and consumption (Jones, 2011). Additionally, the theoretical perspective (section 4) brings to light academic perspectives on proscription, sustainability, aesthetic labor, and user behavior to better understand how these developments have influenced contemporary relationships between users and beauty products (Toffler, 1980; Elias et al., 2017; Wolf, 2002). The contextual research frames the current producer-consumer gap not as an isolated issue, but as the result of socio-technical transformations over time. DIY cosmetic-making is therefore suggested as a revival of earlier participatory practices adapted to present-day conditions.

5.2 Addressing the "Gap"

To address the identified gap(s), this research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining contextual inquiry through industry observation, qualitative data collection through interviews and workshops, and validation through reflection and co-creation embedded in the workshop. This combination allows for both in-depth exploration of user experiences and broader validation of emerging patterns across participants (Creswell, Plano, & Clark, 2018). Importantly, the research aims to identify opportunities and design directions rather than test a predefined solution. This aligns with research-through-design methodologies that prioritize exploration and knowledge generation through iterative making and reflection (Zimmerman, Forlizzi, & Evenson, 2007).

The framework is used as a structuring device for the conducted research, organizing and positioning data collection, linking insights to design opportunities, and ensuring that findings remain actionable for design outcomes. Through the triangulation of methods, the

research progresses from understanding to framing, to validating, and finally to designing. This progression is reflected in the methods applied- an observation at Cosmoprof enables an understanding of industry systems and production contexts, interviews with users and professionals help identify needs, barriers, and motivations, the reflection and co-creation moment within the workshop facilitates the generation of design directions which are

validated by user input and participation. These methods were informed by an initial research overview (see page 40) and a planning phase, which outlined key areas of inquiry, including deeper insight into the system-level supply chain processes, the practice level of patterns in user behavior, and the experiential level where opportunities for user engagement within cosmetic systems may arise (Figure 4).



Figure 3 : Steps of Design for DIY Framework
Hoftijzer 2024



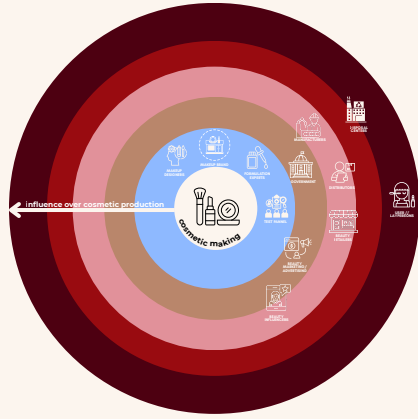
System level →
how the industry operates

Practice level → how products are designed, marketed, and used

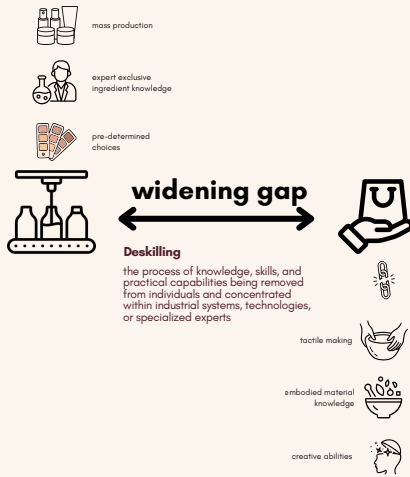
Experiential level → how users perceive and engage with beauty

Figure 4 : Current Cosmetic System- levels of inquiry

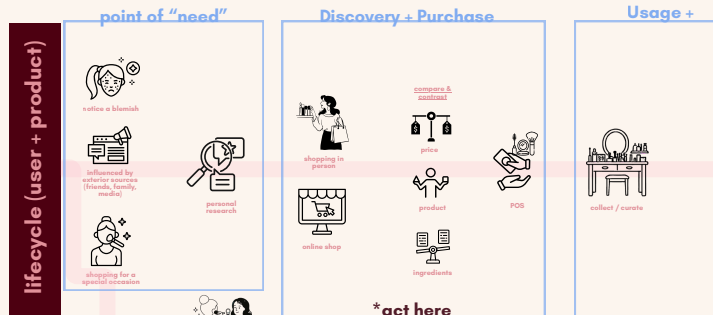
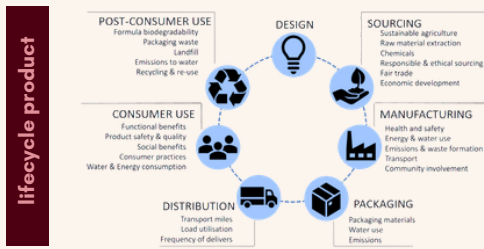
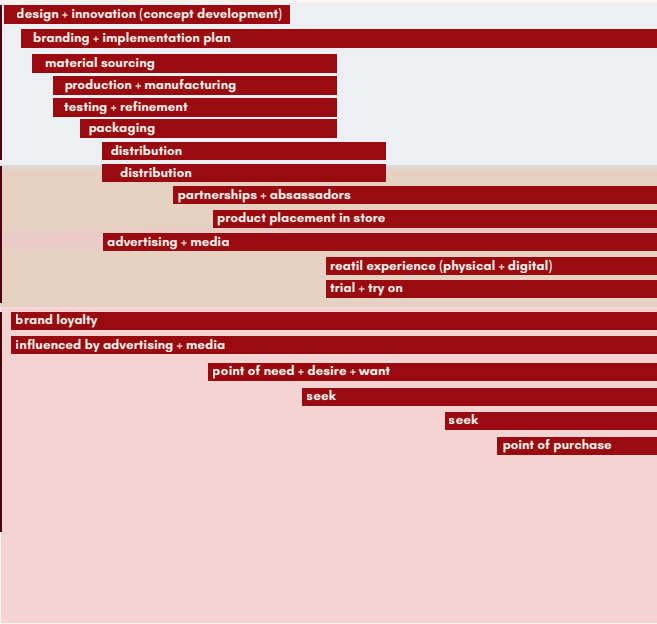
Systems Mapping



Users have the least amount of influence over the cosmetic products they ultimately use



widening gap
problem formation

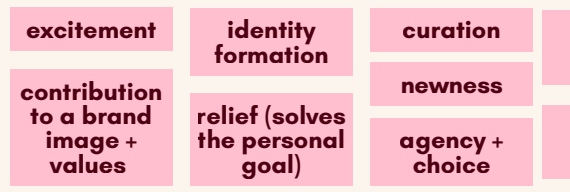


- Transform how users choose, evaluate, and consume makeup products.
- Shift users from passive purchasing toward more intentional product selection and use.
- Encourage more conscious engagement with cosmetic choices, ingredients, and consumption habits.
- Reframe makeup consumption from product acquisition to active participation and decision-making

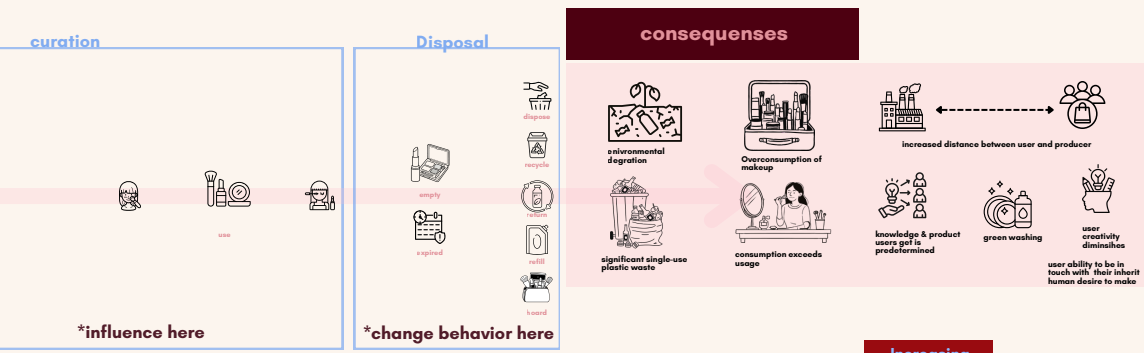
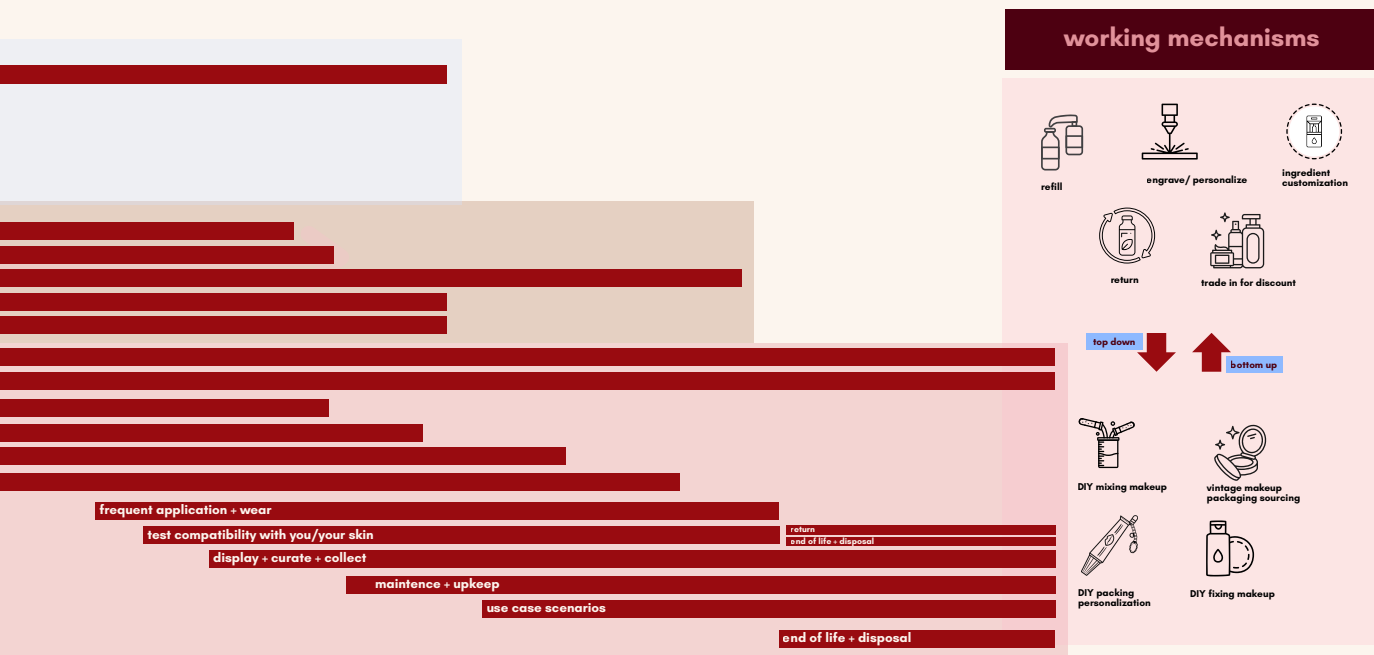


Maslow's hierarchy of needs

feelings associated



An initial systems mapping exercise was used as a framing tool to establish the context for the research. The map synthesized insights from the historical review, theoretical analysis, and observations of contemporary cosmetic consumption to visualize the broader cosmetics system and identify preliminary opportunities for intervention. These initial insights were then explored, tested, and refined through industry observation, semi-structured interviews, and participatory workshops, ensuring that the identified opportunities were grounded in both theory and user experience before informing the final design direction.

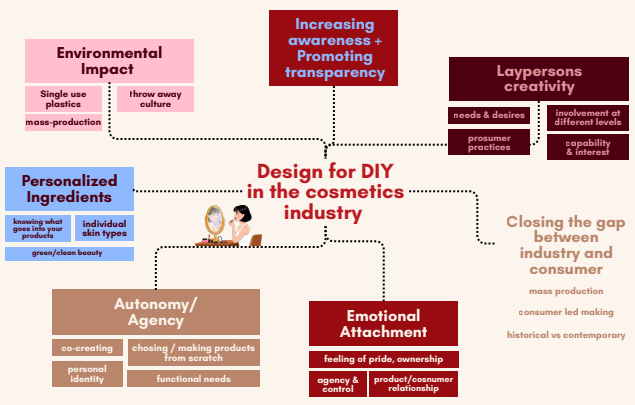


- More intentional consumption influences how users curate, value, and utilize their makeup collections
 - Greater awareness and authorship encourage users to build more purposeful and personalized beauty collections
 - By becoming more conscious consumers, users gain greater control over how they acquire, use, and maintain their products
 - Increased agency and knowledge shape more thoughtful curation, use, and retention of cosmetic products
- This creates opportunities for alternative end-of-life behaviors such as refilling, reusing, repurposing, and responsible disposal
 - Greater product awareness encourages users to consider reuse, refill, and circular alternatives at the end of a product's life
 - By extending responsibility beyond purchase and use, users are more likely to adopt sustainable end-of-life practices

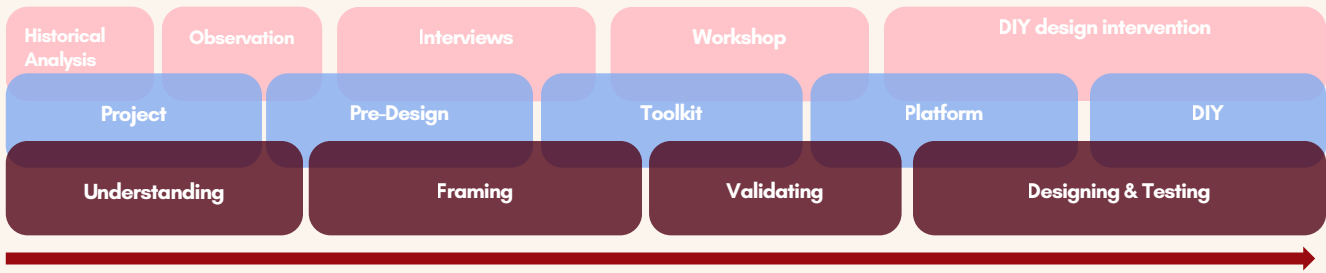
"perfect match"

something made for me

alignment with aesthetics/ other products/ needs



5.3 METHODS



Historical Analysis → discovering origins of behavior and intrigue
 Observation (Cosmoprof) → understanding industry systemically
 Interviews (users + professionals) → identifying needs, barriers, motivations
 Workshop (co-creation) → generating design directions



5.3.1 Historical Analysis

A combined historical analysis and theoretical review of the beauty and cosmetics industry was conducted by selecting and synthesizing sources focused on the historical development of the beauty industry, user-producer relationships, and the contemporary cosmetic landscape. The purpose was to learn from the past and follow the evolution of cosmetic production and consumption practices, while also engaging with academic perspectives on sustainable consumer behavior, presumption and user-product relationships. Together, these methods provide insight into how industrialization, globalization, and media infrastructures have contributed to the increasing

separation between producers and consumers, and the reduction of embodied knowledge in cosmetic-making practices.

This historical and literature review acts as a foundation for the Project Cycle of the Design-for-DIY framework (Hoftijzer, 2024) by analyzing the broader problem space and identifying interesting and relevant areas of intervention. By grounding the research in both historical and theoretical perspectives, this approach strengthens the connection among observed industry conditions, lived user experiences, and potential design interventions, as detailed through additional methods.



5.3.2 Observational Study

To understand the current structure of the cosmetics industry, including production processes, innovation trends, and user engagement strategies, a contextual observational study was conducted at Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna 2026. Cosmoprof is a renowned beauty trade show that has been operating for over 50 years and serves as a benchmark event for professionals across all sectors of the cosmetics industry. The event captures the full spectrum of cosmetic production, from ingredient sourcing and formulation to packaging, distribution, and the final product. Operating in a business-to-business (B2B) model, Cosmoprof creates a globally interconnected network that supports companies and stakeholders in their beauty operations while also serving as a breeding ground for product innovation, partnerships, and emerging market trends.

By entering this B2B environment as a student, researcher, and designer, the observation study truly provided an immersive oversight into how the beauty industry engages with its stakeholders, products, and consumers. A mix of field notes and visual documentation, including photographs and videos, were

collected throughout the event. Particular attention was paid to domains where I lacked knowledge, including manufacturing systems, product formats and packaging, brand communication, and emerging technologies such as AI and automation. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of “what happens behind the scenes,” to communicate with diverse stakeholders in the industry, and to bring new perspectives into the conversation with users. It was also to identify the terminology, processes, and mechanisms that cause users to distance themselves from embodied knowledge, as well as potential points of accessibility for non-experts (to be discussed in section 6).

This observational study informs the Project Cycle of the Design-for-DIY framework by helping define the existence and feasibility of DIY cosmetics within existing industry structures, identifying systemic barriers, and uncovering opportunities for increased user involvement. It provides a macro-level understanding of the current landscape, which is crucial to positioning DIY cosmetic-making as a credible alternative within the industry.



5.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews Purpose

Qualitative research data were collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders across the cosmetics industry to investigate user motivations and barriers, as well as industry constraints and perspectives. Participants included makeup users with varying levels of experience and engagement, as well as industry professionals working across formulation, branding, and sustainability. By engaging stakeholders at micro, meso, and macro levels, this method aimed to uncover existing connections, tensions, and opportunities within the beauty domain.

The format of semi-structured interviews was chosen to allow for both consistency in tone and questions asked, and the flexibility to explore emergent themes through conversation. A total of 13 interviews were conducted with participants, 2 industry professionals (plus one ex-industry professional) and 11 users, ranging from 23 to 30 years old, covering topics such as personal consumption habits, trend engagement, sustainability awareness, and experiences with or perceptions of DIY cosmetic making. This qualitative approach enables deeper insights into lived experiences, emotional connections, and habit

formation, revealing patterns in perception, trust, knowledge, enablers, and barriers across users with different levels of skill and investment in cosmetics.

Insights gathered from the interviews are used for two main purposes :

1. To validate system map findings related to the producer-consumer gap
2. Reveal deeper patterns behind knowledge asymmetry to identify physical and emotional needs and barriers relative to DIY cosmetic participation

These interviews contribute to both the Pre-Design Cycle, by identifying constraints such as safety, regulation, and technical complexity, and the start of the Toolkit Cycle, by clarifying user needs for tools, instructions, and knowledge support. This stage also acts as a bridge between theoretical concepts such as presumption, sustainability, and agency and real-world practices observed across industry and user contexts.



5.3.4 Workshop & Co-Creation

A participatory workshop is then developed and tested to explore how users envision, engage with, and co-design DIY cosmetic experiences. The workshop is designed to actively engage participants in ideation and making, allowing them to reflect on their current cosmetic experiences, participate in DIY scenarios, and co-create potential tools, systems, and experiences with me. This approach aligns with the value of democratizing design (Hoftijzer, 2024) by positioning users not only as subjects of research but also as contributors to the design process.

The workshop structure follows a three-phase approach: expanding knowledge, engaging in DIY cosmetic making, and co-creating the necessary toolkit, platform, and guidance. In the first phase, participants are introduced to key concepts related to cosmetic ingredients, formulations, and processes. This phase aims to make knowledge more accessible and to establish a baseline of confidence before engaging in hands-on making.

In the second phase, participants actively engage in DIY cosmetics by creating a personalized lip balm. This activity allows participants to experiment and engage with color, formula, and packaging customization, translating abstract knowledge into an embodied experience. The workshop setup, including tools, materials, and step-by-step guidance, is intentionally designed and acts as a prototype to observe how users interact with the process, where friction occurs, and what

forms of support are necessary to enable successful participation.

In the final phase, participants are invited to reflect on their experience and further share their input to co-create the metaphorical “toolkit” needed to successfully engage in DIY cosmetics. This includes identifying both tangible and intangible components such as tools, ingredients, instructions, emotional confidence, and environmental conditions that contribute to a successful making experience. Insights from this phase inform the development of a DIY cosmetic toolkit and platform, bridging user experiences and design outcomes.

By designing and facilitating the workshop, the research directly addresses the action-value gap, acknowledging that users do not always act on their intentions without the right conditions and support. This method places the designer in the role of facilitator, creating an environment where knowledge exchange, experimentation, and confidence-building can occur. The workshop contributes to both the Toolkit and Platform Cycle by exploring where and how DIY cosmetic-making can take place, and the beginning DIY Cycle by observing how users engage in making when given the appropriate tools, guidance, and context. It plays a crucial role in translating insights from previous methods into actionable design directions, allowing users to experience embodied knowledge of ingredients, processes, and customization possibilities in cosmetic production.

6 COSMOPROF

WORLDWIDE BOLOGNA TAKEAWAYS

COSMOPROF LEGITIMACY

NARROW INDUSTRY MINDSET

UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY DIY BEAUTY

INDUSTRY INNOVATION

UNSUSTAINABLE CONDITIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA & OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH BEAUTY

DISCOVERING INSPIRING BRANDS



6.1 Cosmoprof Legitimacy

Colored cosmetics were met with controversy upon their introduction to society, and with the Industrial Revolution came the globalization of cosmetic routines and practices (Jones, 2010). This access to and the acceptability of colored cosmetics today is remarkable. Now, in this era of not just consuming and using, but also identifying and expressing ourselves through makeup, we find ourselves at another controversial intersection of emotional desire and physical need in a world that is pushing for and requiring solutions that consider greater environmental implications.



Image 16 : Example of Beauty Category Voting Criteria

Cosmo Prof has been around for over 50 years, legitimizing the cosmetics industry through new developments in formulation, packaging, and marketing, alongside building cross-continental relationships around beauty. By attending such an event, there was an opportunity to conduct research through a critical, immersive deep dive into the processes, practices, and innovations that define the industry today, and to gain insight into where some of the leading beauty experts see the future of cosmetics headed. There is no doubt that this is an oversaturated industry, yet with each new development, there are changing demands from consumers, partners, and governmental regulations that

make it difficult for new beauty products to break through to consumers. A common theme discussed during the CosmoTalks panel was the importance of clearly expressing a Point of Difference (PoD) (Panelists, Innovation Roundtable Panel Discussion, 2026, March 27). Many of the judges of the CosmoProf/ComsoPack Awards were panelists who expressed their desire for more vocal and distinctive ways to take the industry into uncharted territory. Without brands challenging the norms of current operations, consumer behaviors cannot change.

Nassim Hamek, President and CEO of C enee, mentions how colored cosmetics are in need of rejuvenation as a medium that began in the arts and speaks to a wide and diverse audience who wear a range of minimal to experimental makeup looks (Panelists, The Next Chapter of Make-up Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). We live in a time where makeup purchasing shows more than just your facial features, but is also a window into who you are, your personality, aesthetics, and personal values. Hamek says, "You have to take out all these preconceived ideas about the product, socially preconceived, to re-enchance the category."

6.2 Narrow Industry Mindset

It feels as though the beauty industry continues to operate with a narrow mindset, lacking sufficient future-focused planning, as it bends to user-generated content (UGC)-driven trends and operates under the constraints of mass production. It is important to break the boxes of the pre-defined cosmetics industry and explore new ways of producing and consuming. Gabby Chen says, "I would say the biggest mistake is the illusion that desirability equals understanding the latest trends." She believes it is not as much about the media you are presented with at face value, but about really getting to people's aspirations and the ways consumer values can be derived and taken to macro-level perspectives and practices in and around the beauty industry, physically in packaging and production, but also emotionally in use-case scenarios, color inspiration, and consumption patterns (Panelists, The Next Chapter of Make-up Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26).

Brand authenticity really stood out as a hot topic and a recurring recommendation from many cosmetic brand founders and department heads (Panelists, Navigating beauty retail: The U.S. Beauty Market in a Global Context Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). Because people are buying much more than a product, they are buying a lifestyle that enables them to become the version of themselves that your brand inspires. Yet, people have also relied too heavily on brands to define that personal image. This

Image 17 : CosmoTalks Panel - Navigating beauty retail: the U.S. Beauty Market in a Global Context



became particularly evident during participatory observation conducted at CosmoProf on March 26, 2026, where the brand Jovo had me reflecting on my own relationship with makeup and why I began to love it. It was not for others' validation or emotional engagement; it was for the appreciation of the art form, the colors, the variety, and the opportunity for experimentation. Observing how the brand engages younger demographics (as captured in Image 18) reintroduced a sense of playfulness that is often lost in what has become a seemingly adult, professionalized art form.



Image 18 : Jovo Brand Offerings

DIY is also a term that can be misunderstood as childish and unprofessional, which is why the legitimization and resurgence of DIY processes through globalized media is so inspiring for this domain. We are slowly learning to take back control and agency across many domains, yet beauty remains difficult to break through due to the distance between production and consumption in embodied knowledge and making practices. Through personal communication with industry representatives at CosmoProf (March 27, 2026), who are professionally involved in cosmetics production and management, the potential of DIY cosmetics was characterized as "impossible." With this research, it is not about labeling this kind of creator-consumer relationship as a black-and-white answer of whether it can or cannot be done, but more so about identifying the conditions and capacities through which DIY makeup production can succeed, with the intention of shifting mindsets beyond traditional consumption patterns and current cosmetic practices.

6.3 Understanding Contemporary DIY Beauty

The IKEA effect is representative of an alternative solution to passive consumption. IKEA revolutionized the flat-pack furniture industry by making the act of creation part of the product, thereby instilling attachment, time, and effort from the consumer into the final product (Norton, M. I., Mochon, D., & Ariely, D., 2012). Brands in the cosmetics industry have also begun to recognize the value of personalization and customization and to capitalize on it, elevating DIY trends in the market. It is very well understood that consumers have

growing interest and investment in cosmetics, their usage, their ingredients, and the brand image that comes with the product itself. A term that came up frequently in a roundtable interview hosted by CosmoTalks was *efficacy* (Panelists, The Next Chapter of Make-up Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). Consumers are actively looking for results and seek transparency from the brand to get them. With increased digital access to information about cosmetics, consumers know a lot more and are increasingly aware of ingredients, results, and regulations. Yet there is also so much knowledge out there that it becomes overwhelming to sift through it all, which has led to an over-reliance on brands to deliver the message and educate their users transparently.

Now more than ever, it is crucial for a brand's success to reach consumers where they are: in-store with visual displays, in online shopping environments, through AI search engine experiences, and mixed in with UGC. This means staying up to date with social media content, trends, and information sources such as ChatGPT and Google AI (Panelists, Navigating beauty retail: The U.S. Beauty Market in a Global Context Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). Brands are at consumers' disposal because if word gets out that an ingredient or brand is deceptive, it spreads quickly and can ruin that ingredient's or brand's image. Misinformation spreads rapidly through media sources that feed the cosmetics industry. Digital media has transformed the way people purchase, view, and interact with products. Induced stress comes from many external pressures, digital, worldly, personal, and otherwise. The behavior of consumption that stems from stress can lead consumers into an "I deserve it" mentality and therefore encourage indulgence in a personal purchase that brings joy (Panelists, The Next Chapter of Make-up Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). This means we are dealing with much more than just a physical need when analyzing entry points into the cosmetics industry; it is equally an emotionally driven industry. Products need to resonate with consumers more deeply to align with and help set standards in grey areas such as beauty standards, inclusivity, and personal values, including sustainability and lifestyle.

Thinking of the next generation of makeup buyers and wearers, Gen Alpha was a hot topic of discussion. It was very prominent that the consumption patterns of Gen Alpha should and will be different. Consistent with a trend among Gen Z, younger consumers use products to "make them feel good" (Panelists, The Next Chapter of Make-up Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). This sense of 'goodness' can be extended to many things, emotionally, physically, and in terms of responsibility for the environment. Gen Z, for example, is also bigger on in-store shopping. This has to do with a few factors, such as the urgency to buy the product, the authenticity of the experience, and the socialization of the experience. It is not new that beauty brings people together in many ways, and when it does, it is critical that education be shared alongside color trends, methods, and products.

6.4 Industry Innovation

In a discussion about up-and-coming brands in terms of sustainability, packaging, and formulation (Panelists, Innovation Round Table Panel Discussion, 2026, March 27), the topic of product format was brought to my attention. While traditional methods, forms, and production processes of familiar self-care and hygiene products remain dominant in the industry, it is important to break through in other ways, not just through branding and shade range. An example includes a candidate in the Hair Products category of the CosmoProf Awards, the DearDot Waterless Sheet (Image 18), recognized for its unique product format for shampoo, body wash, and face wash. While presumably unique in scent, ingredients, and branding, it is the product's format that truly sets it apart from others on the market and opens up new affordances. As a waterless cleanser, it is not only innovative for branding's sake, but also for the environment by reducing shipping weight, water use, and packaging requirements.

Similarly, the winner of the Green & Organics Sector, QPearl (Image 19), demonstrates how rethinking product format can drive system-level sustainability. Its reusable dispensing system, containing water-activated cleansing pearls, replaces conventional liquid formulations and single-use packaging, reducing material use and CO₂ emissions across the product lifecycle. Together, these examples illustrate how innovation in beauty products is increasingly emerging through new formats that challenge conventional production, packaging, and consumption.



Image 18 : Deardot Waterless Cleanser



Image 19 : QPearl - CycleOne

6.5 Unsustainable conditions

We are at a critical point where the way products are developed, produced, and consumed “as-is” is creating unsustainable outcomes for the socio-environmental landscape, and brands are under increasing regulatory pressure to address this. The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is a new EU law that was enforced in February 2025, aiming to make all packaging in the EU sustainable, recyclable, and/or reusable by 2030-2040 (European Commission, n.d.).

Regulatory enforcement is a top-down approach to expediting adherence to uniform standards that prevent waste, reduce packaging volume, and make brands aware of mandatory recycled content in plastic packaging. The beauty industry contributes excessive plastic waste to our planet, and brands now need to take responsibility not only for production but also for the entire lifecycle of a product. It was encouraging to hear from the CosmoTalks panel that increasingly more products are being designed and produced with regard to the end of the product's life through material considerations like post-consumer recycled plastics (PCR), ease of separation, and sorting for recyclability (Panelists, Innovation Round Table Panel Discussion, 2026, March 27). That being said, top-down pressure only goes so far, and we still need new solutions to address sustainable consumption issues in this industry.

6.6 Social Media & Our Relationship with Beauty

Social media has changed the perceptions of various stakeholders in and around the cosmetics industry, with platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram Reels becoming major discovery channels for trends, ingredient understanding, and shopping (Panelists, Navigating beauty retail: The U.S. Beauty Market in a Global Context Panel Discussion, 2026, March 26). Social media is the most recent development in how technology has grown and shifted the beauty industry. Colored cosmetics really began in the theater, and as new forms of media developed, such as print media, radio, film, and television, inspiration and practice became accessible across the globe. Social media platforms are the new era of information intake, and makeup brands utilize this digital connection in new ways. People who use beauty products rely on others in the beauty community, their peers, online reviews, and longer-form video try-ons to persuade them to purchase a product without actually trying it.

A large part of purchasing a new beauty product is the perceived value of the product: how would that product make you feel, how does it perform, and what does it say about you? Beauty products entering the market are constantly balancing emotional storytelling with the delivery of something new to customers, while maintaining their brand authenticity online. This plays into a deeper consumer desire: to connect, to feel part of the brand, the community, and the atmosphere surrounding the product. Digital media formats make it easy and accessible to participate in trends. DIY activities have grown with digital media, especially as people can be inspired by, watch, replay, and make something their own through clear, entertaining, visual instructions that, in some cases, are interactive.

DIY practices are already happening in various ways because consumers have an inherent urge to exercise their creativity through personalization and customization. The cosmetics market has become so oversaturated that makeup users of varying levels have been taking matters into their own hands through (based on personal observation) practices such as mixing their own lip glosses, turning products into keychains, personalizing through decoration, upcycling, repackaging, and much more (discussed in section X). The aim is to harness these interests and desires to inspire users to reclaim agency over their beauty, not always by buying new, but by educating and provoking creativity toward embodied knowledge and self-making.

6.7 Discovering Inspiring Brands

During the participatory observation conducted at CosmoProf on March 26, 2026 the brand Bella Pierre was made known to me, opening my eyes to new possibilities within colored cosmetics and to how multipurpose and multifunctional ingredients can exist within the universe of ready-made consumable goods. Their display of colors is what initially caught my attention (captured in Image 20). Upon listening in on a demo, new possibilities opened up by showing me how much just one pigment can do with so few ingredients. The brand displayed a range of powder eye shadows made with 3-6 all-natural mineral pigments. Unlike the eyeshadows commonly found on the market, these come in loose powder form and are made up of 100% pigment, providing a very rich color payoff when applied.

Not only do these products perform well on their own, but they can also be mixed with each other, become matte with an eyeshadow base, or transform into a liquid-liner consistency with just water. The multi-use immediately caught my attention, as the functionality already opens up possibilities for experimentation, color mixing, and consistency play. An additional bonus is that they can be mixed directly in the cap of the packaging. Through deeper discussion with the brand owner, I learned that because these colors are natural and 100% pigment, they can also be used as mix-ins to color other products, such as lip balm, lip gloss, and blush, which the brand offers and encourages. Yet they do not currently display or sell their products in a diverse and dimensional way.

This is for a few reasons: their brand has been around for a while, it has been tricky to find the right audience for a multifunctional pigment powder, and people are increasingly looking for convenient, ready-made solutions, so they sell it simply as an eyeshadow. There is also a CosmoProf in Las Vegas, and they said these pigment colors are not something they bring there because the audience simply is not interested. While solutions like this might be great for experienced users

such as makeup artists, there has not yet been a hybrid category of makeup where altering and mixing are normalized.

Learnings and observations from the observational study at CosmoProf, such as these tensions between innovation and consumer readiness, later informed the development of the interview questions and directly tied into the interview outcomes and identified patterns. The insights gathered from industry perspectives, particularly around innovation, consumer behavior, and the perceived limitations of DIY cosmetics, provide a foundation for exploring how these dynamics are experienced and interpreted at the user level. More examples of brands are as follows (Images 21-28):

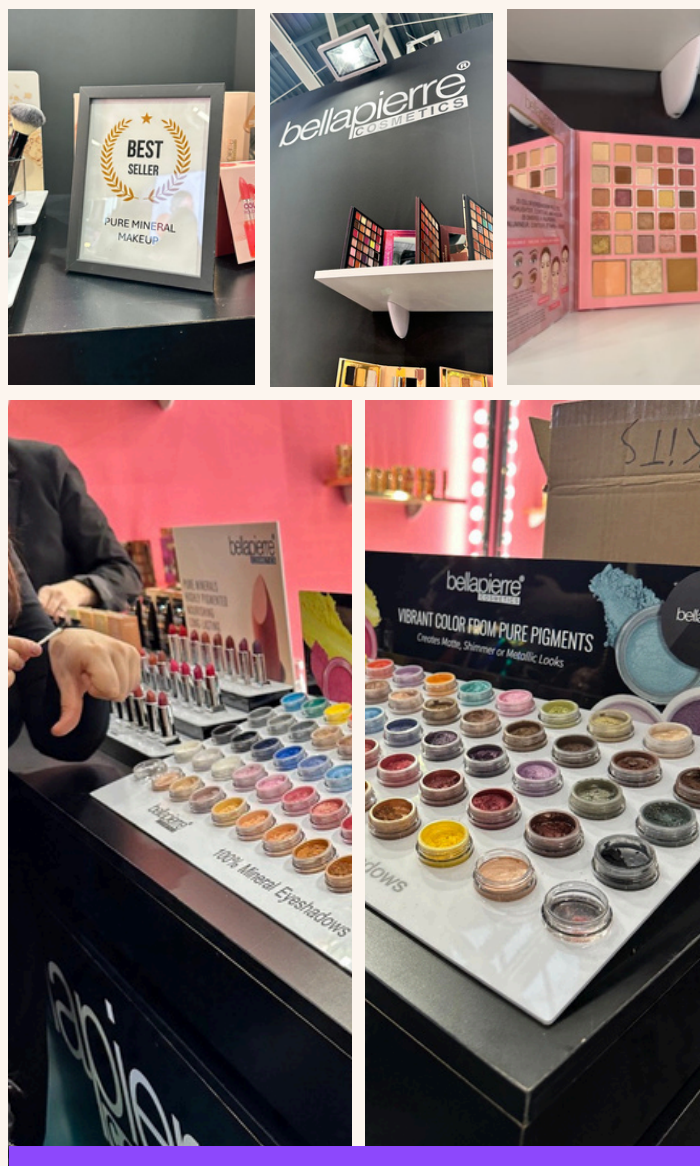


Image 20
Bella Pierra : showcasing a line of powder pigments that are multi functional and multipupose
OUTCOME : understanding how users interpret this kind of format and exploring the possibilities of doing more with less



Image 21
 JOVO : a makeup brand utilizing emotional storytelling and catering to a younger audience
 OUTCOME : understanding the playfulness and beginning to every users makeup experience



Image 22
 Ble de fonty & Q Pearl : alternative formats of familiar product categories
 OUTCOME : how do new formats push engagement, interact with products, and help users use smaller quantities



Image 23
 tfit : high-performance skincare combined with colored makeup
 OUTCOME : understanding virality, how does a product become an entry way to brand offerings



Image 24
 Dr.ceuracle : natural ingredient skincare
 OUTCOME : marketing & innovation of integrating other popular categories (like food)



Image 25
 ABC texture : cosmetics factory built in France in a sustainable High Environmental Quality approach
 OUTCOME : in what ways are sustainable products translating to customers/brands

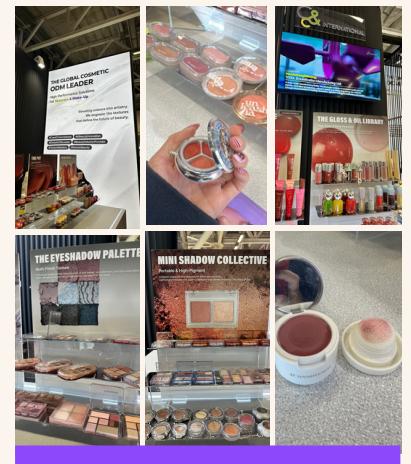


Image 26
 C&C international : R&D and production company for korean colored cosmetic
 OUTCOME : understanding the process of moving from concept to end result, trend analysis, formulation, packaging



Image 27
 Ocean Waste Plastic: collecting, cleaning, sorting and tracking their plastic
 OUTCOME : understanding material trade offs for users and brands

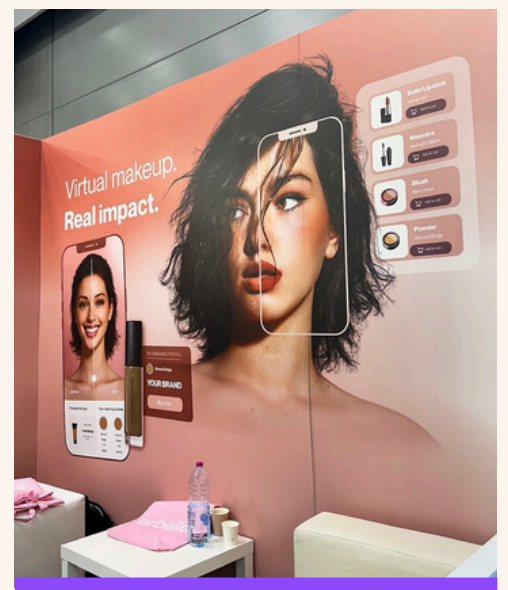


Image 28
 Arbelles : AI and beauty
 OUTCOME : how can developing technologies actually aid in informing users

7 Interview Insights

USER BEHAVIOR & CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MAKEUP

INDUSTRY TRANSPARENCY

5W'S & H



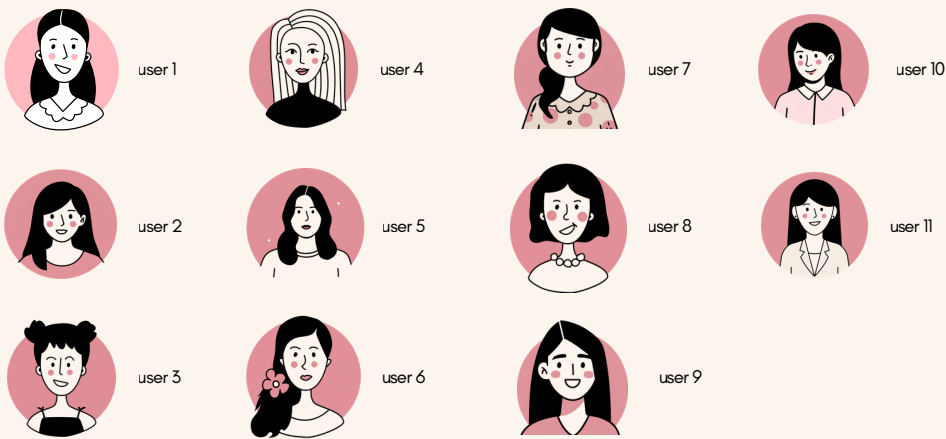

Interview Step	Purpose	Action
Recruitment	To recruit participants with diverse perspectives on cosmetic use, DIY practices, and the beauty industry in order to explore current experiences, motivations, and barriers.	Recruited 11 participants through convenience and snowball sampling, including regular cosmetic users with varying levels of DIY experience and two beauty industry professionals to provide both consumer and industry perspectives.
Semi-Structured Interviews	To gain rich qualitative insights while allowing flexibility to explore participants' experiences, opinions, and emerging themes related to the research questions.	Conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews using an interview guide organized around the research questions. Topics included beauty routines, cosmetic knowledge, perceptions of DIY cosmetics, personalization, sustainability, trust, and desired forms of participation. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.
Confidentiality	To ensure ethical participation and protect participant privacy.	Participants received information about the study, provided informed consent, and were informed that participation was voluntary. All interview data were anonymized using participant codes (User 1-11; Industry Professional 1-2), securely stored, and used solely for research purposes.
Interviewees	<p>Makeup users aged approximately 20–30 with varying levels of cosmetic knowledge and DIY experience</p>  <p>Professionals working within the cosmetics industry providing perspectives on product development, consumer trends, and industry practices.</p> 	

Table 2 : Interview Process Overview



By conducting interviews with 11 user participants, the main goal was to understand what users need to succeed in any form of DIY cosmetic making and to identify unifying characteristics that could inform the type of persona most likely to engage in such practices. The results could be understood in terms of emotional, functional, and systemic forms of support. Each interview was semi-formal and designed to elicit feelings about the current beauty industry, as well as personal routines, DIY practices, and the enablers and barriers to customizing cosmetics.

While each participant engaged with cosmetics in their own way, there was variation in skill level, investment in beauty routines, and knowledge of the material components, such as ingredients, formulations, and packaging. During discussions, it was important to identify key feelings, behaviors, and circumstances that could be accelerated into self-directed cosmetic personalization, even if it was within a context defined by

mass production, convenience, and overconsumption. The interviews also acted as a moment of reflection for participants, encouraging them to reconsider their relationship with the cosmetics industry by identifying their own consumption patterns, therefore acting as a “planting the seed” moment to open up the conversation to the topic of DIY beauty.

Emergent and recurring patterns revealed a general lack of ingredient knowledge, alongside a desire for personalization through DIY, but with a need for guidance. Participants expressed greater trust in social and peer-based knowledge over information passed down from brands due to potential deception and expressed a preference for experiential learning environments such as workshops or in-store experiences. Lastly, concerns around safety and formulation complexity can be lessened through guided DIY practices.

To better guide the outcomes of the interviews, six additional questions were posed using the 5 W’s and H, to identify and better understand underlying and relevant patterns:

WHAT: What knowledge, skills, tools, or support systems are necessary for individuals to successfully engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHY: What motivations, values, or perceived benefits drive individuals to engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHERE: In what contexts or environments do people currently engage, or would prefer to engage, in DIY cosmetic making (e.g., home, community spaces, retail environments)?

WHEN: At what moments or within which routines would individuals be most likely to engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHO: Who constitutes the primary target audience for DIY cosmetic making, and what behavioral or attitudinal traits characterize these users?

HOW: How can DIY cosmetic making be positioned or experienced as a credible and reliable alternative to commercially produced cosmetics?

By addressing these questions, the research moves toward the main goal: understanding how a designer can facilitate a DIY cosmetic-making experience that inspires agency, increases transparency around ingredients, and supports personal expression, ultimately contributing to a shift away from mass-market consumption.



7.1 User Behavior & Consumption Patterns

One of the first patterns identified was how users establish their own makeup routines. Many expressed a process of trial and error, beginning their journey with a wide range of products and gradually reducing the number they use to better cater to specific needs or learned preferences. It is the art of application and the excitement of exploration that initially drew them into the experience, but as familiarity builds with brands, formulas, and their own skin requirements, users find they do not need as many products as they did during their exploratory phase. Additionally, many participants began their makeup journey by learning from and being inspired by content creators on YouTube, as well as from friends and family.

The long-form visual format captured users' interest in beauty and cosmetics and continues to do so, as many remain engaged with the latest products and trends through social media platforms. Through this trial-and-error process, users developed a certain level of relational knowledge with products, particularly in understanding what their skin needs to feel its best. Many interviewees have developed an awareness of their skin type (oily, dry, textured, sensitive, etc.) and learned how to identify products that best suit it. Over time, it seems users become more critical and less likely to follow trends blindly, due to a stronger understanding of what products are worth investing in.

Most of the time, purchasing a new product requires capturing the user's attention in a specific way, whether it's through a desired effect, suitability for a particular skin type, or perceived quality and value that justify the investment. Even if users maintain minimal daily routines, the makeup they purchase does not always equate to the makeup they use. Many participants noted that products often remain unused, stored away, or expire before being fully utilized.

“ I always get the information from maybe YouTubers or influencers who introduce products to their fans. Sometimes there are comparison videos, like the top makeup products from 2025 or 2026, where they list the best in each category. - User 5

“ When I was younger, like a teenager, I was really into watching beauty videos and YouTubers.

”
- User 2

“ I mainly learned from YouTube because influencers and creators make videos that teach you how to put on makeup. - User 9

“ I was doing a whole beauty routine with so many steps watching YouTube videos. - User 1

“ By the end of middle school, I kind of started wearing concealer and mascara to school daily, which was a combination of influences—on one side my mom and her recommendations, and on the other side YouTube. I feel like there was a really big YouTube makeup community when we were younger.

”
- User 4

“ It started quite early, but there was also an awkward phase in junior high where I was learning how to properly use makeup and experimenting with different methods, just following random YouTubers. - User 8

“ When I was in high school, that's when everyone was using YouTube, so I watched a lot of videos on how to put makeup on. That became my main source of learning about makeup and products, and after watching a lot of videos I was excited to try things out.

”
- User 6

That being said, users are actively working to finish their products before purchasing new ones, particularly in “base” categories such as mascara, foundation, and brow products. This is because there is less room for variation, and users feel comfortable sticking to a product once they find one that works. In contrast, categories such as lip color, blush, and eyeshadow encourage deeper investment in variety, as small color changes can significantly alter a makeup look. This promotes the habit of collecting multiple shades for different occasions.

“ I very much like to hit pan and finish all my makeup before I buy new makeup. - User 1 ”

“ I’m a person who will buy one thing and use it until it finishes. If I have something I don’t use, it’s because I bought it and didn’t like it - User 2 ”

“ things like mascara, concealer, foundation, blush, bronzer, those are things I will have one of, use up, and then re-buy - User 4 ”

This pattern of trial and error, combined with growing product awareness, reveals that users are already engaging in exploratory and iterative practices similar to DIY processes. This serves as a potential foundation for DIY cosmetics, where users could be further supported in learning and experimenting through self-making practices.

7.2 Emotional Relationship With Makeup

Whether users identify as makeup experts or novices, I aimed to understand how putting on makeup makes them feel. Overwhelmingly, the response was centered around confidence and transformation. Participants identified the act of applying makeup not only as a routine but also as a transitional step, shifting from an internal state (mental and physical) to a presentable external state, allowing them to step into the person they want to be outside the home. This applies across social and professional contexts, special occasions, and even casual situations where appearing presentable is desired.

“ I think that makeup is a way to, if you look good, you feel good. - User 7 ”

Having access to and the ability to apply makeup provides users with a sense of control over their own appearance, which is considered empowering in some sense. However, the current systemic structure of the beauty industry continues to predefine these notions of beauty for many users. Within a saturated landscape of ready-made products, further reinforced by strong brand identities and lifestyle expectations, users often feel guided, if not pressured, into conforming to existing market solutions. While makeup provides users with a sense of control and empowerment over their appearance, this sense of agency does not always extend to an understanding of what goes into the products themselves. This becomes particularly evident when discussing transparency within the beauty industry.

7.3 Industry Transparency

When discussing transparency in the beauty industry, many participants expressed their inexperience in discussing or understanding ingredients, formulations, or specific product outcomes, largely because they felt they simply did not know enough. Users expressed that, with makeup, they pay less attention to ingredients than to skincare, hygiene products, or even food. The standards differ for several reasons. First, makeup is perceived as impermanent; the intention is to wear it for a fixed period of time and eventually remove it. Second, the color payoff is what is seen first, rather than the ingredients' properties, meaning users tend to focus on immediate results rather than long-term impact. Third, expiration dates and ingredient information are not visible or accessible enough for users to engage with.

As a result, users reported that they do not tend to check ingredients and are often unaware of when their products expire, simply because this information is not presented in a way that captures their attention. This leads to limited investment of time or energy in understanding what is in their makeup, turning the trial-and-error process into a more arbitrary act of consumption rather than informed experimentation. This gap in embodied material knowledge was quickly recognized by participants themselves, often accompanied by an “I feel like I should be doing it” mentality:

“ I would say that I don't look at ingredients at all, which I feel like I should, because I have never looked at an ingredients label. - User 4 ”

The biggest barrier to engaging with ingredient information is exposure, time, and effort. If users do not perceive something as harmful, their behavior is unlikely to change. This is reflected in the common occurrence of users keeping products beyond their expiration timeline, sometimes for months or even years, simply because there are no clear visual or physical indicators that the product is at the end of its life. Instead, users prefer to keep products for potential future use rather than discard them.

“I'm not really sure about when it expires... I try to check the expiry date but it's not mentioned on the product itself. Maybe it was on the packaging, but I already threw it away.”
- User 9

Participants generally agreed that improving transparency in supply chains and ingredient information is a shared responsibility between brands and users. Brands are expected to communicate clearly about ingredients, testing, and ethical practices, while users also recognize their own role in seeking out and understanding this information. However, because beauty is not a one-size-fits-all domain, the abundance of options makes it difficult for users to determine what works for them. As a result, many turn to social media, relying on influencers, reviews, comments, and forums to form perceptions and self-educate.

While this access to information through media has expanded knowledge, it has also led to users testing products that ultimately do not work for them and remain unused:

“I have an eyeshadow palette that I would only use if I were going out at night... and a bottle of foundation that I never use because I realized it wasn't for me, but I don't throw it out because I think, what if I need it?”
- User 1

“I have purchased some that are useless... like organic eyeshadow brands... and I don't want to throw them away, but I also don't want to buy a new palette.”
- User 3

This raises the question of what to do with unused products. The options are often limited to disposal, hoarding, or occasional alternation, the latter occurring rarely, if at all. If a product were customized from the beginning, the assumption is that users would develop a stronger emotional attachment to it, invest time in personalizing it, and have the ability to adjust it to better suit their preferences, ultimately extending its use (Schifferstein, 2008).

Engaging hands-on with the materials and processes of making makeup has the potential to re-inspire users not only to learn but also to form deeper relationships with their products. With access to the proper tools, ingredients, and guidance, users could participate more actively in cosmetic self-making and extend that participation over time. While many users acknowledge their responsibility to understand the materials they apply to their skin, the goal is to move beyond overreliance on brands and develop embodied material knowledge. This shift implies redistributing trust away from solely external sources and toward users' own skills, creativity, and informed decision-making when navigating the mass market.



7.4 5W's & H

Returning to the six questions helped to structure the interview outcomes into more concrete representations of what users need

Findings Relevance to Research Questions

Main: how can designers facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that give users agency over ingredients, packaging, and making processes to increase transparency, support identity expression, and reduce passive, mass-market consumption?

Agency	Conditions & tools	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether agency is desired • how it is currently expressed • where it is constrained • what the barriers are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tools / workspace • ingredients • knowledge • safety • inspiration 	assess whether DIY systems could most meaningfully: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve knowledge? • support expression? • reduce overconsumption?

Sub1 : How have prosumer practices appeared in the cosmetics industry historically and contemporarily?

Existing or emerging prosumption		
Industry & designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customization services • refill systems • modular products 	Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-creation narratives • community engagement Retail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customer requests for personalization 	Users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mixing products • repurposing • following tutorials

Sub2 : How and why have interventions succeeded or failed in reconnecting users with cosmetic production processes?

Barriers	Enablers	Systemic constraints
formulation → safety, complexity industry → regulation, scalability retail → consumer behavior users → lack of knowledge, confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility of tools • clarity of instructions / ingredients • emotional engagement • community/inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • siloed departments ? • supply chains ? • marketing influence ? • structural reasons why interventions fail

Sub3 : What forms of self-making (ex. toolkits, workshops) could meaningfully reintroduce agency, inspire creativity, and proactive transparency into cosmetic-making?

Practical	Emotional	Physical formats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tools for mixing, storing • accessible ingredients • refillable packaging • safety instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspiration • confidence • community • creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutorials (TikTok, YouTube) • guided instructions • physical kits • workshops • educational systems • modular products

Table 3 : Interview Findings

7.4.1 WHAT :

What knowledge, skills, tools, or support systems are necessary for individuals to successfully engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHAT is needed to succeed in DIY Cosmetics?	
packaging that complies with refillable/ self making intentions	methods and/or instructions for execution
ingredients that can be used in diverse ways	inspiration to show ways in which others succeed and customize
Available/ accessible tools to mix, clean, and store + material accessibility	confidence in their abilities / experiential learning
expanded knowledge (ingredients, shades processes, outcomes)	safety regulations communicated clearly from start to disposal
to conduct self-experimentation in the home	a system which is in favor of to DIY cosmetic making
in person guidance for shade matching, skin type, creating the product	social encouragement/ perception/ experience / advice

Table 4: WHAT Findings

* barriers are very knowledge dependent → “i don’t know enough”

* unlike other DIY activities, cosmetics involve bodily risk, which slightly raises the threshold for participation

* participants prefer low-threshold entry points like kits/workshops rather than sourcing and learning independently

* cosmetic practices/recommendations are socially learned through visual media and peer feedback alongside trial & error

* confident DIY cosmetics seem to require more structured learning experiences rather than pure self-learning

I found that users expressed feeling most confident engaging in DIY cosmetic making when additional physical guidance was in conversation, rather than being fully self-guided. One of the biggest takeaways was the desire for someone to walk them through each step, ensuring that the process is executed properly from the selection of ingredients to color matching to packaging compatibility, because users feel they do not have enough information to do it on their own.

A large part of DIY is the learning phase, and participants preferred in-person experiences over navigating the process independently or online. This preference is closely connected to the desire for access to tools and materials. Users indicated they would prefer not to go through the hassle of sourcing ingredients, tools, and components on their own. Within an in-person setting, it is also implied that these necessary resources would be readily available, lowering the threshold for participation.

In addition to in-person guidance, users expressed the need for clear, detailed instructions to carry out the self-making process independently. This could take the form of step-by-step guides, manuals, or tutorials. Visual formats are strongly preferred, including

images, simple illustrations, or video. Being able to see each step and understand how to execute it in the simplest way is important for users to feel confident completing the task successfully and achieving an outcome comparable to the example provided.

While users enjoy DIY processes, they more often prefer creating with a specific outcome in mind, while still having the opportunity to add their own “spin” to the project, whether it be through visual aesthetics, formulation, or use case. Many participants described the importance of curating inspiration as part of the process, such as gathering images or mood boards before jumping into making, so they do not start from an entirely blank canvas.

In general, transparency and safety emerged as top priorities. Unlike other DIY activities, cosmetics inherently involve a level of bodily risk, which increases the threshold for participation and highlights the existing knowledge gap. Because users are unfamiliar with specific ingredients and the processes involved, it is crucial that information is communicated clearly and transparently, and that the environment in which DIY cosmetic making takes place feels safe, reliable, and appropriate.

7.4.2 WHY :

What motivations, values, or perceived benefits drive individuals to engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHY would someone engage in DIY cosmetics?			
Personalization & identity expression	Gaining agency through ingredient awareness	Creative expression	Social experience
personalized shade matching	get more embodied knowledge over makeup ingredients	personal accomplishment	bonding over the experience
skin-specific formulations	knowing what works for their skin	having the ability to mix and match different shades	getting a second opinion
packaging preferences	connect the dots between product + outcome	pairing with other forms of self expression like fashion/jewelry	learning from your peers

Table 5: WHY Findings

Getting to the root of why users might be encouraged to participate in DIY cosmetics was initially challenging, as the idea is not yet on everyone's radar. However, by identifying what users feel is lacking in their current cosmetic engagement and what might spark interest in interacting more deeply with cosmetics in the future, several key motivations emerged. The ability to personalize, gain knowledge of ingredients, engage in creative expression, and socialize was identified as a primary pathway to DIY cosmetic making.

Participants expressed interest in discovering and crafting their perfect shade, creating formulas tailored to their specific skin type, and choosing packaging that suits their preferences. Beyond customization, gaining knowledge about cosmetics was a strong motivator, as many users felt they should know more about what goes into their products. This includes ensuring compatibility with their skin, developing a deeper understanding of individual ingredients, and learning about their effects.

Creative expression was another key driver. Many users described makeup as an art form, taking pride in color matching, experimentation, and using makeup as an

accessory to complement their outfit, similar to a handbag, a pair of shoes, or a piece of jewelry.

Lastly, an underlying desire that emerged was the potential for social engagement within DIY cosmetic making. Many participants expressed that engaging in such an activity alongside friends or in a group setting would make the experience more meaningful. This could provide an opportunity to create shared memories, exchange knowledge, learn from peers, meet new people, and gain a second opinion, especially given the trust many place in their social circles.

Uncovering these emotional and experiential motivations helped reframe the understanding of DIY cosmetics, shifting it from a functional activity toward one rooted in expression, learning, and connection. These insights more clearly emphasize and encapsulate what DIY cosmetics could meaningfully offer users, socially and educationally.

7.4.3 WHERE :

In what contexts or environments do people currently engage, or would prefer to engage, in DIY cosmetic making?

WHERE might DIY cosmetics take place?		
In the home	Retail / workshop spaces	Online platforms
tool kit with clear instructions	with physical expert assistance	tik tok
small modifications to existing products (mixing products)	readily available tools	youtube
extended at home experience from a guided learning session	safe workspace	inspiration like pinterest
	classes/workshop style	other... discord?

Table 6: WHERE Findings

The question of why naturally led to the question of where DIY cosmetic making would most meaningfully take place. The three main locations identified were the home, workshop or retail spaces, and online environments. While these spaces are interconnected and often relational to one another, they each require different attitudes, atmospheres, and ways of engaging with the making process.

From the interviews, it seems users feel the least confident engaging in DIY cosmetic making as a solo experience at home and would require pre-curated tools, materials, and instructions to successfully complete a project. However, many participants noted that after participating in a workshop or guided session, they would feel more inclined and confident to continue these practices at home, especially if tools and materials were readily available. The home environment also opens up opportunities for users to experiment with what they already have, such as existing pigments, lipsticks, or other cosmetic ingredients.

Workshop or retail spaces were the most preferred option among participants. A designated environment for DIY cosmetic making is expected to provide those key structural elements, such as safety, guidance, access to

safe ingredients, available tools, and course-like learning. While users enjoy the hands-on aspect of making, having this infrastructure in place significantly lowers the threshold for participation and creates a more comfortable and supportive experience.

Lastly, online and digital spaces play a significant role in DIY practices, particularly in the beauty community. Beauty products and methods are highly visual, and digital platforms allow for the global sharing of knowledge, inspiration, and techniques. Learning from others across different contexts becomes both accessible and engaging. While DIY making can and should occur in physical spaces, it is equally important that it is communicated and encouraged through digital media to increase awareness and participation. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest, Reddit, and other beauty forums are key spaces where users already engage, making them important entry points for introducing and supporting DIY cosmetic practices globally.

7.4.4 WHEN :

At what moments or within which routines would individuals be most likely to engage in DIY cosmetic making?

WHEN would someone participate in DIY cosmetics?		
Event-based activity	Social leisure activity	Personal occasional customization
workshop	with friends	adjusting existing products
beauty event	with family	creating a personalized shade through color mixing/color correcting
pop ups	to meet new people	seasonally

Table 7: WHEN Findings

Identifying when users are most likely to engage in DIY cosmetics is difficult to pinpoint, as if this were to become a more widespread practice, these moments could become increasingly unpredictable and circumstantial. Over time, users may develop the skills and knowledge needed to make cosmetics at home whenever it fits into their routines. However, at this stage, three defining moments emerged as the most welcoming and low-threshold opportunities for participation:

- (1) as an event-based activity
- (2) as a social leisure activity
- (3) as a personal customization activity

These three moments reflect both what users need to feel successful and where they feel most comfortable participating. Positioning DIY cosmetic making as an event-based activity, such as a beauty event or pop-up, transforms the experience into a special moment of learning, creating, and self-expression. It also creates a more expressive, media-forward way to experience and share the practice, serving as a point of exposure, a way to build traction, and a moment to capture and share.

Following this, a more discreet yet still participatory

experience can emerge in the form of a social leisure activity, such as a workshop or a class. This allows participants to engage more deeply with materials and processes, either with new peers or alongside friends and family. It creates an opportunity to slow down, take part in a guided experience or course, and socialize through a shared activity and learned skill.

Lastly, there is the opportunity for personal customization. This involves integrating DIY cosmetic knowledge into individual routines and personal spaces through smaller-scale making and modification. This could include customizing products already owned, creating small-batch products from scratch, or altering products based on specific needs, such as seasonal changes or particular events.

Across all of these moments, engaging in DIY cosmetic making contributes to the development of embodied knowledge and supports users' creative expression, ultimately leading to a greater sense of agency over personal beauty practices.

7.4.5 WHO :

Who constitutes the primary target audience to participate in DIY cosmetic making, and what factors (behavioral or attitudinal traits) characterize these users or influence their likelihood of engagement?

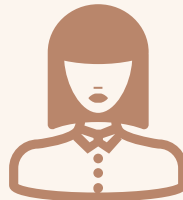
While the participants interviewed shared similar demographic characteristics such as age, gender, current residency, and educational level, due to recruitment processes and proximity, it is important that the target audience for DIY cosmetic making is not defined or limited by these factors alone. What becomes more relevant are the characteristics, needs, behaviors, and desires that shape users' engagement with cosmetics and their openness to DIY practices.

By developing three personas, a broader spectrum of users and their attitudes, motivations, and expectations can be captured. These personas help translate interview insights into relatable archetypes, allowing other users to resonate with the behaviors, motivations, and frustrations that emerge from current beauty industry practices. They are grounded in and derived from the real user interviews conducted, built upon overlapping values, and capture three unique perspectives: the Expressionist, the Conscious Curator, and the Curious Creator



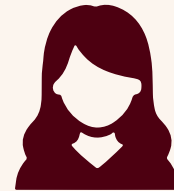
The Expressionist

The **Expressionist** represents someone who views makeup as a medium for creativity and personal expression (Figure 5). They enjoy experimenting with colors, textures, and techniques, often recreating looks from social media while adapting them to reflect their own style. Makeup allows them to explore different identities, moods, or aesthetics, making the creative process as rewarding as the final result. For this user, DIY cosmetics should represent creative freedom, experimentation, and personalization through accessible tools, customizable pigments, and endless opportunities for self-expression.



The Conscious Curator

The **Conscious Curator** represents someone who intentionally builds a makeup collection centered on quality, longevity, and sustainability (Figure 6). They actively consider ingredients, brand transparency, and circular offerings such as refill systems or take-back programs before making purchasing decisions. Their makeup routine is minimal and purposeful, with each product serving a clear function, and they may already create simple skincare or cosmetic products at home. For this user, DIY cosmetics should represent transparency, ingredient control, sustainable consumption, and opportunities to reduce waste through refillable and reusable systems.




The Curious Creator

The **Curious Creator** represents someone who enjoys hands-on, participatory activities, whether independently or with others (Figure 7). They are interested in how products are made and value the making process as much as the final outcome, appreciating the sense of accomplishment it brings. They often spend their free time attending workshops, learning new skills, or pursuing creative hobbies. While makeup is part of their routine, they are equally interested in understanding ingredients and formulations. For this user, DIY cosmetics should represent hands-on participation, ingredient transparency, social learning, and refined results that reflect the effort invested in making.




While the interviews help to reveal these three user archetypes, the Expressionist, the Conscious Curator, and the Curious Creator, not all segments provide equal potential for strong engagement with DIY cosmetic making. A more focused targeting approach is needed to determine which audience should serve as the primary user group for future design interventions; this strategic targeting is discussed in Section 12.

Creative-driven · Experimental · Identity-focused



Maya
The Expressionist

“Putting on makeup is like creating art on my face.”

Age: 24
Gender: Female
Occupation: Artist/Designer/Creative
Location: Finds herself in and around arts districts
Income: Low-mid
Brands:   

Behaviours

- Uses makeup as a creative and expressive medium rather than just for functional reasons
- Frequently experiments with colors, textures, and styles
- Consumes & creates content online (TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest)
- Owns many makeup products & often mixes them to create new looks
- Enjoys trying DIY trends but values unique self-expression.

Motivations

- Creative experimentation
- Personal identity expression
- Participating in beauty culture and trends

Frustrations

- Limited shade ranges or formula options in commercial cosmetics.
- Waste from buying many products that are rarely fully used.
- Lack of tools to easily customize or remix makeup.

What DIY Cosmetics Should Mean to Maya :
Creative freedom and experimentation through accessible tools and pigments.

Figure 5: The Expressionist Persona

Value-driven · Minimalist · Sustainability-oriented



Elise
The Conscious Curator

“I’d rather own fewer products that I really trust.”

Age: 33
Gender: Female
Occupation: Sustainable Design Consultant
Location: higher-end neighborhoods w/ artistic influence
Income: Mid-high, stable
Brands:   

Behaviours

- Buys fewer beauty products, but prioritizes quality and sustainability
- Researches ingredients, sourcing, and brand transparency
- Prefers refillable packaging and multipurpose products
- Shops online but values brands that communicate ethical values clearly
- Uses makeup primarily for professional and social occasions

Motivations

- Reducing waste and overconsumption
- Understanding what ingredients she puts on her skin
- Investing in products that align with personal values

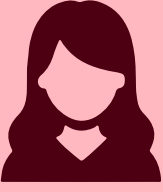
Frustrations

- Lack of transparency in cosmetic ingredient lists.
- Excessive packaging and short product life cycles.
- Having to buy entirely new products instead of refilling or adapting

What DIY Cosmetics Should Mean to Elise
Transparency and sustainability through ingredient control and refill systems.




Figure 6: The Conscious Curator Persona

Experience-oriented · Process-driven · Learning-focused



Daniella
The Curious Creator

“If I can contribute to how it’s made, I trust & value it more.”

Age: 28
Gender: Female
Occupation: Industrial Designer
Location: busy cities filled with activities to do
Income: Mid, stable
Brands:   

Behaviours

- Enjoys DIY activities such as ceramics, woodworking, or cooking
- Interested in how products are designed and manufactured
- Curates personal products that show visible craftsmanship
- Regularly attends workshops, maker spaces, and creative events
- Uses minimal cosmetics but values well-designed tools and systems

Motivations

- Learning new skills
- Understanding materials and processes
- Participating in creative communities
- Experiencing the satisfaction of making something yourself

Frustrations

- Consumer products that hide their production processes
- Overly closed systems that prevent user participation
- Lack of opportunities to engage directly with product creation

What DIY Cosmetics Should Mean to Daniella:
Hands-on participation, new knowledge over ingredients, and high-quality aesthetics that align with personal taste

Figure 7: The Curious Creator Persona

7.4.6 HOW :

How can DIY cosmetic making be positioned or experienced as a credible and reliable alternative to commercially produced cosmetics?

HOW can DIY cosmetics become credible and reliable?		
Guided experiences	Transparent ingredient Communication	Readily available components
workshops	simplified ingredient explanations	toolkits
in-store ingredient customization	understandable safety labeling	pre-formulated ingredients (like baking)
guided color matching	cause & effect	multifunctional pigments / ingredients
	clear expiration dates	instructions / "recipe" cards

Table 8: HOW Findings

The question of how is the most critical to this project. During interviews and discussions with industry professionals, the term "impossible" was used to describe the feasibility of DIY cosmetics. This perception stems from the complexities associated with large-batch production requirements, highly technical ingredients and processes, and strict safety regulations that define the contemporary cosmetics industry.

While these are valid considerations, this project proposes that DIY cosmetics should be understood and evaluated outside the constraints of current industrial production models. By doing so, new pathways and opportunities can be identified to involve user participation and re-inspire self-making practices.

Therefore, the current takeaway and proposition for how DIY cosmetics can become a credible and reliable alternative to ready-made products is through the development of guided experiences, transparent communication of ingredients and processes, and readily available infrastructure, including tools, materials, and instructions, that support users in engaging confidently in cosmetic self-making (Image 20). DIY cosmetic making isn't about conforming but about redefining the conditions under which making can occur. By shifting focus toward guided, small-scale, and user-centered experiences, DIY cosmetics can become accessible, safe, and meaningful for a wider audience.



8 Ideas / Criteria for Design Interventions



Image 20 : Hand Drawn Workshop Design Concepts

Many considerations must be incorporated into a design intervention that thoughtfully aims to close the gap between user and producer, transforming passive consumers into active prosumers. The beauty industry contains both emotional and physical entanglements that must be addressed.

Users should have opportunities to exercise agency and actively participate in the making process, while also feeling supported, guided, and reassured. DIY cosmetics remain a relatively unfamiliar concept, and products designed for direct contact with the skin introduce additional sensitivities and perceived risks. As a result, participation should feel empowering without feeling overwhelming.

From a physical perspective, tools and materials should be readily available and accessible while offering enough variety to support personalization without feeling

excessively standardized or mass-produced. Packaging, ingredients, and materials should be selected not only for immediate use but also for their longevity and their ability to build meaningful relationships between users and products. The goal is to encourage more thoughtful beauty consumption, meaning the experience should not feel like a one-off activity or novelty product.

This leads to a broader consideration: the need for a system or infrastructure specifically designed to support ongoing user involvement and DIY cosmetic making. The beauty industry, as it currently operates, does not naturally support this type of participation. Greater consideration must be given to packaging modification, refillability, reuse, product maintenance, and end-of-life disposal. First and foremost, users should have visibility into each step of the process in order to support transparency throughout the operating model.

As lip products were identified as the most accessible entry point into DIY cosmetics due to their experimental nature and relatively low barrier to participation, a series of non-negotiable criteria were established to determine the level of involvement participants would have in the DIY beauty-making process. These criteria were informed by interviews, trend analysis, and the emerging opportunities observed within contemporary beauty practices. Specifically for lip balm making, this meant providing users with opportunities to influence and learn about the packaging, ingredients, colorants, scents, and overall aesthetic qualities that contribute to the finished product. At the same time, sufficient guidance, safety information, and material support were needed to ensure participants felt confident throughout the process.

To explore and validate these conditions in practice, the next phase of this research translates these insights into a workshop-based design intervention (Image 21). The workshop functions as a prototype intervention, investigating how users engage with guided cosmetic-making processes while simultaneously involving them in the design process itself. Through this, it seeks to identify the tools, environments, educational formats, customization options, and support systems that users perceive as necessary for meaningful and sustained participation in DIY cosmetics (Image 22).

Interviews conducted prior to the workshop revealed that curiosity alone was not enough to encourage participation in DIY cosmetics. Participants consistently reported barriers including limited knowledge, uncertainty about ingredients and safety, lack of confidence in their abilities, and unfamiliarity with cosmetic production processes. At the same time, they expressed a desire for greater transparency, personalization, and involvement in the products they use.

To address these barriers while gradually increasing participants' involvement, the workshop was intentionally structured into three phases: Expanding Knowledge, Engaging in DIY Cosmetic Making, and Building the Toolkit, Platform, and Guidance for Future Success. Together, these phases were designed to move participants from understanding the contemporary beauty system to actively experiencing an alternative through making, and finally to have the ability to reflect on the conditions necessary to support DIY cosmetics beyond the workshop itself.

LET'S MAKE MAKEUP:
DIYING LIP BALM
 COLOR, FORMULA & PACKAGING CUSTOMIZATION

LOOKING FOR:
8 PARTICIPANTS

agenda:

- project intro
- short discussion
- instruction
- workshop
- takeaways + brainstorm



Image 21: Workshop Flyer / Invite

Ingredient Choices:

1. Component (packaging) /function
 ex) squeeze tube, wand applicator, tin, stick
2. Base ingredient + its purpose/function
3. Hydrating additives (oils)
4. Scent/flavor
5. Colorant/pigment

Tools:

- mixing bowl
- mixing spatula
- transferable tool - syringe or funnel
- measuring tools
- heat source
- lip product packaging

Guidance:

1 facilitator / designer / researcher

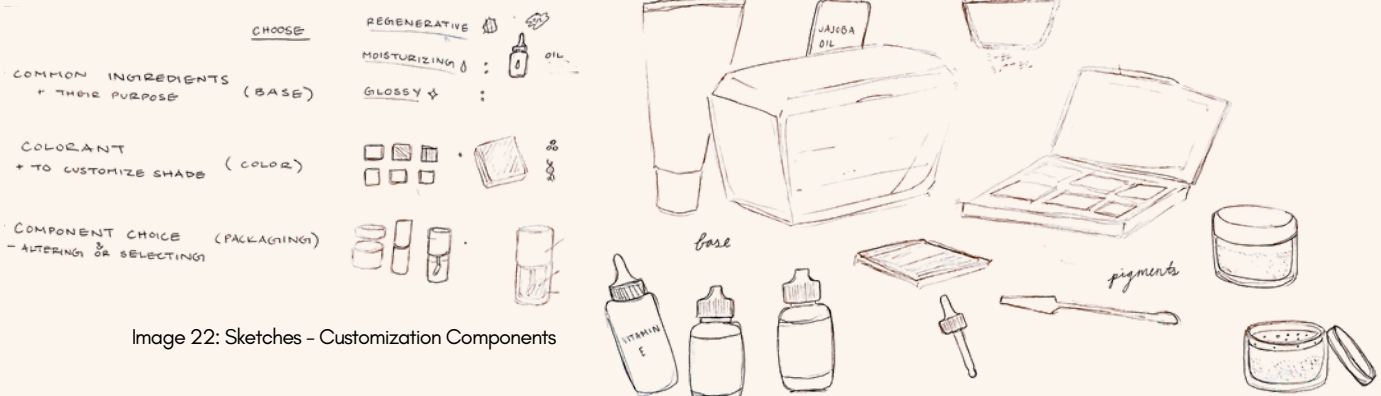


Image 22: Sketches - Customization Components

9 The Workshop

WORKSHOP
ORGANIZATION

EXPANDING
KNOWLEDGE

ENGAGING IN
COSMETIC MAKING

BUILDING TOOLKIT,
PLATFORM, & GUIDANCE

SECOND WORKSHOP
ITERATION



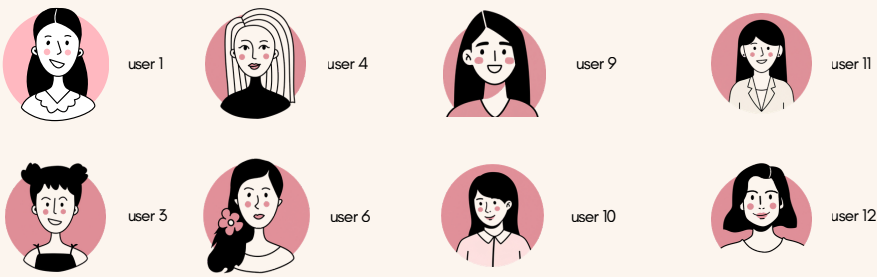
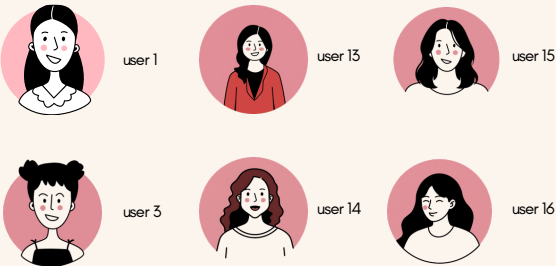
Interview Step	Purpose	Action
Recruitment	To recruit participants representative of the target audience in order to evaluate the DIY cosmetics workshop and explore how participants engage with cosmetic making, learning, and participation.	Recruited participants through convenience sampling, inviting interview participants and additional volunteers to participate in two iterative workshop sessions. Participants were novice to regular makeup users with varying levels of cosmetic knowledge and DIY experience.
Workshop Procedure	To evaluate the DIY cosmetics workshop as a design intervention while generating qualitative insights into participant experiences, learning, confidence, creativity, and opportunities for refinement.	Conducted two workshop sessions in which participants learned about the history of cosmetics, contemporary beauty consumption, ingredients, packaging, and formulation before creating their own lip product. Participants selected ingredients, fragrances, pigments, and packaging, followed guided formulation activities, completed pre- and post-workshop questionnaires, and participated in a facilitated co-creation discussion to reflect on their experiences and identify opportunities for improvement.
Confidentiality	To ensure ethical participation and protect participant privacy.	Participants received information about the workshop, provided informed consent, and were informed that participation was voluntary. Workshop responses, observations, questionnaires, photographs, and discussion data were anonymized using participant codes (Users 1-16), securely stored, and used solely for research purposes.
Participants workshop #1	<p>Recruited 8 participants, including 7 interview participants (Users 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, and 11) and 1 new participant (User 12). Participants represented the target audience of makeup users aged approximately 20-30 with varying levels of cosmetic knowledge and DIY experience.</p> 	
Participants workshop #2	<p>Recruited 6 participants, including 2 returning participants (Users 1 and 3) and 4 new participants (Users 13-16). Participants represented the target audience of makeup users aged approximately 20-30 with varying levels of cosmetic knowledge and DIY experience, allowing comparison between returning and first-time participants.</p> 	

Table 9 : Workshop Process Overview

9.1 Workshop Organization

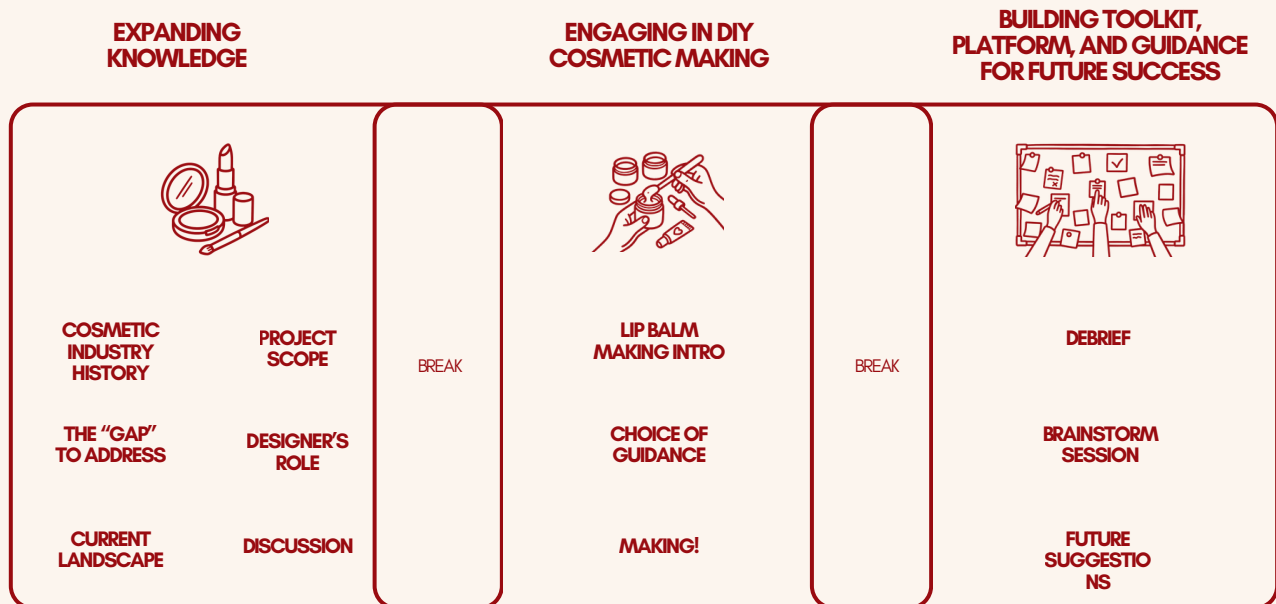


Figure 8: Workshop Agenda

The workshop activities were divided into three phases to best inform participants and deliver an educational, engaging activity for them to reflect on (Figure 8).

The first phase, **Expanding Knowledge**, focused on providing participants with the context needed to understand the current state of the beauty industry and the project's motivation. Participants were introduced to the historical development of cosmetics, the project's scope, the widening gap between consumers and producers, contemporary industry developments, and the designer's role in facilitating alternative relationships with beauty products. This phase aimed to establish a shared understanding of the problem space before introducing DIY cosmetics as a potential intervention.

The second phase, **Engaging in DIY Cosmetic Making**, turned these ideas and concepts into a hands-on experience through the creation of personalized lip balm. Participants were introduced to the cosmetic-making process and a range of ingredients, packaging options, colors, and scents through creating their own products. This phase allowed participants to experience what it means to move from consumer to maker while exploring the opportunities and limitations of DIY cosmetic production firsthand.

The third phase, **Building Toolkit, Platform, and Guidance for future success**, invited participants to reflect on their experiences through a debrief and brainstorming session. This was a moment for participants to evaluate and reflect on the workshop, identifying barriers and enablers to participation, and which tools, knowledge, support systems, and infrastructures they believed would be necessary to make DIY cosmetics more accessible, desirable, and sustainable for long-term engagement in the future.

This structure is informed by the Design for Do-It-Yourself Framework proposed by Hoftizjer 2024. By structuring the workshop in this way, participants were able to progress from understanding the problem to experiencing the making process to co-designing/co-creating the conditions for the expansion of DIY in the beauty scene. These three phases generated insights into the interest in DIY cosmetics itself and also into the educational, social, material, and systemic support required to enable meaningful participation.

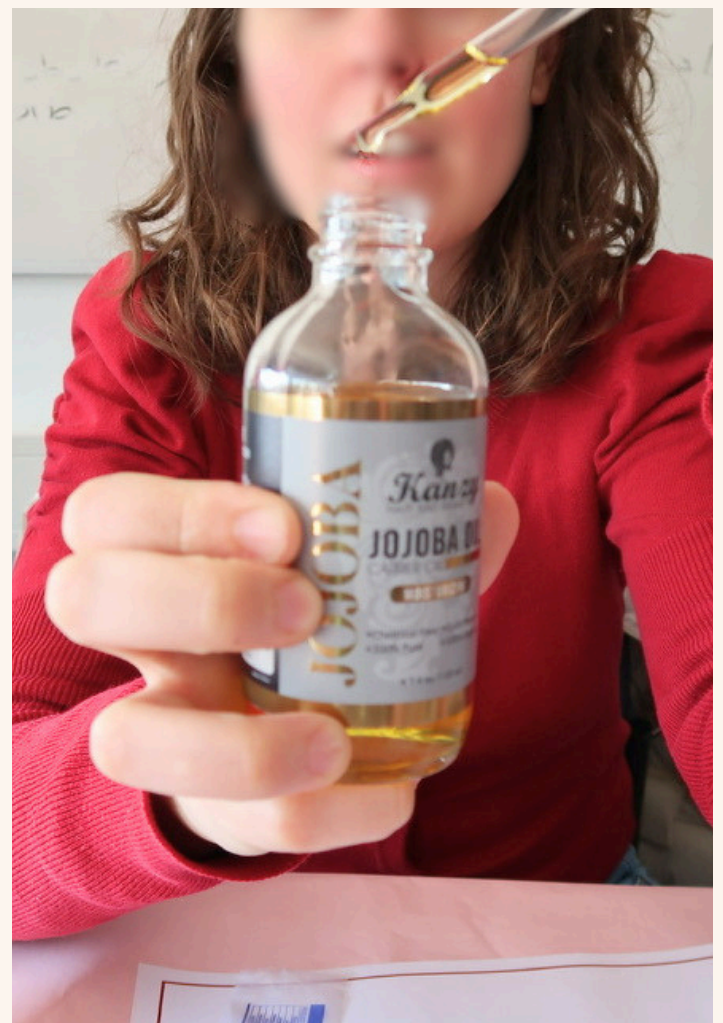
“Mixing & testing colors is fun, seeing the color become the one you like also gives you the vibe that you’re getting to know yourself better”

- Workshop Participant Anonymous Feedback

The workshops functioned as both a designed intervention and a prototype, allowing participants to move from passive cosmetic consumers into active makers. In doing so, it revealed many of the emotional, practical, and systemic conditions required for DIY cosmetics to feel credible, desirable, and empowering.

Even before formal instruction began, participants were already engaging with the materials and asking questions about ingredients and their functions. As the workshop space was being prepared, participants observed the workplace setup, ingredient displays, colorful pigments, and visual instructions. The setup itself seemed to generate a good amount of curiosity and anticipation around the activity. Once seated at their assigned workstations, participants immediately began exploring the components spread across the table. Without hesitation, they handled the tools, examined pigments, opened oils and fragrances, and discussed their impressions with one another. Some ingredients were familiar, while others were completely new to them. Participants began selecting scents based on sensory preferences before they even knew how or when they would be used. They bonded over shared preferences and dislikes, became excited about creating unconventional colors such as blue or green lip balm, and explored the creative possibilities available to them.

This initial engagement revealed that curiosity and sensory exploration, such as seeing the information, physically handling it, and smelling some ingredients, played an important role in lowering the threshold to participation. It was wonderful to see how participants naturally gravitated toward the materials and began to shape personal preferences by engaging with the ingredients and discussing.







9.2 Expanding Knowledge: Understanding the Beauty Industry

This first phase of the workshop aimed to contextualize contemporary cosmetic consumption for the participants by tracing the industry's transition from localized self-making practices to today's globalized beauty infrastructure.

Participants were guided through this historical shift from homemade cosmetics to industrialized mass production, and through the social and technological developments that enabled this transition. For many, this information was new. Multiple participants commented that they had never previously considered how our relationship with beauty products came to be, nor how they were designed, manufactured, or distributed. Embedded within this historical narrative was the central problem explored throughout this thesis: the widening physical and metaphorical gap between consumers and producers of beauty products. Participants recognized how this separation has shaped contemporary beauty culture in positive and negative ways, formed consumption patterns, and shaped our understandings of beauty itself.

One participant reflected:

“The industry is driven a lot by trends and then the products become more generic. So for example, if a certain country's beauty is in, then everything looks like that.”

This observation reflects beauty users' and participants' broader concerns about the homogenization of beauty trends and the increasing standardization of production in a globalized industry.



To further situate participants within the contemporary beauty landscape, examples from a site visit to Cosmoprof Bologna (section 6) were presented through photographs, product samples, and promotional materials collected during the event. This was to involve the participants in current industry trends, emerging technologies, and the latest beauty innovations. Some examples include AI-supported beauty tools, multifunctional pigments, and new cosmetic formats. These examples were meant to showcase both the creativity and scale of the contemporary cosmetics industry while hinting at the level of market saturation that defines it.

The discussion naturally shifted toward one of the industry's most significant consequences: overconsumption. Participants reflected on their experiences navigating an increasingly crowded marketplace characterized by frequent product launches, competing ingredient claims, and extensive choices even within a singular brand. When asked whether they felt excited or overwhelmed by the amount of choice available in beauty retail environments, the overwhelming response was a sense of fatigue and overload.

“ still excited to see the new trends but when it comes to purchasing it's too time consuming to find the right product ”

“ overwhelmed, too much information, don't know which one fits me better ”

“ i feel more overwhelmed when having a lot of choices actually... then i need to compare and look into reviews on some forums to find what fits me ”

“ overwheked by color + brands b/c i don't know what looks good on me, what brands are nice, so i stick to a few brands ”

The number of products, brands, colors, ingredients, and claims from various influences to choose from can be exhausting. Many explained that their own process of evaluating options, researching reviews, and determining what suited their personal needs required considerable effort and often reduced their motivation to purchase altogether. What makes them pull the trigger on a purchase is recommendations from trusted sources, such as friends and family, a reputable brand name, or a refill of a favorite product.

These reflections suggest that while this accessibility and variety are often seen as benefits of contemporary consumer culture, they can also generate uncertainty, decision fatigue, and disengagement (Kaur, 2024; Wang et al., 2022; Schwartz, 2004). Participants' experiences align with broader concerns about overconsumption in the beauty industry and reveal an emerging desire for more meaningful, intentional, and personalized relationships with cosmetic products.



9.3 Engaging in DIY Cosmetic Making

After the knowledge-building phase, participants began the making portion of the workshop. This phase began with a safety introduction before introducing participants to the shared and individual tools, materials, ingredients, packaging options, and instructional cards. It was important to establish both emotional and physical safety while providing participants with the tools, materials, and support structures necessary to engage confidently in cosmetic making.



Participants were given a workstation and presented with a wide range of options, including ingredients, packaging, and formula choices. They could choose from four packaging formats, four base ingredients, five oils, twelve scents, and twenty-four colors that could be combined, to each their own. Information was available for all ingredients, and instructional cards guided participants through the process based on their selected lip product type: lip balm tube, chapstick tube, lip balm stick, or lip balm tin. Although each packaging format required a slightly different formulation, all recipes followed a similar sequence: measuring ingredients, combining bases and oils, heating, adding color and scent, finishing with a protective oil, and transferring the final product into the chosen packaging with a cosmetic syringe (Figure 9).

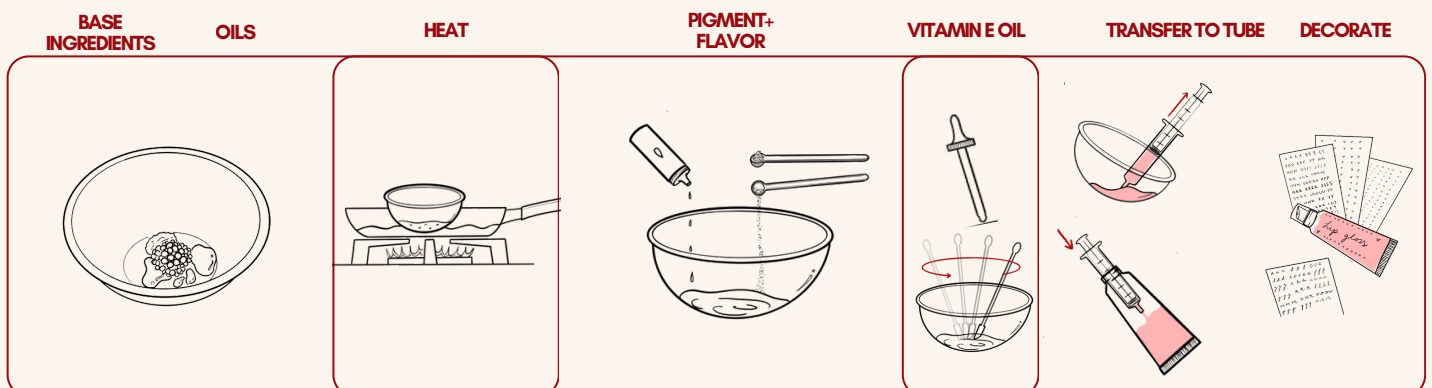


Figure 9: Lip Balm Making Sequence

The selected packaging largely determined the final product's consistency (Figure 10-14), while ingredient choices influenced qualities such as hydration, repair, and glossiness.

This first workshop was an opportunity to understand how participants engaged with ingredients, tools, information, and one another throughout the making process. In addition to observing participants' emotional responses and levels of engagement, attention was directed to moments of hesitation, curiosity, confidence-building, frustration, unprompted creativity, collaboration, and decision-making. The workshop also provided an opportunity to evaluate how the physical setup itself influenced participant behavior and interactions with the tools, ingredients, and instructional materials.

One of the earliest and most visible moments of decision-making occurred during the packaging selection stage. Preferences emerged almost immediately. Overall, the lip gloss squeeze tube was the most popular option, with the lip gloss tube with a wand applicator following as a popular second choice. None of the participants selected the Chapstick-style tube or lip balm tin format. Participants then selected the corresponding recipe for their chosen packaging, reinforcing the relationship among packaging, formulation, and final product characteristics.

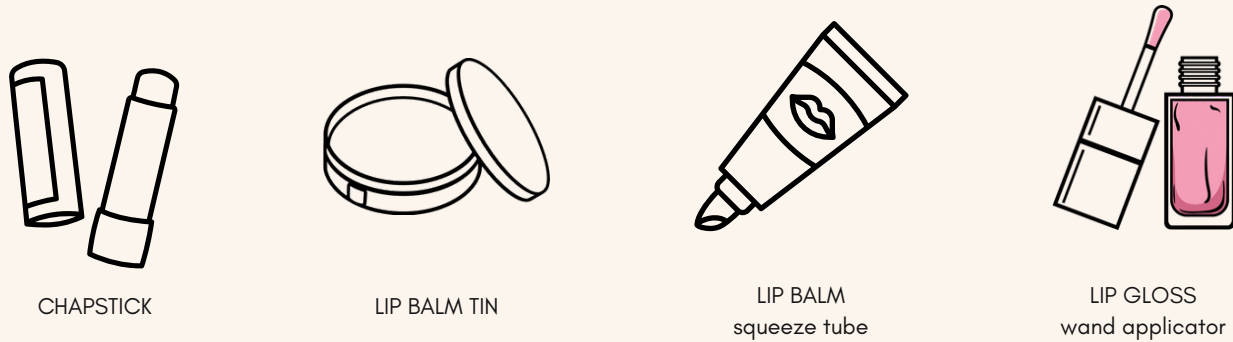


Figure 10: Lip Balm Packaging Options

INSTRUCTIONS

LIP BALM

Tools Needed
Double boiler
Spoon or spatula
Digital scale
Lip balm tins or small containers
Pipette

Ingredients	Quantity	Purpose
Beeswax	2 g	Adds firmness and protective barrier
Coconut Oil	2 g	Softens and moisturizes lips
Shea Butter (or cocoa/mango butter)	2 g	Deep nourishment and smooth texture
Sunflower Oil (or carrier oil)	4 g	Lightweight hydration and glide
Vitamin E Oil	1 drop	Antioxidant protection and shelf life
Peppermint Essential Oil (optional)	2 drops	Cooling sensation and scent

Instructions

1. Measure all ingredients accurately before starting.
2. Add beeswax, coconut oil, shea butter, and sunflower oil into a double boiler.
3. Heat gently until fully melted, stirring occasionally.
4. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly.
5. Add vitamin E oil and peppermint essential oil if using.
6. Stir well to combine.
7. Carefully pour mixture into containers.
8. Leave to cool completely before closing lids.

Customization Tips

- Replace sunflower oil with jojoba or avocado oil for different textures.
- Add mica powder for a tinted balm.
- Use flavoring oil for a flavored balm.
- Pour into tubes instead of tins for portable use.

Figure 11: Lip Balm Tin Recipe

INSTRUCTIONS

CHAPSTICK

Tools Needed
Double boiler
Spoon or stir stick
Lip balm tubes or tins
Funnel/Pipette (optional)

Ingredients	Quantity	Purpose
Beeswax Pellets (or candelilla wax)	1 tbsp	Creates structure and firmness
Shea Butter	1 tbsp	Conditions and softens lips
Coconut Oil / Sweet Almond Oil	1 tbsp	Moisturizing base oil
Vitamin E Oil	3-5 drops	Lip protection and preservation
Essential Oil of Choice	5 drops	Flavor or scent
Mica Powder (optional)	1/4 tsp	Adds colour tint

Instructions

1. Add beeswax, shea butter, and chosen oil into a double boiler.
2. Heat gently until all ingredients are melted.
3. Remove from heat and cool for 1 minute.
4. Add vitamin E oil, essential oils, and mica powder if desired.
5. Stir thoroughly until smooth.
6. Pour into chapstick tubes or tins.
7. Leave undisturbed until fully set.

Customization Tips

- Use candelilla wax for a vegan version.
- Add mica powder for a tinted chapstick.
- Use peppermint for cooling effect or vanilla for sweetness.
- Increase beeswax slightly for a firmer stick.

Figure 12: Chapstick Recipe

INSTRUCTIONS

LIP BALM

Tools Needed
Double boiler
Spoon or stirrer
Funnel/Pipette
Lip gloss tubes

Ingredients	Quantity	Purpose
Castor Oil	2-18 tsp	Adds shine and glossy texture
Sweet Almond Oil	1-18 tsp	Nourishes and softens lips
Kokum Butter	1-18 tsp	Adds richness and smooth consistency
White Beeswax	1/2-18 tsp	Thickens and stabilizes formula
Mica Powder (optional)	1/8-18 tsp	Adds shimmer or tint
Lipstick Piece (optional)	1/4-1/2 inch	Adds colour pigment
Essential Oils (optional)	5 drops	Scent or flavor
Candy Flavoring (optional)	10 drops	Sweet taste and aroma

Instructions

1. Fill saucepan halfway with water and place measuring cup inside.
2. Add castor oil, almond oil, kokum butter, and beeswax.
3. Heat gently until fully melted.
4. Remove from heat.
5. Add mica powder, lipstick pigment, flavoring, or essential oils if using.
6. Stir until evenly blended.
7. Pour mixture into glass tubes using funnel.
8. Allow to cool completely before sealing.

Customization Tips

- Add lipstick pieces for custom shades.
- Use extra castor oil for higher shine.
- Add gold mica for shimmer gloss.

Figure 13: Lip Balm Tube Recipe

INSTRUCTIONS

LIP "GLOSS"

Tools Needed
Double boiler
Spoon or spatula
Pipette or small funnel
Lip gloss tubes
Measuring spoons

Ingredient	Amount	Purpose
Coconut Oil	1-18 tsp	Moisturizing base
Beeswax	1-18 tsp	Adds body and shine
Vitamin E Oil	3-5 drops	Lip protection and preservation
Flavor / Fragrance Oil	2-3 drops	Adds scent or taste
Mica / Pigment (optional)	1/4-18 tsp	Adds colour tint

Instructions

1. Add coconut oil and beeswax to a double boiler.
2. Heat gently until fully melted and smooth.
3. Remove from heat and allow to cool briefly.
4. Stir in vitamin E oil and fragrance or flavor oil.
5. Add mica or pigment gradually if using, mixing until evenly combined.
6. Carefully pour mixture into glass tubes or jars using a pipette or funnel.
7. Leave at room temperature for approximately 30 minutes until fully set.
8. Seal containers and store in a cool, dry place.

Customization Tips

- Extra Shine: Add 1/2-18 tsp castor oil for a glossier finish.
- Softer Texture: Increase coconut oil slightly.
- Vegan Formula: Replace beeswax with candelilla wax.
- Natural Glow: Skip pigment and add extra vitamin E oil.

Figure 14: Lip Gloss Recipe

9.3.1 Social Engagement



Without being prompted, participants naturally began working in pairs. While some participants were already familiar with one another, this behavior appeared to be driven less by existing relationships and more by the comfort of progressing through an unfamiliar process alongside someone else. Participants frequently checked in with one another, compared progress, asked questions, and followed along with peers who were at a similar stage in the process.

This observation provided valuable insight into the social dimensions of DIY cosmetic making. The importance of social engagement had already emerged during the interview phase, as participants expressed a greater willingness to attend a DIY cosmetic activity with friends than to do so alone. The workshop seemed to validate this finding. The environment was designed to create a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere, and the social interaction aspect emerged as a practical resource. Participants exchanged tips, discussed color combinations, shared scent preferences, compared outcomes, and helped one another navigate decisions throughout the process.

My role as facilitator was most apparent during the moments that required technical guidance. Participants approached me with questions regarding process steps, heating stages, ingredient substitutions, and formulation outcomes. However, when it came to aesthetic choices such as color mixing, scent combinations, packaging decoration, or personal preferences, participants mainly made independent choices or consulted one another. Throughout the workshop, I emphasized that the recipes were intentionally forgiving and designed to encourage experimentation. While guidance was provided when necessary, participants were encouraged to trust their own judgment and make decisions independently. This resulted in a level of supported confidence while maintaining the sense of authorship over the final product.

The workshop's shared resources also unintentionally revealed useful insights regarding pacing and user participation. Because the participants progressed through the activity at different speeds, resource-intensive stages such as heating, transferring the mixture into packaging, and decorating became staggered. Rather than creating congestion, this variation in pace reduced demand for shared tools and stations while allowing participants to also learn from others who were slightly ahead or behind in the process.

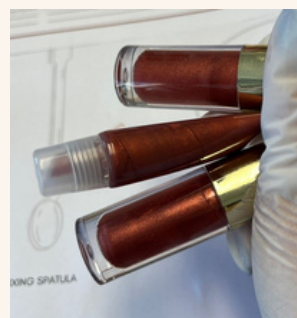


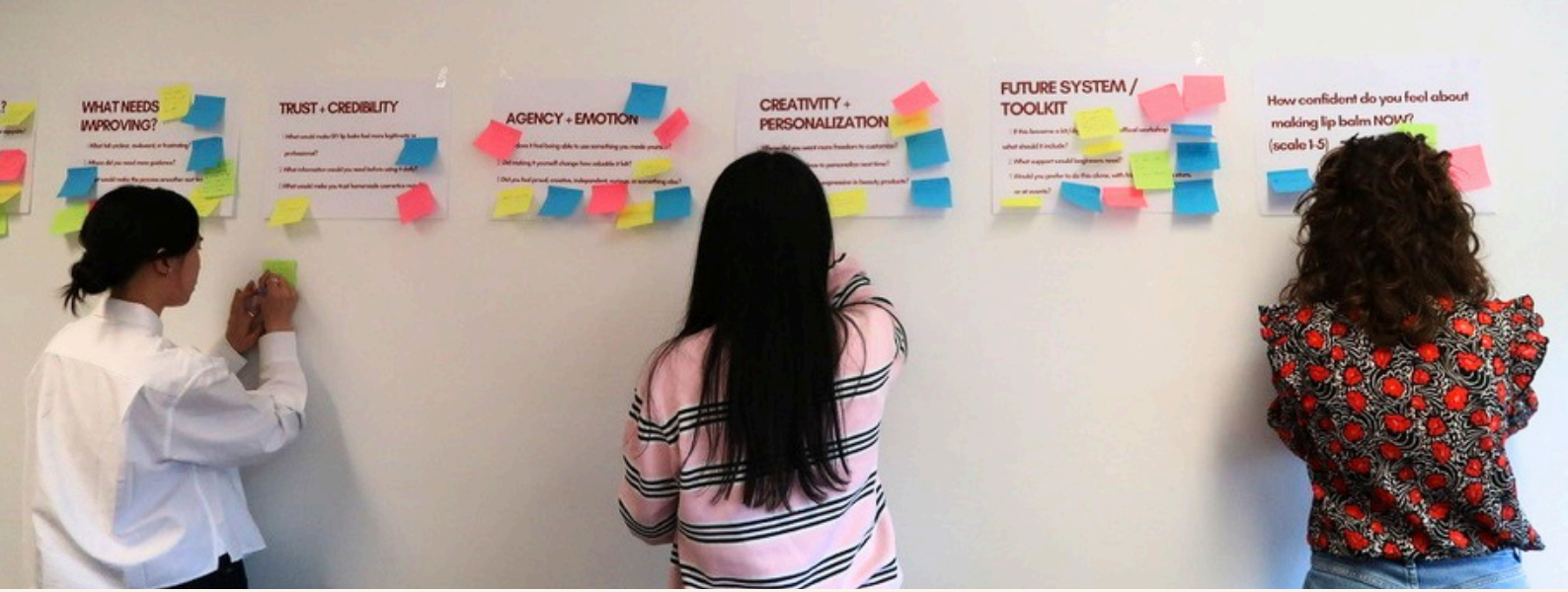
Image 29: Participant's final balms

Another unexpected outcome was the quantity of product produced. Most recipes generated enough material for participants to fill multiple lip gloss containers (Image 29). This isn't a positive or negative takeaway, but an observation regarding the recipe size. As a

result, many participants left with more than one product. This was perceived as valuable and introduced opportunities for personalizing and gifting. Several participants discussed giving a product to a friend or family member, while others customized packaging with specific names, colors, or decorative elements intended for a particular recipient. In this way, participants were not only designing for themselves but also engaging in acts of personalization and care for others.

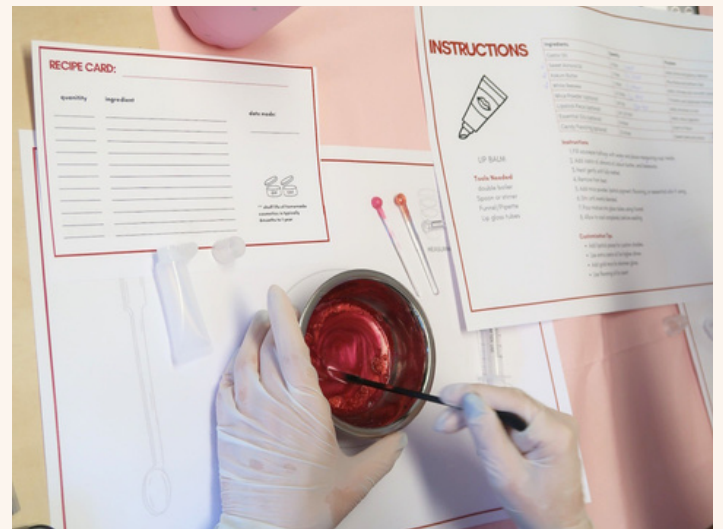
What was particularly striking was how readily participants engaged with the activity despite receiving only a manageable amount of information regarding the process, ingredients, and expected outcomes. Following completion of the making process and product decoration, participants entered the final phase of the workshop: a co-creation session focused on identifying the social, functional, and systemic conditions necessary to support the future success of DIY cosmetics.





9.4 Building Toolkit, Platform, & Guidance

The first workshop not only explored participants' perceptions of DIY cosmetics but also served as an opportunity to evaluate the workshop itself as a designed intervention. Feedback, observations, and participant discussions revealed several opportunities to improve the facilitation of knowledge, materials, and participation. As a result, a second iteration of the workshop was developed around three primary areas of improvement: Workshop Set-Up, Knowledge Transfer, and Instruction Format.



WHAT WORKED WELL?



1. What part of today's experience felt easiest or most enjoyable?
2. What helped you feel capable or successful?
3. What made the process feel fun?

- ★ themed set up, something that feels intentional and easy to understand
- ★ Being an activity to do with friends
- ★ Accessible materials
- ★ Processes and practices deepening knowledge
- ★ Personal and intentional making

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVING?



1. What felt unclear, awkward, or frustrating?
2. Where did you need more guidance?
3. What would make the process smoother next time?

- ★ Access to cleaning tools while working with oily materials
- ★ Clearer instructions of when/how to heat the mixture
- ★ Enough equipment (measuring spoons) to make the process more streamlined



TRUST + CREDIBILITY



1. What would make DIY lip balm feel more legitimate or professional?
2. What information would you need before using it daily?
3. What would make you trust homemade cosmetics more?

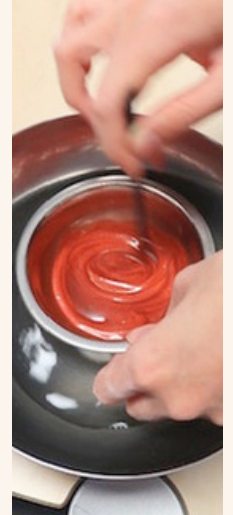
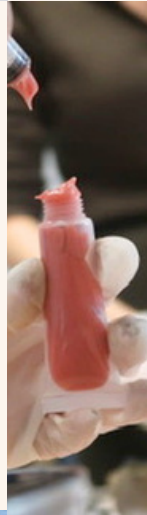
- ★ Having a deeper understanding of ingredients
- ★ Clear instructions with additional imagery
- ★ Processes and practices deepening knowledge

AGENCY + EMOTION



1. How does it feel being able to use something you made yourself?
2. Did making it yourself change how valuable it felt?
3. Did you feel proud, creative, independent, curious, or something else?

- ★ Feeling freedom of choice
- ★ A fun and empowering practice
- ★ Giving an item more value



CREATIVITY + PERSONALIZATION



1. Where did you want more freedom to customize?
2. What would you love to personalize next time?
3. How important is self-expression in beauty products?

- ★ Already high in customizability!!
- ★ ingredients, color, scent, packaging, personalization

FUTURE SYSTEM / TOOLKIT



1. If this became a kit/digital platform/official workshop what should it include?
2. What support would beginners need?
3. Would you prefer to do this alone, with friends, online, in store, or at events?



9.5 Second Workshop Iteration




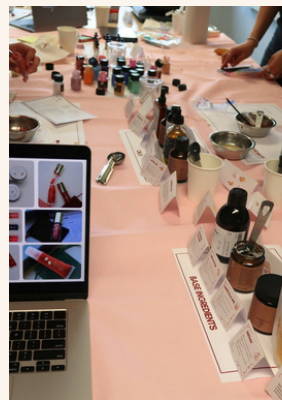
WORKSHOP SET UP	KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER	INSTRUCTION FORMAT
		
<p>Layout / table set up → how items are arranged → how participants move through the space</p> <p>How participants engage with tools: + add more measuring spoons, clear instructions materials : sanitization station eachother: sharing, exchanging tips, assisting one</p> <p>Agenda & timing + room for breaks</p>	<p>How users understand each ingredient → How ingredient options differ → what results ingredients have → Alternatives</p> <p>How users understand the process → phrasing → images → tactile → sensory → physical guidance</p>	<p>Different formats of learning → Recipe Card → Manual → Video tutorial</p> <p>Different learning formats provide different levels of guidance, support, and independence</p>

Table 10: Workshop #2 Re-Design Domains

9.5.1 Refining the Workshop Set-Up

The first area of refinement through design focused on the physical workshop environment and how participants interacted with the space, materials, tools, and one another. Particular attention was given to the layout and table setup, considering how ingredients, packaging, tools, and instructional materials were arranged, displayed, and presented. The goal was to curate a more intentional aesthetic and atmosphere while simultaneously improving functionality, safety, and ease of use.





Adjustments were also made to support participants as they moved through the workshop and engaged with available resources. Additional measuring spoons were provided to reduce bottlenecks during the making process; instructions were clarified, and a dedicated sanitization station was introduced to reinforce safe cosmetic-making practices.



Equally important was how participants interacted with one another. The workshop was designed to encourage conversation, collaboration, sharing preferences, exchanging tips, and assisting one another throughout the making process. These social interactions were observed as valuable components of the first workshop and were intentionally supported within the second iteration.

Finally, the agenda and pacing of the workshop were adjusted. Additional time was allocated for breaks, questions, experimentation, and trial and error. This created greater flexibility for individual pacing while reducing moments that felt rushed or overwhelming.

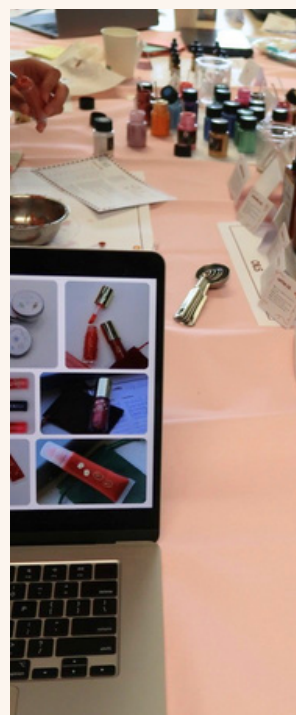
9.5.2 Improving Knowledge Transfer

The second area of refinement focused on how information was communicated to participants. While participants expressed strong curiosity regarding ingredients and cosmetic production, Workshop 1 revealed a desire for more accessible and detailed explanations.

To support informed decision-making, greater emphasis was placed on communicating ingredient functions, differences, and expected outcomes. Participants wanted to understand not only what ingredients were, but why they were being used, how different ingredients compared to one another, and what alternatives might exist.



Additional improvements were made to support the understanding of the cosmetic-making process itself. Instructions were rewritten using more accessible language, supplementary process images were introduced, and greater opportunities were provided for tactile and sensory exploration. Participants were encouraged to touch, smell, compare, and test ingredients before making decisions. Particular attention was also given to the role of facilitation, exploring how and when guidance should be provided throughout the workshop and how much support participants required at different stages of the process.



9.5.3 Exploring Instruction Formats

A third area of redesign emerged from participants' requests for resources that could support DIY cosmetic making beyond the workshop environment. As a result, Workshop 2 was also used to test different instructional formats and levels of guidance.

Participants were given access to three learning formats:

- Recipe Card
- Manual
- Video Tutorial

These formats were introduced to explore how different forms of instruction influence confidence, understanding, and participation in DIY cosmetic making. Each format provides varying levels of guidance, support, and independence, shaping how users engage with the making process.

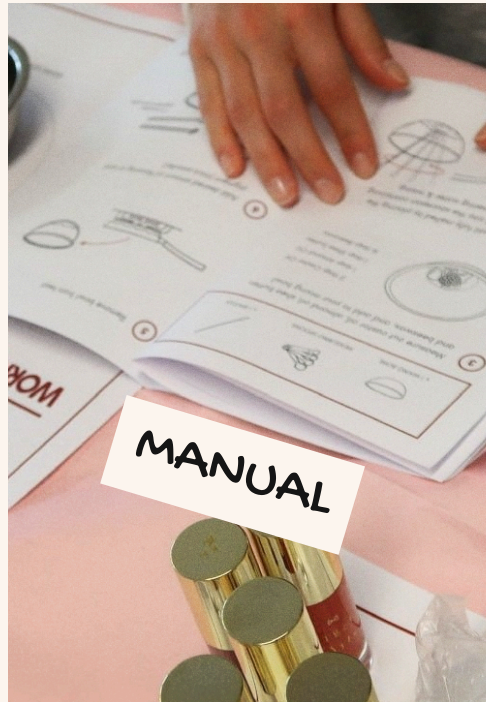
Workshops represent the highest level of facilitation through hands-on guidance, shared learning, and real-time feedback, helping users build confidence while reducing uncertainty. Video tutorials provide visual step-by-step instructions while allowing users to learn at their own pace. Manuals and recipe cards offer more independent forms of learning, giving users greater control, flexibility, and opportunities for experimentation.

By comparing these formats, the second workshop was designed to better understand what types of educational support are necessary for users to successfully engage with DIY cosmetics both within and beyond a facilitated workshop setting. These findings contribute to understanding how future DIY cosmetic platforms, toolkits, and learning resources might be designed to support varying levels of agency, creativity, confidence, and personalization.





RECIPE CARD



MANUAL



VIDEO TUTORIAL



WORKSHOP

10 Findings

CURIOSITY AND
KNOWLEDGE
SEEKING

OVERWHELM WITH
CONTEMPORARY
BEAUTY MARKET

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL
LEARNING AND
COLLABORATION

TRUST,
CREDIBILITY,
AND SUPPORT

AGENCY
THROUGH
CREATIVITY

CONFIDENCE
BUILDING BY
MAKING





10.1 Curiosity and Knowledge Seeking

One of the strongest observations across both workshops was participants' natural curiosity toward ingredients, tools, and cosmetic production processes. Before any formal instruction was given, participants were already asking questions about ingredients and their purpose, examining pigments, opening fragrances, and discussing their preferences with one another. The workshop environment itself appeared to stimulate exploration. The visual display of ingredients, tools, packaging, and instructions transformed the setup into a spectacle that invited interaction.

Participants demonstrated a strong interest in learning about ingredients, despite initially describing knowledge of ingredients as inaccessible or time-consuming to acquire. One participant noted:

“ I start thinking when I see the behind the scenes videos posted by brands. But normally I wouldn't really think of it as I found that quite complicated and also not a field that I'm familiar with. It would take a lot of effort to actually educate myself to all these things. Especially the ingredients.

Interestingly, once knowledge was made tangible through physical ingredients, ingredient cards, demonstrations, and making activities, participants actively sought more information. During the co-creation sessions, many requested additional details regarding ingredient functions, substitutions, and expected results. Suggestions included manuals, ingredient cards, visual guides, and more detailed process explanations.

The second workshop further reinforced this finding. Participants immediately began reading ingredient cards and self-educating before the activity began. Comments such as “Ooo Jojoba oil!” demonstrated familiarity, excitement, and recognition. These observations suggest that the barrier is not a lack of interest but rather the accessibility of information and how it is communicated. This aligns with DIY literature suggesting that reducing knowledge barriers and providing supportive infrastructures can encourage participation and self-directed learning (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011).

10.2 Overwhelm with Contemporary Beauty Market

Prior to making, participants reflected on their experiences navigating the contemporary beauty industry. A recurring theme was the feeling of being overwhelmed by product abundance, endless choice, competing brand claims, and information overload.

Participants described feeling overwhelmed not only by the number of products available but also by uncertainty surrounding ingredients, greenwashing, product performance, and suitability.

“If I go to Sephora I feel overwhelmed because there are so many”

“Overwhelmed by color and brands because I don't know what looks good on me.”

“a lot of shops in Korea, I feel like, there are so many nice products and their packagings are so beautiful. But at the same time, I feel overwhelmed because I don't know which color will suit me and which product will suit me. And when I see the package, they're all promoting the same points and same ingredients.”

“I think for me, it's always been very overwhelming...So I have one or two brands that I like and I just stick to it.”

“I'm in this shop and I'm really trying to find something. And I'm literally in the shelf for like 35 minutes, looking at the shelf, looking at every product, I got so overwhelmed.”

Although participants appreciated having options in the current beauty scene, many expressed that excessive choice increased decision-making effort rather than satisfaction. This reflects broader concerns about overconsumption and market saturation in the cosmetics industry, where consumers are increasingly confronted with numerous similar products competing for attention. Cosmetics scholars have similarly identified growing consumer concerns regarding sustainability, transparency, and product overload within contemporary beauty markets (Wang et al., 2022).

The concept of buyer fatigue captures this experience particularly well. In the digital age, consumers are exposed to an unprecedented volume of information through product reviews, advertisements, social media recommendations, expert opinions, and a constant stream of product launches. While this abundance of information can empower consumers to conduct more thorough research and make informed decisions, it can also become overwhelming. Information overload has been linked to decision fatigue, anxiety, and difficulty navigating increasingly complex purchasing environments (Kaur, 2024), like the beauty retail environment. As consumers are confronted with an ever-expanding number of products, brands, ingredients, and claims, the cognitive effort required to evaluate options can become exhausting, often leading to delayed decision-making, avoidance, or disengagement altogether.

This phenomenon closely resembles what participants described throughout the workshop discussions. Rather than feeling empowered by endless choice, many participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by the volume of options available to them. Their experiences reflect what Schwartz (2004) describes as the paradox of choice, where an abundance of options can reduce confidence in decision-making and increase feelings of uncertainty rather than satisfaction. As a result, participants expressed a desire for more intentional and meaningful interactions with cosmetic products, suggesting that involvement in the creation process itself may provide an alternative to the passive consumption patterns that contribute to buyer fatigue.



The workshop, therefore, functioned as a contrast to conventional beauty consumption. Instead of navigating thousands of finished products, participants engaged with a curated set of ingredients, scents, packaging formats, and colors that offered meaningful choice without creating the same level of overwhelm.

still excited to see the new trends but when it comes to purchasing it's too time consuming to find the right product

overwhelmed, too much information, don't know which one fits me better

good to connect with a brand and stick to that brand

a little bit overwhelmed → more time and effort to think, search and make sure which is best

excited 40% and overwhelmed 60% now that I already have a routine I actually don't need that much options

also feel safe that I can chose by myself

i feel more overwhelmed when having a lot of choices actually... then i need to compare and look into reviews on some forums to find what fits me

overwhelmed by color + brands b/c i don't know what looks good on me, what brands are nice, so i stick to a few brands

if i need a very specific product i'm excited to have many options to chose from but if i'm not yet 100% sure on the type of product ex. i need mascara but don't know if volumizing, lengthening, waterproof... then i get overwhelmed and demotivated to chose

overwhelming not only by the amount of products but also the amount of "corruption" behind - whats best for your skin and green washing

in eco beauty stores i like the vibe more. it's calm and there is less to look at and the labels and packaging are more toned down so i don't get as overstimulated

i don't personally buy too much skincare and i do not like that much going to the shop. rather buy online by friends recommendations

if i go to sephora i feel overwhelmed because there are so many. i usually only look at the first two stands or so/ look at brands I recognize





10.3 The Role of Social Learning and Collaboration

The social dimension emerged as one of the most significant findings across both workshops. Although participants were free to work individually, they naturally formed pairs and small groups without instruction.

Participants exchanged tips, compared colors, discussed scents, checked each other's progress, and shared observations throughout the process. While I acted as facilitator and provided technical support, many decisions regarding colors, scents, personalization, and experimentation were discussed amongst participants themselves.

The workshop, therefore, became both a social and educational experience. Conversations served as informal knowledge-sharing opportunities in which participants collectively built confidence and understanding. This finding strongly validated earlier interview insights, suggesting that participants would be more interested in DIY cosmetics if they could engage in

the activity with friends. Participants consistently highlighted the atmosphere, conversation, music, and collaborative environment as major contributors to their enjoyment.

Interestingly, participants expressed a preference for future DIY cosmetic experiences to occur socially rather than individually. When discussing future toolkit or platform concepts, most expressed interest in workshops, events, or friend-based activities. If undertaking DIY cosmetics independently, participants felt they would require additional support through curated kits and structured guidance.

This mirrors research on DIY communities, which highlights the importance of shared knowledge exchange, peer support, and collective learning in legitimizing DIY practices and encouraging participation (Morais et al., 2018).

10.4 Trust, Credibility, and Support



Trust and credibility emerged as critical conditions for participants to feel comfortable engaging in DIY cosmetic making.

The professional presentation of the workshop strongly influenced perceptions of legitimacy. Participants repeatedly referred to the workshop as feeling “professional” and appreciated that all tools, ingredients, materials, and instructions had been considered, supplied, and carefully organized.

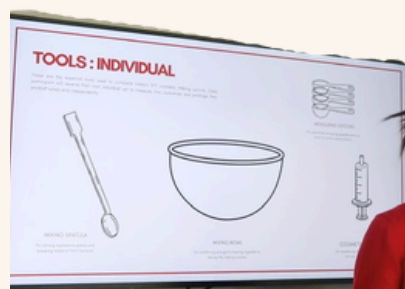
One participant specifically noted:

“The labels of materials made the credibility of products high.”

While participants generally trusted the workshop process, they still desired additional information regarding ingredient functionality,

comparisons between ingredients, and expected outcomes. This interest shows how credibility is built through both transparency and education (Figure 15).

It is important to note, participants really valued expert support while also wanting enough information to make independent decisions. This reflects a balance between facilitation and autonomy, where users seek reassurance without giving up control over the process. This finding aligns closely with Design-for-DIY literature, which argues that successful DIY experiences require carefully designed support systems that lower barriers while preserving participant agency (Hoftijzer, 2024).



Participants identified several factors that increased trust:

01

Clearly labelled ingredients



02

Ingredient information cards



03

Structured instructions



04

Transparent material sourcing



05

Organized workspace and tools



06

Natural ingredients and oils



07

Access to expert guidance



Figure 15: Factors that increased trust

10.5 Agency Through Creativity

A core goal of the workshops was to explore whether DIY cosmetics could offer greater agency and creative expression than conventional mass-market beauty consumption.

Participants responded positively to the range of customization options available, neither expecting more nor feeling overwhelmed by the options presented. Across both workshops, they were able to choose:

- Packaging format
- Base ingredients
- Oils
- Fragrances
- Color combinations
- Decorative elements: labels and branding

Unlike their responses to the broader cosmetics market, where excessive choice often felt overwhelming, participants described the workshop options as manageable, exciting, and empowering. The available choices felt like a proper balance between guidance and freedom.

Participants expressed satisfaction with the ability to create products that reflected their own preferences. During the second workshop, greater experimentation emerged, specifically in color mixing.



While many participants in Workshop 1 gravitated toward traditional pink and red tones (Image 30), Workshop 2 participants explored more diverse combinations incorporating blues, greens, and purples into the pink and red tones, creating a more diverse range of shades (Image 31).

This observation highlights a distinction between surface-level customization and deeper participation through embodied knowledge. While contemporary beauty brands offer personalization through refill systems, charms, and product customization, participants valued most the ability to actively shape ingredients, formulations, colors, and scents themselves. DIY cosmetics with this level of autonomy move beyond embellishments toward productive consumption through active creation.

WORKSHOP 1

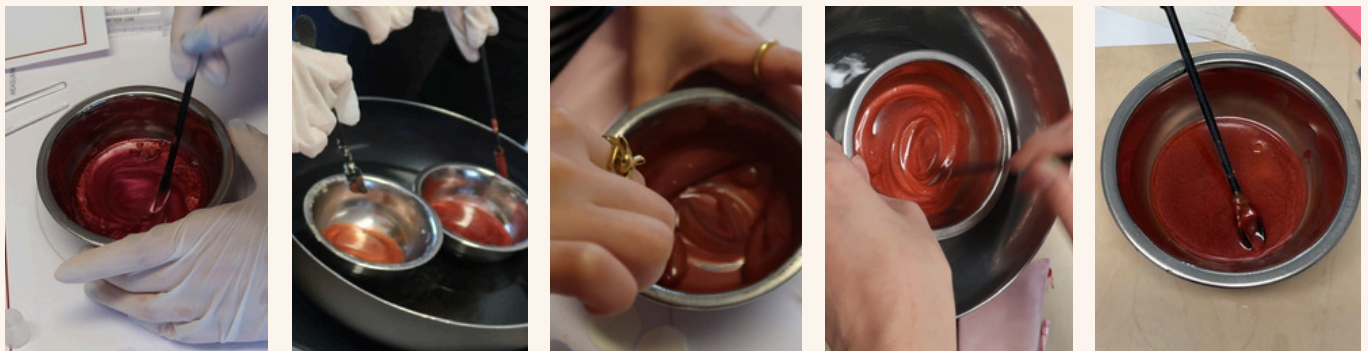


Image 30 : Self- Made Lip Balm Color Variation Workshop 1

WORKSHOP 2

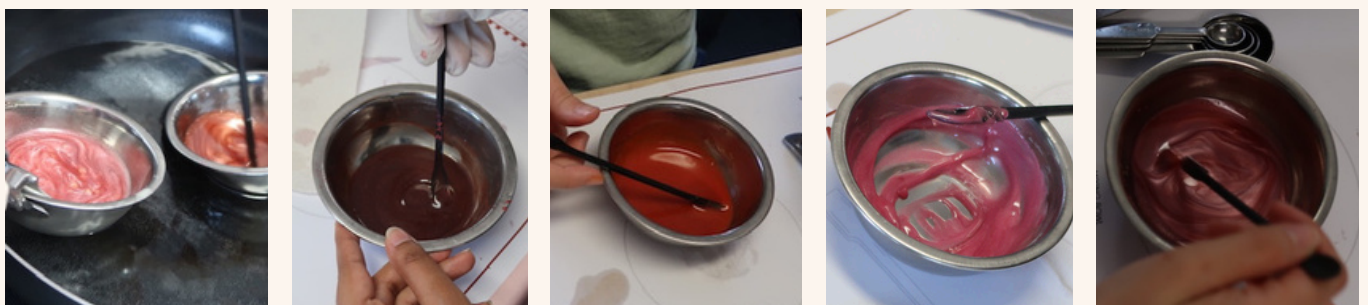


Image 31 : Self- Made Lip Balm Color Variation Workshop 2

10.6 Confidence Building by Making

One of the most validating findings was the increase in confidence observed throughout the process of making.

Before making, participants reported an average confidence level of 3.375/5. Despite many expressing uncertainty about their knowledge, skills, or ability to make cosmetics, they felt sufficiently supported to begin. As participants progressed through the activity, their hesitations gradually faded, giving way to experimentation and independent decision-making. Once participants understood that the recipes were forgiving and that mistakes were not catastrophic, they became increasingly willing to adapt them to personal preferences for specific colors, fragrances, and ingredients.

Following the workshop, average confidence increased to 4.06/5.

Participants described feelings of pride, freedom, empowerment, and creativity. They valued leaving with a functional product they had created themselves and felt more confident in their abilities should they repeat the process in the future.

Many participants also placed greater value on the final product because they had invested effort, creativity, and personal decision-making in its creation. This reflects the well-documented "IKEA Effect," whereby individuals place greater value on products they help create themselves (Norton et al., 2012).

The increase in confidence suggests that DIY cosmetics can function as more than a product-making activity. The workshops specifically can act as a mechanism for building competence in the DIY cosmetics field, reducing perceived barriers to participation, and reconnecting consumers with cosmetic production processes. This directly addresses the widening gap between users and producers identified throughout this thesis and demonstrates how making can become a pathway toward greater agency, understanding, and engagement.





DIY Beauty
Builds Confidence

IN YOUR SKILLS, IN YOUR AESTHETIC & IN YOUR DEFINITION OF BEAUTY

WORKSHOP
AS AN
INTERVENTION

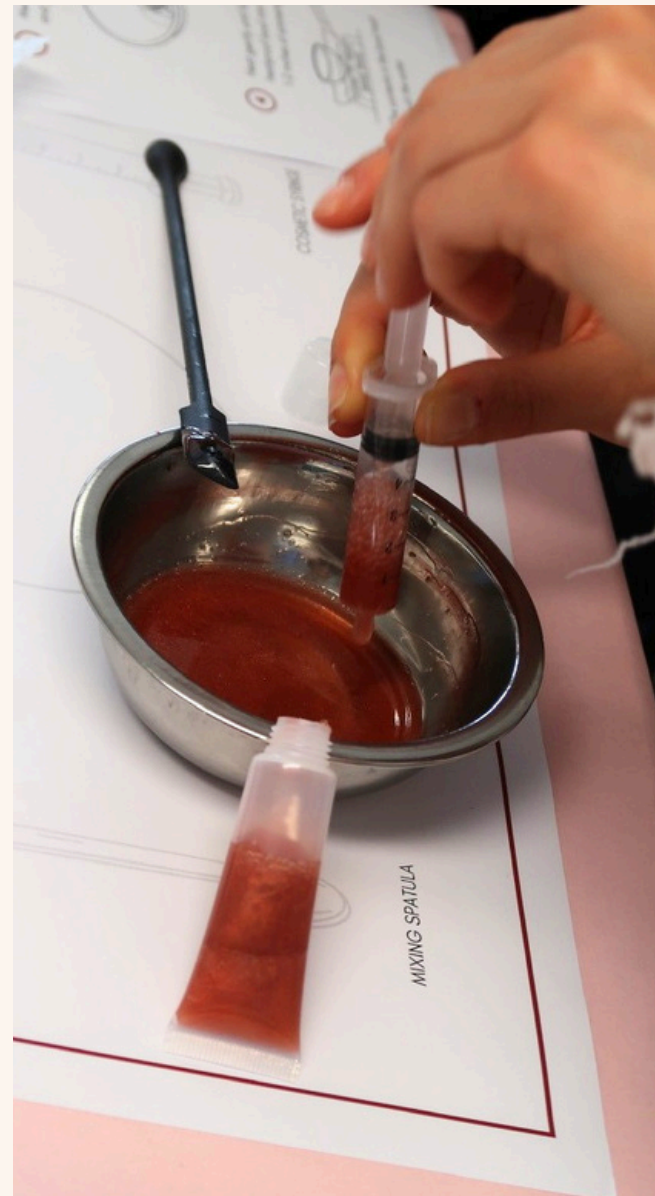
WHAT TO BE
DESIGNED

GROWTH
BEYOND THE
WORKSHOP

11

DISCUSSION + TAKEAWAYS

11.1 Workshop as an Intervention



The workshops served two important functions in validating DIY cosmetics. Firstly, they created the platform component of the framework for DIY, providing the time, space, and accessibility that people need to create cosmetics themselves. Secondly, they informed me about the future success of DIY cosmetics and clarified what I, as a designer, can contribute to the field when my goal is not simply to make more “things,” but rather to inspire laypersons to create value for themselves through products that are personal and meaningful. This brings me back to my main research question: How can designers facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that give users agency over ingredients, packaging, and making processes to increase transparency, support identity expression, and reduce passive, mass-market consumption?

The answer to this question does not yield a static solution but rather an evolving framework for how designers can facilitate meaningful participation in cosmetic production. This can be achieved by designing agency into the cosmetic purchasing system. This means allowing users to participate in DIY cosmetic making in the first place, as it is not something normalized or recognized within the contemporary industrial beauty landscape. Creating a low-threshold entry point is essential for raising awareness of the concept while sparking and retaining interest in the practice. To feel capable of participating, users must have enough intrigue to engage and sufficient physical control over the product's components, all while keeping the process accessible and manageable rather than overly complex.

11.2 What to be designed



It is the designer's responsibility to provide users with enough knowledge to make independent decisions throughout the workshop while remaining present as an expert source of reassurance. Participants feel more confident and comfortable when they have quick and reliable access to additional support from someone with more advanced knowledge than themselves. Through gaining embodied knowledge of materials, ingredients, and the historical and current state of the beauty industry, users are encouraged to view the industry from a more informed perspective when they step away from the workshop. This leaves a lasting impression while providing them with a product that is uniquely their own.

Additionally, designers can organize the necessary conditions, tools, and instructions for the activity to take place (Table 11). Upon exposure to the idea, the components that keep users engaged must feel inviting, spark curiosity, and create a safe atmosphere in which making can occur. There is a reason many users do not want to source every ingredient and tool or carve out time for an activity like this independently; it is often perceived as overwhelming and time-consuming. Therefore, the activity must provide the appropriate tools, a clean workspace, and a supportive environment that demonstrates the process is not as complicated as it may initially appear, especially considering many users may lack the tools, materials, or space to do this independently.

An important part of participating in this kind of hands-on workshop is gaining increased knowledge of ingredients and their functions. This knowledge barrier may be the largest source of friction, as users often lack the information, confidence, or time to acquire it independently. To effectively transfer knowledge, providing accessible information, detailed instructions, and additional guidance helps communicate the step-by-step process while still leaving room for interpretation and personal decision-making. While users are more than capable of making cosmetics themselves, most feel more confident and secure when supported by additional guidance that minimizes errors and uncertainty. This support can come in the form of an expert facilitator, as well as through written and visual guidance, such as manuals, recipe cards, or tutorials.

Finally, designers can inspire creativity and confidence by facilitating meaningful outcomes, although this is easier said than done. Participating in an engaging experience with friends or peers is a significant source of value for users. It creates a bonding moment in which people learn from one another, collaborate, and express creativity together. This social element, encouraged within the workshop environment, proved crucial to both the activity's success and participants' perceptions of it.

Main: how can designers facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that give users agency over ingredients, packaging, and making processes to increase transparency, support identity expression, and reduce passive, mass-market consumption?

Giving users agency	Providing conditions, tools & instructions	Creating meaningful outcomes
Allowing users to, first, have the option to participate in DIY cosmetic making as it isn't something normalized in the contemporary industrial beauty scene	inviting/ welcoming / safe atmosphere (creating intentional time and space for making to take place)	participating in an engaging experience with friends / peers (aka a social element)
Creating a low barrier threshold for users to be introduced to the concept	accessible tools + clean workspace → users may not have all tools and materials or space at home	the process of knowing you are gaining more knowledge about materials, ingredients and processes
Providing users with enough knowledge to make choices in the workshop independently	increased knowledge over ingredients & their functions → this is may be the biggest friction point as users likely don't have all the information or time to get this information independently	the process of knowing you are gaining more knowledge about yourself!! preferences and deeper knowledge over colors, ingredients, scents
Having enough physical control over the components of the product while keeping the process accessible and not overly complex (managable)	instructions and/or guidance → while users are more than capable, most feel more confident and secure with additional guidance while making to ensure minimal errors	expressing visual identity through packaging personalization
Gaining embodied knowledge over materials and ingredients and the historical + current state of beauty industry to look at the industry from a new informed perspective		being able to take home and share the experience of making a product entirely your own
		bringing a product into the world with intention

Sub3 : What forms of self-making (ex. toolkits, workshops) could meaningfully reintroduce agency, inspire creativity, and proactive transparency into cosmetic-making?

Practical	Emotional	Physical formats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical environment introduction into topic & why this is a valuable experience the ability to understand your relationship to products better a glimpse into the current unsustainable consumption habits and processes in the beauty industry safety instructions Tool info : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tools for individual use tools for shared use Outline of process Accessible ingredients Clear ingredient info Packaging options Learning format options Physical guidance/ expert/ assistance Visual Inspiration Visual personalization Product to walk away with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a platform, language, and processes that feel empowering Feeling motivated by friends and peers Inspiration that makes you feel excited to begin & go through the motions the option to express your creativity through multiple choices feeling freedom to create on your own feeling the safety of knowing there is guidance to help having fun while making something practical having confidence in yourself that this is a process you are capable of executing (beginner friendly) Feeling proud/prideful of the final product and experience you walk away with 	<p>In person workshop this is a crowd favorite because of the ability to create and connect simultaneously while being a low barrier and fun entry point</p> <p>DIY Manual this gave users a pre-packaged version of the workshop including extra ingredient information, drawings following each step, and something to log your creations and extend the making process to the home</p> <p>DIY Recipe Card a format derived from cooking, this is the most basic in terms of guidance, folks had the most questions with the recipe cards but is still effective for quick access, basic instruction, in a format which has the essentials</p> <p>Video tutorial a fun and entertaining format of learning which can also be nice to watch on your own as a source of information/inspiration, you can see the whole process before starting and follow along</p> <p>take home/ at home kit</p> <p>a class</p> <p>digital downloads / access</p>

Table 11 : Components to be Designed Overview

11.3 Growth Beyond the Workshop

Alongside the social value, participants recognized that they were gaining knowledge about materials, ingredients, and processes, demonstrating that they were building a new skill set that extends beyond the workshop itself. Not only are users gaining practical knowledge, but they also recognize how they are learning more about themselves. Through the DIY process, participants begin to develop preferences and gain a deeper understanding of the colors, ingredients, scents, and product characteristics that suit them, rather than allowing the industry to impose these preferences on them. By repeating this process over time, users develop a stronger personal taste and a greater understanding of what works for their bodies and why.

By creating a handmade product, participants also begin to express a visual identity through packaging personalization, which complements the personalized formulation they have created. Ultimately, it is the experience of walking away with a product that is entirely their own, and the story of having made it, that leaves the most lasting impression. It ensures that the product enters the world with intention rather than through passive consumption. This feeling is one that designers, in a new facilitating role, should strive to recreate for different participants, and one that needs to feel comparable in value and satisfaction to serve as a credible alternative to purchasing a ready-made product.

This research demonstrates, through the case of a cosmetic creation workshop, that a do-it-yourself approach to beauty can create personal products while reconnecting users to embodied material knowledge, tactile making skills, and creative freedom that has largely been outsourced within industrial beauty systems. This level of engagement helps bridge the gap between producers and consumers, creating more active

participants, or prosumers, within the cosmetics industry. DIY practices therefore encourage creativity, learning, and personal agency, shifting users, like you and I, from passive consumers to active participants in the creation process. In this context, the designer's role becomes one of facilitation: creating the conditions, tools, knowledge, and support structures through which users can meaningfully engage with the topic, materials, and making process.

To understand how DIY cosmetics might develop in the future, this practice can be examined across multiple levels (Figure 16), from existing individual behaviors to community-based interventions such as workshops to broader industry trends and societal shifts (Marmat & Kashif, 2024). At the micro level, DIY cosmetics already exist within pockets of the beauty landscape, shared through online communities, social media, and self-guided experimentation. To accelerate and expand these practices, a meso-level intervention is needed. Workshops such as the one explored in this research create a platform for participation, offering a space where users can craft not only products but also experiences, developing personal makeup collections through agency, localized know-how, and creative exploration. At the macro level, DIY cosmetics are not necessarily about commoditization; they are about democratization. The ultimate goal is not for every cosmetic product to be homemade, but for users to possess the knowledge, confidence, and capability to create for themselves when they want, how they want, and for the reasons they choose. In this sense, making cosmetics becomes less about the product itself and more about restoring participation, knowledge, and choice (Figure 17). The ability to make cosmetics ourselves has been out of reach for too long; this research explores how design can help bring it back into practice.

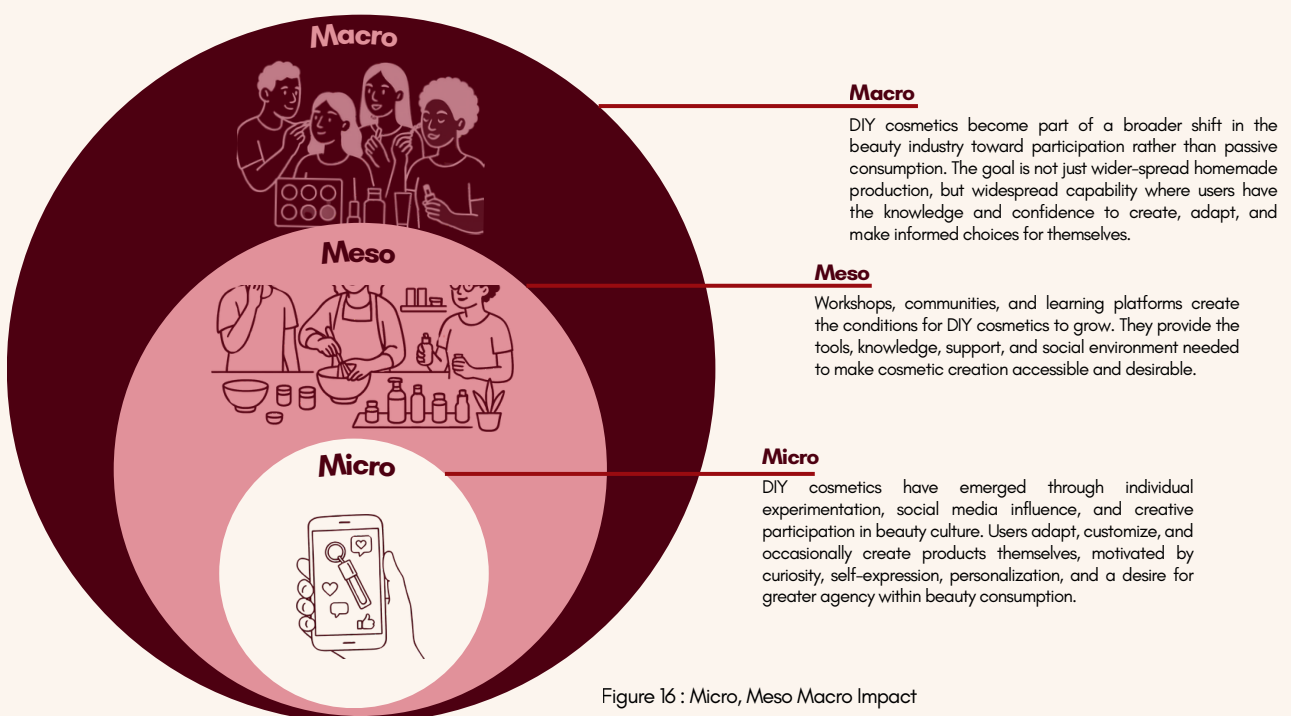


Figure 16 : Micro, Meso Macro Impact

Answering RQ : systemic level

Main: how can designers facilitate DIY cosmetic-making systems that give users agency over ingredients, packaging, and making processes to increase transparency, support identity expression, and reduce passive, mass-market consumption?

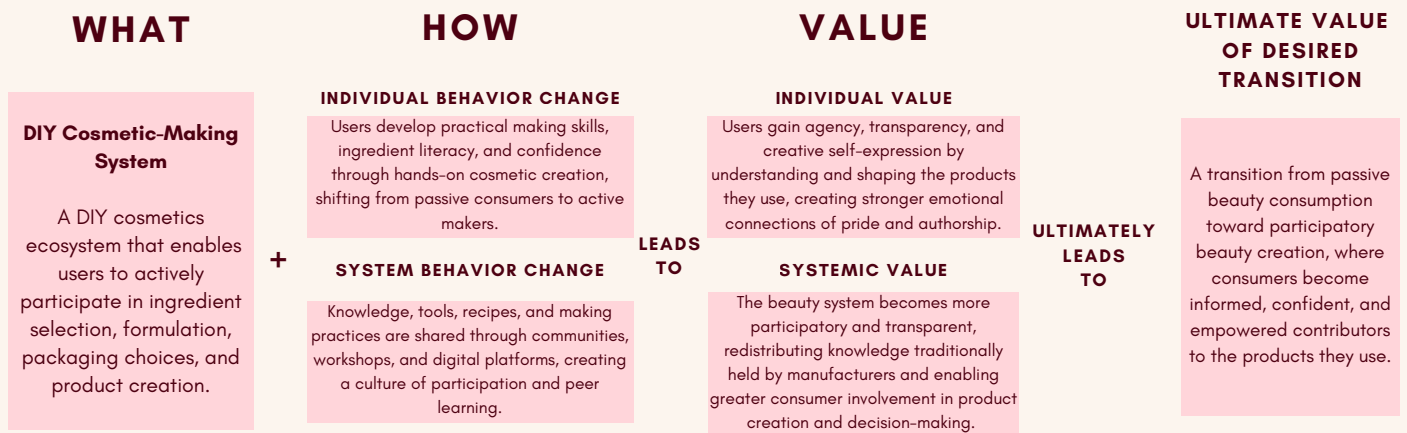


Figure 17 : Framing Across System Scales and Timeframes: Supporting Designers in Reasoning Toward Transition Design Interventions, 2025

Through the historical analysis, examination of the contemporary beauty industry, interviews, workshop interventions, and participant feedback, it becomes evident that DIY cosmetics are not simply about making individual products. They represent an opportunity to rethink how people engage with beauty altogether. The findings reveal a growing desire for greater transparency, participation, personalization, and creative agency, while exposing the limitations of an industry largely built around passive consumption. Responding to this broader transition requires more than developing another cosmetic product; it requires designing new systems of participation that reconnect people with the beauty-making process. The outcome of this research is **by.you** – a participatory cosmetic-making platform that translates these insights into an accessible experience, empowering users to become active creators rather than passive consumers.



by.you



Beauty made by you

INSTRUCTI



UP BA
Tools Ne
Spoon
Funnels
Lip gl

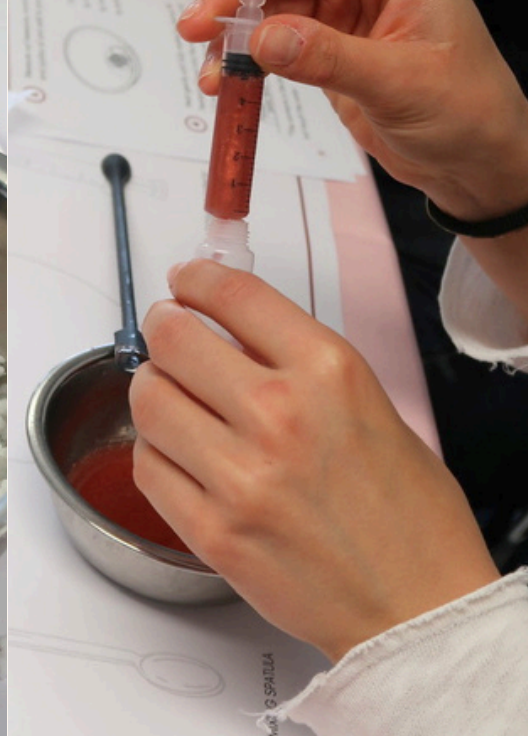
MEASUR

With *by.you*,
makeup becomes
more than
something you buy

—
it becomes
something you
create.

date made:





Through hands-on cosmetic making workshops, users craft personalized beauty products that reflect their creativity, ingredient preferences, and visual identity, transforming beauty routines into experiences of self-expression, agency, and authorship.

By creating your own makeup, you walk away with products, shades, and routines that truly reflect your unique beauty...

Because you made them yourself!

by.you



BASE INGREDIENTS

FLAVORING OIL

What: Concentrated aromatic oils used for scent or taste

Purpose: Adds fragrance, cooling sensations, or flavor notes

Effect: Enhances sensory enjoyment and emotional appeal

FLAVORING / SCENT

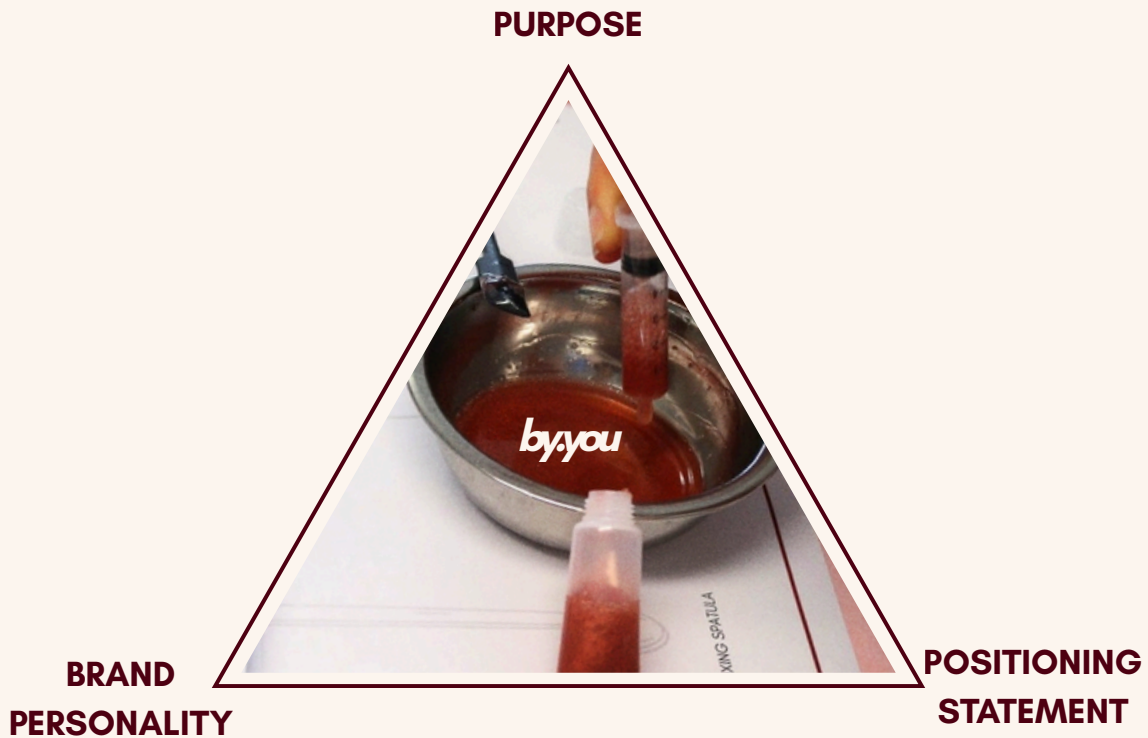


Figure 18 : Brand DNA triangle (Delft Design Guide, 2014)

By.you's Brand is rooted in our brand DNA (Figure 18): its purpose, positioning, and personality (Delft Design Guide, 2014) establish the foundation of the brand, guiding how by.you looks, sounds, and feels across every touchpoint. Our strong foundation components shape the brand's values, communication, experiences, and interactions, ensuring a consistent and meaningful identity that empowers users to become active creators of their own beauty products.

purpose



by.you's purpose is rooted in the principles of Do-It-Yourself making. We empower and support individuals to become active creators of their own beauty products, enabling them to craft cosmetics that align with their personal preferences, aesthetics, and needs to support a more sustainable future of beauty consumption

positioning statement

For curious creators and all beauty enthusiasts, by.you offers a creative workspace where beauty ideas become reality. Through guided hands-on cosmetic making, expanded ingredient knowledge, and opportunities for personal expression, By.you enables users to create makeup that suits them in shade, texture, consistency, and style. By transforming beauty from something purchased into something created, By.you gives people the pride, confidence, and freedom to express their personal stories through their own unique beauty.



MISSION

Our mission is to reconnect people with the beauty-making process, transforming beauty from something people buy into something they create. Through hands-on making, ingredient knowledge, and personal expression, we empower individuals to become active creators of their own beauty experiences while growing a more conscious relationship with their beauty products.

brand personality

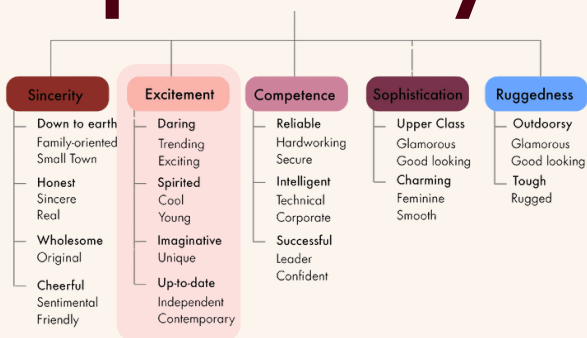


Figure 19 : Brand personality (Aaker, 1997)

Excitement : Imaginative, daring, up-to-date

The brand personality (Aaker, 1997) of by.you is defined by excitement, reflecting the brand's focus on creativity, exploration, and active participation (Figure 19). Through the more specific characteristics of being imaginative, daring, and up-to-date, by.you encourages users to move beyond passive beauty consumption and become creators themselves. By challenging conventional beauty consumption through hands-on making while simultaneously responding to contemporary trends such as personalization, transparency, and DIY culture, **by.you positions itself as a creative, engaging, and forward-thinking brand that empowers users through cosmetic creation!**

Workshop



★ Guided Cosmetic Creation

Join an in-person workshop to create your own personalized beauty products. Experiment with ingredients, colors, scents, and packaging while learning how cosmetics are made. Through hands-on making, you gain creative control, ingredient awareness, and a product that is uniquely your own.

Digital Platform



★ Your Digital DIY Beauty Hub

Access tutorials, recipes, ingredient guides, and making resources anytime. Whether you're revisiting workshop techniques or exploring DIY beauty for the first time, the platform provides the knowledge and support needed to confidently create at home.

DIY for ALL



★ Open-Source Making Guides

Download printable guides, recipes, and instruction cards to continue your DIY beauty journey anywhere. Designed to make cosmetic creation more accessible, these resources allow anyone to learn, experiment, and create at their own pace.

Toolkit



★ Beauty Beyond the Workshop

Take home a refillable toolkit containing ingredients, tools, and containers for future creations. Refill ingredients as needed, experiment with new recipes, and continue building your skills while reducing packaging waste through repeated use.

touchpoints

This ethos is represented within each of our touchpoint offerings, expanding the DIY beauty mentality from your hands to your home with accessible information and community spanning beyond the workshop. While the workshop is our primary touchpoint where we can interact with our users face to face and exchange knowledge with them, we understand that the DIY beauty revolution doesn't happen in just one workshop, we aim to make DIY cosmetic processes and community accessible to all users through our interactive webpage where you can talk to our beauty hosts, download digital guides to DIY at home and offer beauty toolkits to get your hands on our workshop resources to make with your own creativity liberties. A bonus is with the toolkit you get the opportunity to refill the ingredients with us!

Workshops serve as by.you's primary touchpoint because they showcase the brand's value proposition of supporting you in creating makeup that is entirely your own. Through hands-on creations, users gain practical knowledge, explore ingredients, and experience the process of creating personalized beauty products firsthand.

customer journey

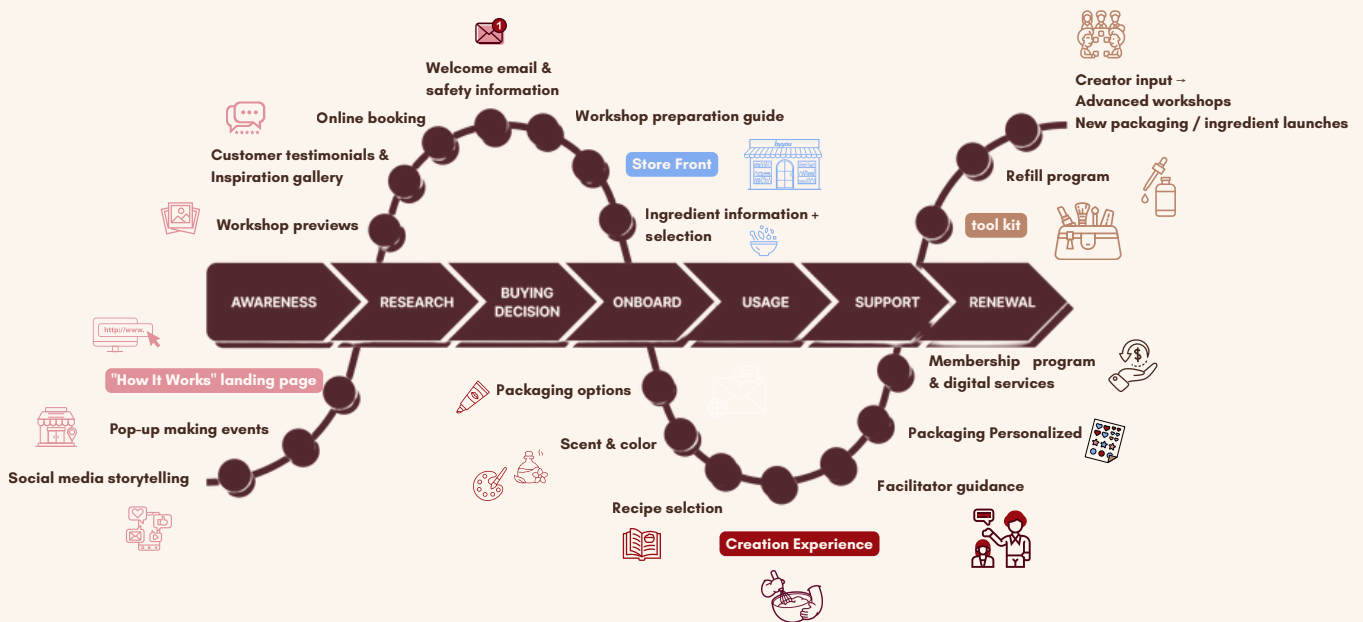


Figure 20 : Brand personality (Aaker, 1997)

The by.you customer journey is designed to extend beyond a single workshop, creating an ongoing relationship that gradually builds curiosity, knowledge, confidence, and participation in DIY cosmetic making (Figure 20).

The journey begins even before the workshop through digital touchpoints including social media storytelling, creator content, customer testimonials, and pop-up-making events that introduce the concept of participatory beauty. Interested users are directed to the by.you landing page, where they can explore workshop experiences, browse an inspiration gallery, learn how the process works, and book a session.

Following registration/booking, participants receive a welcome email with workshop details, safety information, and an introduction to the materials and making process. This prepares users while building excitement before they arrive.

The workshop serves as the core experience. Participants select from a curated range of packaging, ingredients, scents, pigments, and recipes to formulate a cosmetic product

tailored to their own preferences. Throughout the process, facilitators provide guidance and ingredient knowledge while allowing users to maintain creative control. The experience concludes with product personalization, where participants design the final appearance of their cosmetic through packaging and decorative elements, transforming it into a product that reflects both their identity and creative effort.

The relationship continues beyond the workshop. Participants may leave with a unique handcrafted product or a DIY toolkit containing refillable components, recipes, and materials that enable continued making outside the workshop setting. Because both the workshop products and toolkit are designed around refillable systems, users are encouraged to return for ingredient refills, new packaging options, advanced workshops, and seasonal classes. Ongoing creator feedback also informs future workshop offerings, ingredients, and packaging, ensuring that the brand and platform continues to evolve alongside its community.

by.you's target audience

Strategic Need for Targeting

Targeting helps move the project away from a broad and undefined audience toward a specific niche whose needs, motivations, and behaviors can be meaningfully addressed with By.you. This selection is important because it establishes whose needs the proposed workshop experience, learning materials, and future platform offerings should primarily catered to.

Targeting Framework

To make this decision more systematically, the Market Attractiveness and Competitive Position Model (Palmatier & Sridhar, 2017) was utilized to evaluate the three segments and evaluated through two lenses: DIY Engagement Potential and Strategic Brand Fit (Table X).

	Expressionist	Curious Crafter	Conscious Curator
Are there unmet needs?	High: Seeks greater personalization, unique shades, and creative freedom beyond mass-market cosmetics.	Very High: Lacks accessible opportunities to learn, create, and engage directly with cosmetic production.	High: Desires greater ingredient transparency, sustainability, and control over product contents.
Is the segment big enough?	Yes: Large group of makeup enthusiasts active in beauty, fashion, and social media communities.	Yes: Growing interest in workshops, maker culture, creative hobbies, and experiential activities among young adults.	Yes: Sustainability-conscious beauty consumers represent a growing market segment.
Is it profitable enough?	Moderate-High: Will invest in creative products, customization, and beauty experiences.	High: Values experiences, learning opportunities, and repeat participation in workshops and advanced activities.	Moderate: Interested in sustainability but often remains price-sensitive.
How likely is it to grow?	High: Continued growth of personalization, self-expression, and creator culture within beauty.	High: Rising interest in DIY, experiential consumption, creative hobbies, and participatory learning.	Very High: Sustainability and conscious consumption continue to gain mainstream attention.
Competition intensity?	High: Many beauty brands already position around self-expression and customization.	Moderate: Few cosmetic brands offer hands-on making, learning, and participatory creation experiences.	High: Many brands increasingly position around sustainability, refillability, and ingredient transparency.
Can we differentiate?	Likely: Differentiation through self-made cosmetics rather than selecting pre-defined options.	Very Likely: by.you's workshop model directly supports making, learning, and participation not commonly offered by competitors.	Moderate: Sustainability alone is difficult to own as many brands communicate similar claims.
Strategic Fit?	Strong: Aligns with personalization and creative self-expression.	Very Strong: Directly aligns with by.you's vision of participatory cosmetic creation, learning, and empowerment.	Good: Supports transparency and sustainability goals but these are secondary outcomes of the concept.
Skills and Competences?	Good: by.you's ingredient, color, scent, and packaging options support creative exploration.	Strong: Workshops, educational materials, and guided making directly address their motivations and needs.	Good: Ingredient knowledge, refill opportunities, and transparency support conscious consumption goals.
	Expressionist	Curious Crafter	Conscious Curator

Table 12 : Market Attractiveness and Competitive Position Model (Palmatier & Sridhar, 2017)



DIY Engagement Potential (Is it an attractive proposal?) assesses the extent to which each persona demonstrates motivations, behaviors, and attitudes that align with participatory cosmetic creation, learning, and experimentation. This includes factors such as unmet needs, likelihood of participation, potential for repeat engagement, and the segment's future growth.

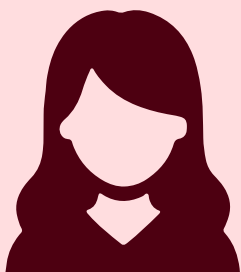
Strategic Fit (Can we deliver value to the segment?) evaluates how effectively the by.you concept can address the needs and motivations of each user. This includes the level of differentiation offered by DIY cosmetics through By.you, alignment with the workshop offering, and how each persona resonates with the project's vision of participation, empowerment, and reconnecting consumers with cosmetic production.

The Curious Creator emerged as the strongest primary audience. This persona scored highest across both DIY engagement and strategic fit. Unlike the expressionist and conscious curator, whose motivations are mainly tied to the outcomes of cosmetic use,

the Curious creator is intrinsically motivated by the process of making itself. The expressionist and conscious curator will remain as important audiences and strong members of the community and can be further engaged through tailored workshop themes, messaging, ingredient offerings, and future platforms/services.

The workshop format, educational materials, ingredient exploration, and opportunities for social learning directly align with the Curious creator's needs and interests. They are an audience who seek opportunities for hands-on participation, learning, experimentation, and creative accomplishment, all of which are at the core value proposition of by.you. The concept therefore provides the strongest value for this segment than for the other personas detailed, while also opening opportunities for repeat participation and long-term community building.

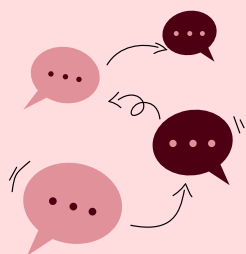
For curious creators and all beauty enthusiasts, by.you offers a creative workspace where beauty ideas become reality. Through guided, hands-on cosmetic making, expanded ingredient knowledge, and opportunities for personal expression, By.you enables users to create makeup that suits them in terms of shade, texture, consistency, and style. By transforming beauty from something purchased into something created, By.you gives people the pride, confidence, and freedom to express their personal stories through their own unique beauty.



The Curious Creator

What DIY Cosmetics Should Mean to Daniella:

Hands-on participation, new knowledge over ingredients, and high-quality aesthetics that align with personal taste



social

- Participate in communities that value craftsmanship and making
- Share unique experiences that reflect her creativity
- Connect with like-minded creators through workshops and creative events
- Express her values around sustainability, learning, and self-sufficiency



functional

- Create beauty products tailored to her preferences
- Gain practical knowledge about ingredients and materials
- Develop new creative skills through hands-on making
- Access tools, recipes, and guidance that support independent creation



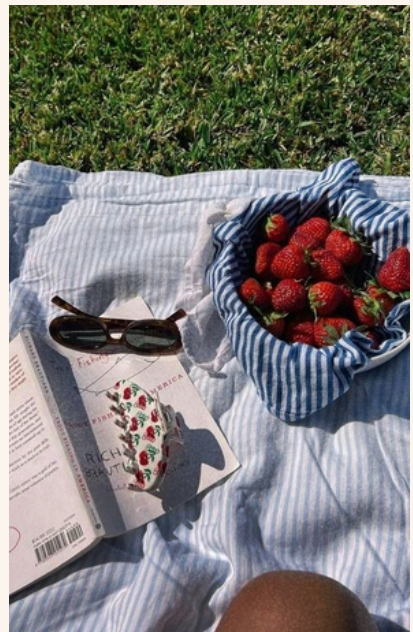
emotional

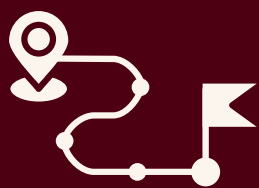
- Feels empowered and proud of creating something with her own hands
- Feel connected to the materials, ingredients, and processes behind products
- Feel confident in her ability to learn and experiment
- Experience the joy and fulfillment of learning more about her own preferences

JTBD

The Jobs to Be Done framework helps translate the needs of the selected target audience, the Curious Crafter, into the value that by.you provides through DIY cosmetic making. Functionally, by.you enables users to create beauty products tailored to their preferences while building practical knowledge of ingredients, materials, and cosmetic formulation. Socially, it creates opportunities to connect with like-minded creators through workshops, shared learning experiences, and creative communities centered around participation and

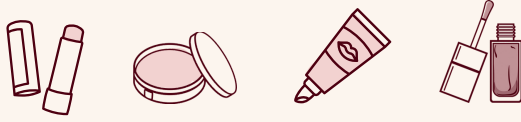
craftsmanship. Emotionally, by.you empowers users to feel confident, capable, and proud of creating something with their own hands, fostering a stronger connection to the products they use and a greater sense of ownership over their beauty routines. Together, these social, functional, and emotional jobs position by.you as more than a cosmetic product or service, but as a platform for learning, creativity, and meaningful participation in beauty creation





workshops as our launchpad

Step 1: Select Your Packaging



Step 2: Choose Base Ingredients



Step 3: Select Carrier Oils



Step 4: Personalize with Scent



Step 5: Create Your Perfect Shade



Step 6: Make It Yours

Workshop as a Launchpad

By using lip products as our base product offering, we have the ability to test its success, refine ingredient selections, and work out customization logistics before expanding the brand into additional makeup product categories over time (micro, meso, and macro). Lip products serve as a low-barrier entry point, inviting users to participate, expand their knowledge, and experience the production process from concept to finished product within a single workshop. Lip products are also a category that has variation in color, consistency, and form across participants, while carrying less risk than many other cosmetic categories.

So far, two workshops have been conducted to demonstrate proof of concept and validate demand. Through these workshops, users were able to actively learn, develop an understanding of ingredients and formulation, and create products that aligned with their personal style and preferences.

Step 1: Select Your Packaging

The first step is to select a desired packaging format, which also helps ensure the consistency of the lip product. Packaging is one of the most exciting parts of customization, allowing users to shape both the look and experience of their product. It also influences the type of formula created, as different containers suit different textures, consistencies, and application methods.



Step 2: Choose Your Base Ingredients

Once the packaging is determined, users select their base ingredients. Base ingredients provide structure, texture, stability, and staying power to the formula. They determine whether a product feels firm, creamy, glossy, or soft, while helping protect the lips and hold the recipe together.



**BEESWAX
PELLETS**

Beeswax is used to create structure, firmness, and protection in lip products. It gives balms a softer, creamier feel while helping the product stay solid and longer-lasting on the lips.



**SHEA
BUTTER**

Shea butter is used for deep nourishment and softness. It creates rich, creamy formulas that feel moisturizing and comforting on dry lips.



CANDELILLA WAX

Candelilla wax is used as a vegan alternative to beeswax. It creates a firmer texture with a slightly glossier finish and helps products hold their shape well in warmer temperatures.



**VEGETABLE
GLYCERIN**

Vegetable glycerin is used to attract and retain moisture in the lips. It helps products feel softer, smoother, and more hydrating over time.

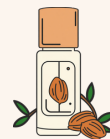
Step 3: Select Carrier Oils

The next step is choosing a combination of carrier oils. Carrier oils are the primary liquid oils used in cosmetic formulations. They “carry” other ingredients, help dilute essential oils, and contribute texture, glide, and moisture. Common examples include sweet almond oil, jojoba oil, sunflower oil, avocado oil, and coconut oil. Oils add nourishment, shine, and hydration while influencing how a product spreads, absorbs, and feels during wear.



ALMOND OIL

Almond oil is used for gentle nourishment and softness. It creates a smooth, comfortable feel while helping condition the lips.



JOJOBA OIL

Jojoba oil is used for balanced hydration and lightweight absorption. Because it closely resembles the skin's natural oils, it creates a smooth, non-greasy finish.



**FRACTIONATED
COCONUT OIL**

Fractionated coconut oil is used to create lightweight moisture and smooth application. It helps formulas feel silky and non-greasy while improving glide.



CASTOR OIL

Castor oil is used to add shine, thickness, and longer wear. It is useful in lip gloss formulas because it creates a rich glossy finish.

Step 4: Personalize with Scent

Next, users add scent using essential oils, food-grade oils, or natural flavorings.

This stage encourages users to engage their senses by smelling, mixing, and adjusting the intensity of scent within their product. Some may prefer a bold flavor or fragrance, while others may prefer something subtle or unscented. There is no right answer, only personal preference.



Step 5: Create Your Perfect Shade

This is where users truly showcase their individuality and creativity. Using mica powders, natural pigments derived from minerals, participants can add both color and shimmer to their lip products. Users can choose a single color or experiment by blending multiple pigments together.

This stage also introduces users to the basics of color theory, something many interview participants expressed interest in learning more about. A small amount of blue may cool down a shade, while orange can create a warmer tone. Participants are encouraged to test colors against their skin tone, explore personal preferences, and create something that reflects their individual style. During the workshops, this was often the moment when participants felt their product truly come to life.



Step 6: Make It Yours

Once the formula is complete, the mixture is transferred into the selected packaging. Participants then have the opportunity to add finishing touches that transform the product into something uniquely their own. Through names, initials, icons, labels, stickers, or embellishments, the final product becomes more than a cosmetic item—it becomes a personal keepsake that reflects the user's creativity, preferences, and involvement throughout the making process.

By moving through these stages, participants develop knowledge of ingredients and formulations, build confidence in their creative abilities, and experience what it means to actively participate in creating the products they use. In this way, the lip balm workshop serves as the foundation case study for a broader DIY cosmetics platform that can expand into new product categories, learning experiences, and opportunities for participation over time.



Feedback Loop

The future of beauty should be created by the people using it!

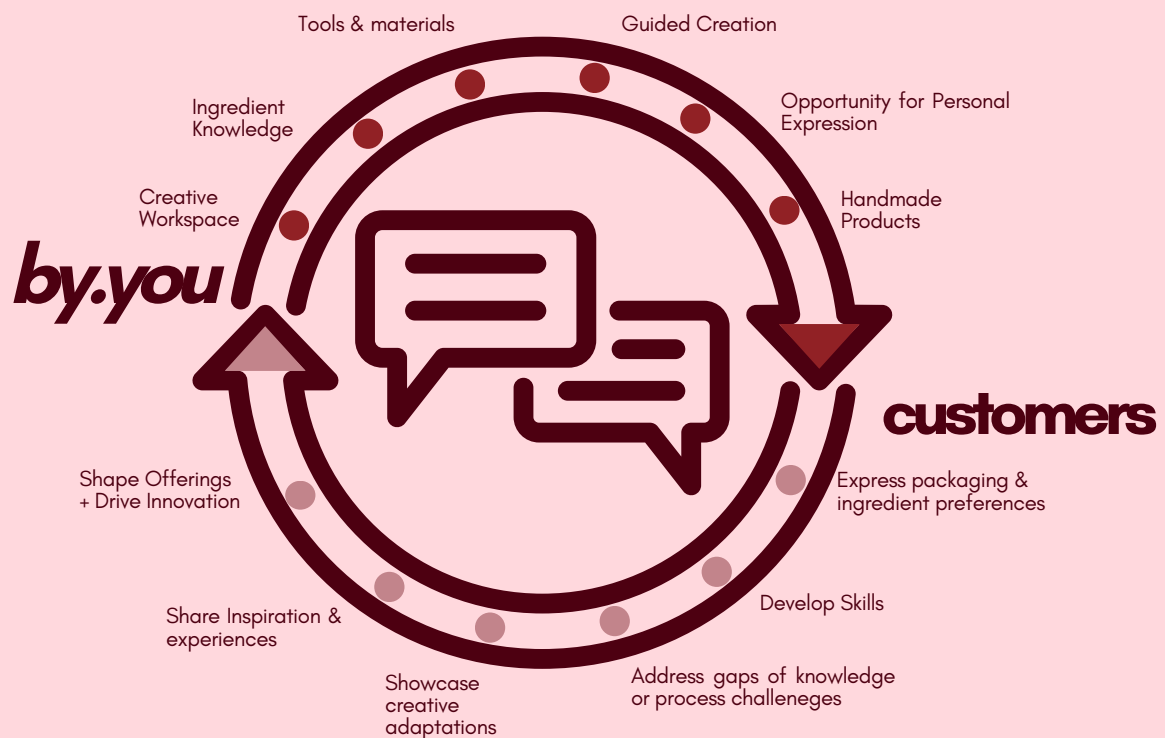


Figure 21 : Feedback Loop Process

At *by.you* Every workshop becomes a conversation where participants influence future ingredients, packaging styles, colours, scents, recipes, and product formats. By providing the platform, tools, and guidance, *by.you* empowers creators to bring their own vision of beauty to life while continuously informing the evolution of the brand. Through shared feedback (Figure 21), creative adaptations, and community inspiration, every participant helps shape the next generation of experiences, making *by.you* a resilient and evolving platform that grows with its creators rather than simply selling to them.

by.you



toolkit

The DIY Toolkit transforms the workshop from a one-time experience into an ongoing creative practice. With reusable tools, refillable components, guided recipes, and digital resources, you can confidently formulate, personalize, and recreate cosmetics whenever inspiration strikes. By extending learning beyond the workshop, the toolkit encourages continued experimentation, creative agency, and self-sufficiency while actively building a more meaningful and lasting relationship with the cosmetic-making process.

what's in my DIY lip balm toolkit?



market opportunity

By.you is in a position to break through an increasingly saturated beauty market through a business model that shifts users from passive consumers to active creators (Figure 22). While many beauty brands continue to compete through new product launches, trend cycles, and expanded product ranges, by.you creates value through participation, knowledge building, and hands-on cosmetic creation.

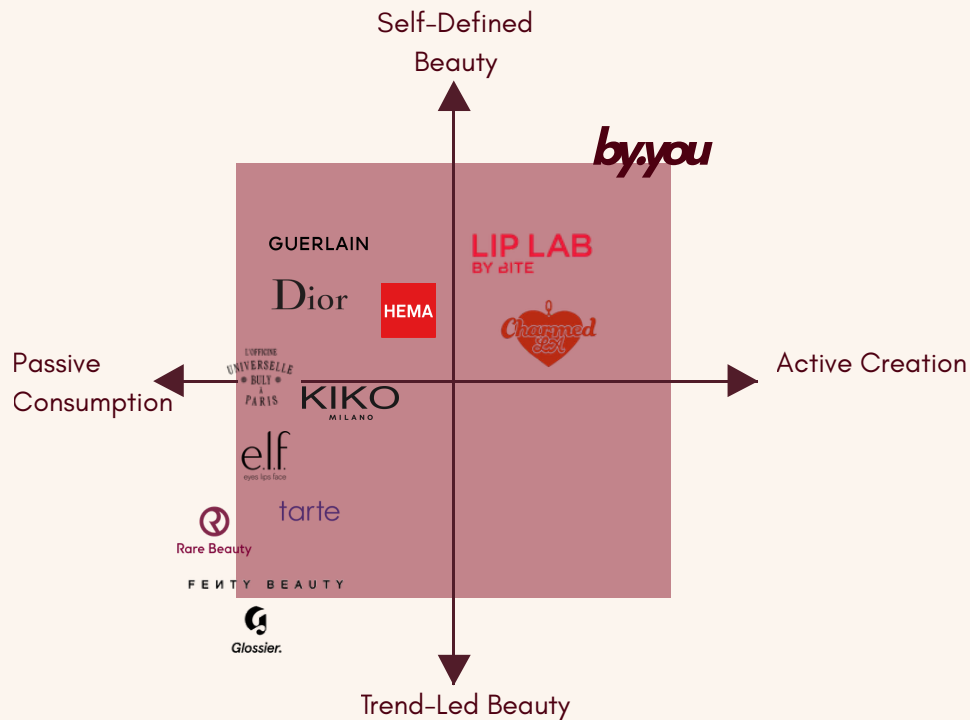


Figure 22: Competitor Analysis Matrix

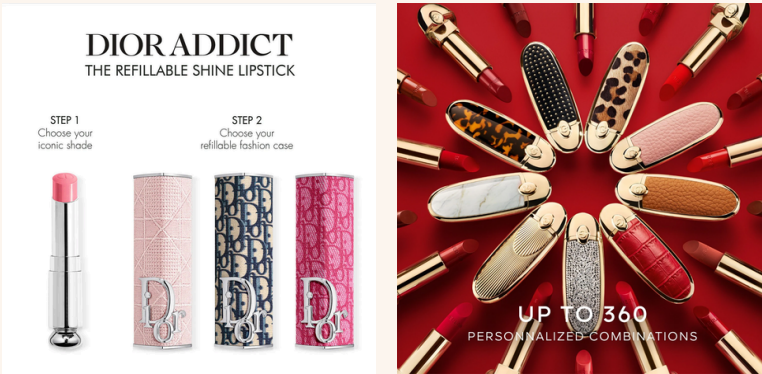
<p>by.you: Workspace and facilitators</p> <p>User : Creator and author</p>	<p>Active engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about ingredients • Measure and combine materials • Make formulation decisions • Chose & fill containers themselves • Experiment with color and scent • Gain the skills to continue creating at & beyond the workshop! 	<p>Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodied learning • Agency of choice • Personal creativity • Skill development • Ingredient transparency • Product authorship
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by.you

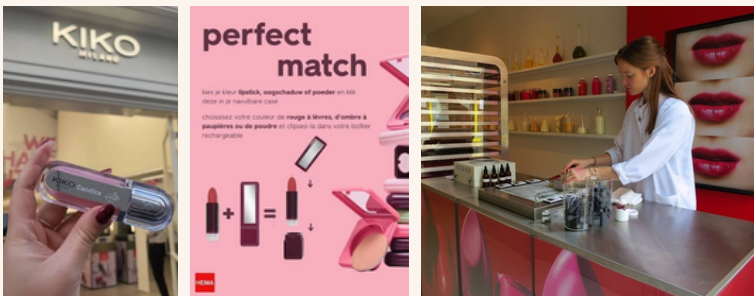
The product is not only personalized,
it is crafted by the user every step of the way



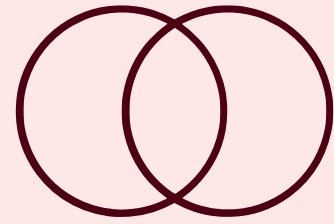
As illustrated in (Figure 22), existing brands on the market occupy different positions between passive consumption and active creation, as well as between trend-led and self-defined beauty. Brands such as Glossier, Fenty Beauty, Rare Beauty, e.l.f., and Tarte emphasize self-expression, accessibility, and community-building, while still largely operating through traditional product consumption with sparse opportunity for personalization.



Dior and Guerlain position themselves through luxury, craftsmanship, and prestige, offering highly curated beauty experiences with consumer involvement in the bounds of their brand.



Other brands, such as KIKO Milano and HEMA, introduce elements of personalization through product selection, customization services, or refill initiatives. Meanwhile, concepts such as Lip Lab by Bite and Charmed Jewelry Bar move further toward active participation by allowing users to customize shades, formulas, or packaging within structured brand experiences.



by:you

Points of Parity

Across the matrix, many brands recognize consumers' growing desire for personalization and agency. These brands offer varying levels of customization, allowing users to select products, shades, packaging, or aesthetic elements that align with their preferences. The popularity of these models demonstrates that consumers value having a level of influence over the products they purchase and appreciate brands that reflect their lifestyles, values, and identities. Personalization has therefore become an increasingly important component of contemporary beauty experiences.



by:you

Points of Difference

By.you extends beyond personalization and positions itself around active authorship rather than ownership. Rather than selecting from pre-defined options, users directly participate in creating the products themselves. The workshop experience is not simply about choosing a shade, engraving packaging, or customizing a finished product, it is about engaging with ingredients, understanding formulations, making aesthetic decisions, and experiencing the production process firsthand. Through this involvement, users gain practical knowledge, confidence, and a deeper understanding of how cosmetics are made. In this way, by.you occupies a unique position within the beauty landscape, combining self-defined beauty with active creation and transforming cosmetic consumption into a participatory and educational experience.

by.you's business model



Figure 23: Business Model Canvas

The business model canvas (Figure 23) outlines how by.you creates, delivers, and captures value while supporting its mission of participatory beauty creation. It details the key activities, partnerships, resources, revenue streams, and customer relationships required to operate the business, while also identifying opportunities for responsible sourcing and long-term growth. By sourcing ingredients and packaging responsibly and building strong relationships with creative, educational, and sustainability-focused partners, by.you

embeds environmental and social responsibility into its operating model from the beginning.

The business model also reflects a diversified revenue structure, combining workshop participation, DIY toolkits, refill opportunities, memberships, educational content, and future partnerships. Together, these offerings support both financial viability and the broader mission of fostering more conscious, creative, and personalized relationships with beauty products.

go-to-market strategy



Build the Foundation

Curate the Creation Experience

- Source sustainable ingredients and packaging
- Develop workshop recipes and educational materials
- Establish supplier relationships
- Create the digital platform and supporting resources
- Test workshop formats and participant journeys



Launch Through Pop-Up Experiences

Generate Awareness and Validate Demand

- Host pop-up making events and workshops
- Partner with creative festivals, markets, universities, and sustainability events
- Capture creator feedback and preferences
- Build an online community and mailing list
- Refine offerings based on participant insights



Position within Creative & Self-Expressive Communities

Grow Engagement and Retention

- Leverage social media storytelling and creator-generated content
- Showcase participant creations and personal beauty stories
- Build a network of engaged creators and brand advocates
- Introduce membership benefits
- Implement community feedback into new offerings



Establish a Permanent Creative Hub

Open the by.you Storefront

- Create a dedicated making environment
- Host recurring workshops and events
- Showcase community creations
- Expand product and ingredient offerings
- Strengthen brand presence and visibility

The go-to-market strategy focuses on gradually building awareness, validating demand, and refining the by.you experience before establishing a permanent creative hub. Rather than launching immediately as a standalone storefront, by.you begins by launching within existing creative, sustainable, and trend-forward communities where potential users are already gathering.

By forming partnerships with creative spaces, cafés, festivals, universities, sustainability initiatives, and workshop venues, by.you has the opportunity to secure locations for pop-up workshops and maker experiences while also building brand visibility through trusted networks. This partnership phase provides valuable opportunities to test workshop formats, refine educational materials, understand operational requirements, and gather participant feedback.

As awareness and engagement grow, by.you can bring together a community of creators through social media storytelling, user-generated content (UGC), and recurring workshop experiences. This allows the brand to strengthen customer retention, validate demand, and establish a network of participants, collaborators, and facilitators who contribute to the growth of the platform.

Insights gained through these pop-up experiences ultimately serve as the foundation for launching a permanent by.you creative hub. By first understanding how the concept functions in real-world settings and building a trusted ecosystem of partners, participants, and staff, by.you can expand with greater security and create a dedicated space for ongoing DIY cosmetic making, education, community building, and product innovation.

by.you KPIs



Creator Participation

- Workshop attendance
- DIY kit purchases and usage
- Repeat participation in making activities
- Engagement with the creation process

By.you tracks workshop registrations, DIY kit sales, refill purchases, and user activity through customer accounts and platform analytics to understand how actively people participate in cosmetic creation.



Creative Confidence & Knowledge Growth

- Confidence in creating cosmetics independently
- Understanding of ingredients and formulation
- Willingness to experiment and personalize
- Sense of agency and ownership

Pre- and post-workshop surveys, learning assessments, and participant reflections are used to evaluate changes in confidence, knowledge, and comfort with DIY cosmetic making over time.



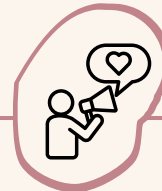
At by.you, success is measured by more than products made—it is reflected in the confidence gained, knowledge shared, creativity expressed, and community built. These KPIs capture how creators participate, learn, influence future experiences, and inspire others to rediscover beauty through making.



Community-Led Innovation

- Customer feedback and suggestions
- Community-created recipes and ideas
- Packaging and ingredient preferences
- User influence on new offerings

Through surveys, platform feedback forms, recipe submissions, community discussions, and workshop reflections, by.you identifies recurring needs and incorporates community insights into future products, tools, and experiences.



Creator Advocacy & Brand Visibility

- User-generated content (UGC)
- Branded hashtag usage
- Social media mentions and engagement
- Referrals and community growth

By.you monitors social media activity, branded hashtags, tagged content, referral programs, and external mentions to measure how creators share their experiences and contribute to growing brand awareness.

roadmap

TIME

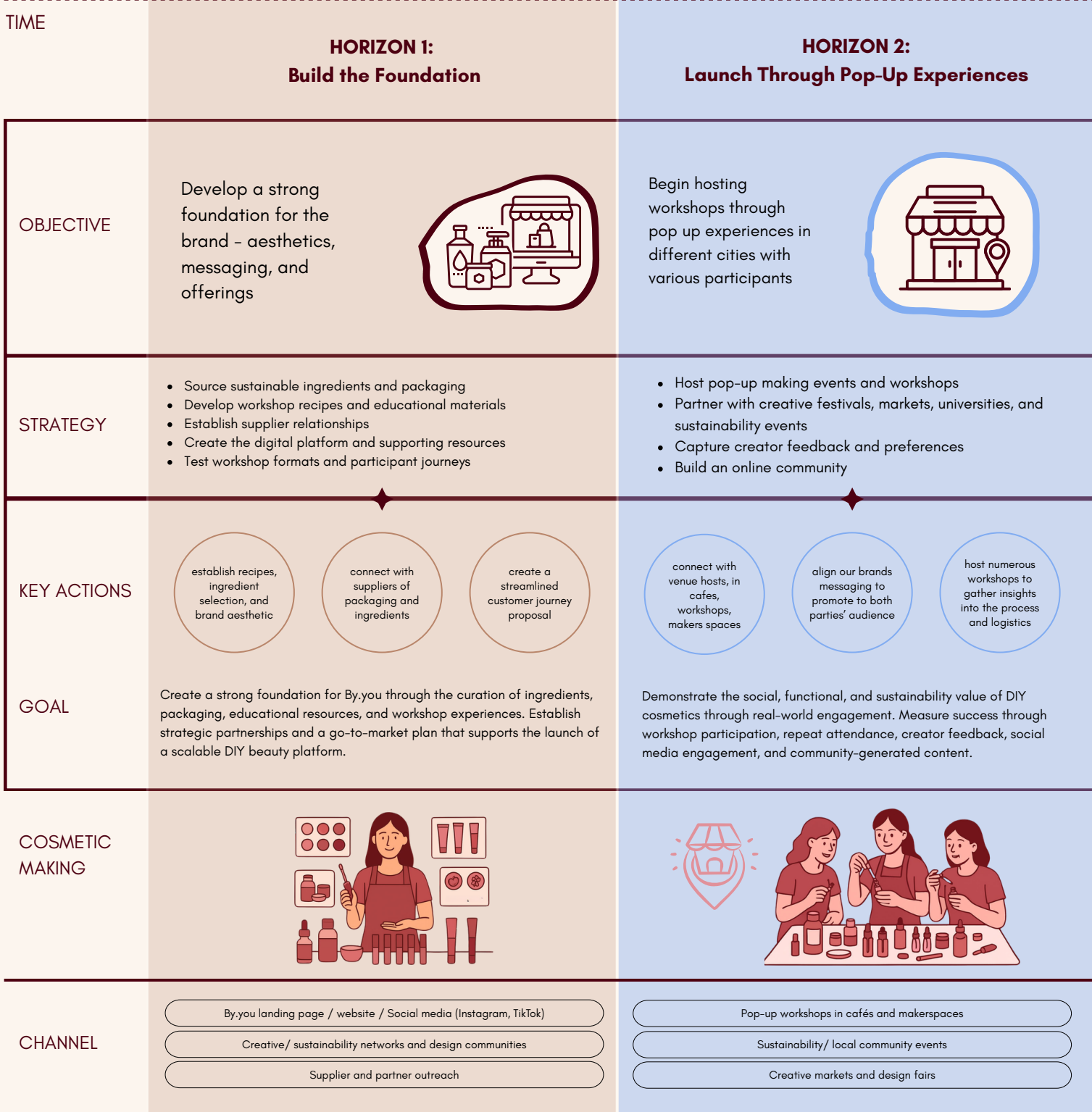


Figure 24: by.you Roadmap

The *by.you* roadmap (Figure 24) represents a long-term vision for reimagining the relationship between people and the beauty products used every day. Rather than positioning cosmetics as finished products to be purchased, this research proposes a shift toward beauty as an active, creative, and participatory process. Through gradual stages of development, from establishing the foundations of the brand to cultivating an engaged community and ultimately creating a permanent creative platform, the roadmap demonstrates how design can facilitate lasting behavioral and cultural change rather than simply being a transactional experience.

Throughout this thesis, historical analysis, theoretical research, interviews, and participatory workshops revealed a growing desire for greater transparency, personalization, and involvement in cosmetic creation. The workshop interventions demonstrated that hands-on making can increase confidence, curiosity, and understanding while transforming participants from passive consumers into active creators. These findings suggest that the value of DIY cosmetics extends beyond the products themselves, the value lies in the knowledge gained, the skills developed, the conversations shared, and the sense of authorship that emerges through creation.

HORIZON 3: Position within Creative & Self-Expressive Communities

Keep the audience engaged through content, promoting the workshops and digital presence with our customers



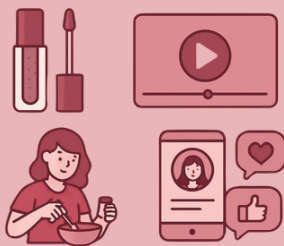
- Leverage social media storytelling and UGC
- Showcase participant creations and personal beauty stories
- Build a network of engaged creators and brand advocates
- Implement community feedback into new offerings

build our own voice through social media storytelling from real life content

engage with our users and their UGC + collaborate

establish our webpage as a trusted source of all things DIY cosmetics

Position *by.you* as a trusted destination for DIY cosmetic creation by expanding workshops, educational resources, partnerships, and digital offerings. Build a growing community of creators who engage with the platform both during and beyond the workshop experience.



Social media storytelling and UGC campaigns

Creative festivals (Dutch Design Week, maker fairs, beauty events)

Email newsletter and community updates

HORIZON 4 +: Establish a Permanent Creative Platform

Find a permanent home for *by.you* to house our own workshops and extend to master classes and welcome new and returning creators



- Create a dedicated making environment
- Host recurring workshops and events
- Showcase community creations
- Expand product and ingredient offerings
- Strengthen brand presence and visibility
- Implement community feedback into new offerings

find a location & begin operations based on insights gathered from pop up events

expand our offerings based on participant insights

offer classes/advanced workshops to diversify offerings & maintain our core values of DIY

Solidify *by.you* as the leading platform for participatory beauty creation, empowering individuals to create cosmetics that reflect their personal style, preferences, and values while continuously shaping the future of the platform through community involvement.



Permanent *by.you* storefront

Advanced workshops and masterclasses

Refill and toolkit program

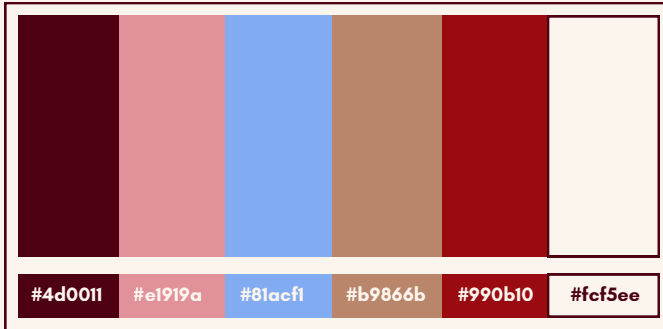
Strategic Brand Partnerships

This roadmap therefore embraces an iterative approach, allowing *by.you* to evolve alongside its community. Each stage is informed by creator feedback, collaborative learning, and continuous refinement, ensuring that the platform remains responsive to changing needs while staying grounded in its core values of creativity, transparency, agency, and conscious beauty consumption. In this way, the community becomes active contributors to the brand's development.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that the future of DIY cosmetics is about expanding the ways in which people can engage with the beauty industry outside of its current confines. By creating opportunities for participation, learning, and creative expression, design can help restore meaningful connections between consumers, materials, and production processes. It is hoped that *by.you* serves as both a practical intervention and an invitation to rethink our relationship with beauty—and who gets to define it—transforming cosmetics from products we simply consume into creations we can understand, create, and truly call our own.

by.you

Beauty made by you



palette rules

<p>Deep Burgundy → Craftsmanship & Authorship</p>	<p>Neutral → Materials & Hands-On Making</p>
<p>Soft Blush → Identity & Personalization</p>	<p>Bold Red → Agency & Empowerment</p>
<p>Powder Blue → Knowledge & Transparency</p>	<p>Canvas Cream → Creativity & Accessible Exploration</p>

Glacial Indifference

<p>ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>bold caps</p>	<p>abcdefgh ijklmnop qrstuvwxyz</p> <p>bold low</p>	<p>ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>regular caps</p>	<p>abcdefgh ijklmnop qrstuvwxyz</p> <p>regular low</p>
<p><i>Amsterdam Fair</i></p>			
<p>ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>regular caps</p>		<p>abcdefgh ijklmnop qrstuvwxyz</p> <p>regular low</p>	

brand principles

◆ **Restore agency through active creation**

Empower people to move from passive consumers to active creators by making their own beauty products.

◆ **Practice ingredient transparency**

Make cosmetic ingredients and formulations understandable, visible, and accessible to every creator



◆ **Encourage conscious beauty consumption**

Inspire more thoughtful choices by reconnecting people with the materials, processes, and creativity behind their beauty products



◆ **Support personal creativity**

Encourage experimentation and self-expression through customizable colors, scents, formulas, and packaging

◆ **Build confidence through tactile learning**

Increase creator knowledge and confidence by learning through hands-on making and creative exploration



by.you

ING BOWL

DISCARD AFTER USE

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Images Sourcing

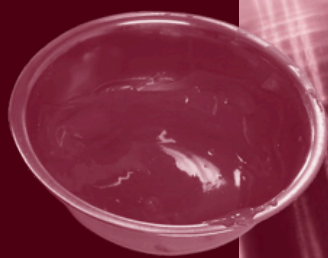
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