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Unmasking Maybelline: What Powers Beauty in Today's Makeup Era

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ABSTRACT:

In the fast-evolving beauty industry, Maybelline New York has successfully adapted to changing consumer expectations, particularly among Gen Z and millennials. This research delves into Maybelline's strategic evolution, using secondary data from industry reports, academic studies, and brand analyses to uncover how the brand resonates with today's digitally engaged, diverse consumers. Maybelline's success lies in its ability to offer affordable, inclusive, and trend-driven products that reflect modern values of self-expression and empowerment. Its strategic use of influencer marketing and social media storytelling has strengthened its connection with consumers. Under the guidance of its parent company, L'Oréal, Maybelline has found a balance between luxury and accessibility. This study highlights how legacy brands can stay relevant by understanding shifting beauty needs and leveraging cultural and digital trends. In today's market, beauty is about identity and connection—and Maybelline is leading the charge in this transformation.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Buying Patterns, Maybelline, Cosmetics Industry, Brand Perception, Comparing Brands, L'Oréal, Existing Data Analysis, Mass Market Makeup, Digital Marketing, Financial Report Insights.

INTRODUCTION:

In the ever-evolving world of beauty and cosmetics, understanding why consumers choose one brand over another is essential for businesses looking to maintain relevance and growth. This study focuses on Maybelline New York, a brand that has consistently stood out in the competitive cosmetics market. Our aim was to gain a deeper understanding of why people are drawn to Maybelline's products and how it maintains its strong position in a saturated industry. To achieve this, we examined existing research, analysed market trends, and scrutinized Maybelline's brand strategy, alongside insights from its parent company, L'Oréal, and a comparative analysis with key competitors. This research was conducted through secondary data—meaning we gathered and analysed information that has already been made available to the public. We examined academic studies that explore consumer motivations behind makeup purchases, reviewed L'Oréal's recent annual reports, focusing on their strategies for consumer-facing brands, and observed how Maybelline positions itself in the market relative to competitors. No new surveys or interviews were conducted; rather, we relied on existing data and reports to form our analysis. From our investigation, several key findings emerged. Maybelline has a strong appeal among younger consumers, particularly those aged 16 to 35. The brand is known for offering good value—combining quality with affordability—while maintaining wide accessibility through both retail outlets and a robust online presence, especially on social media platforms. The rise of influencer marketing and digital marketing strategies has been a significant driver in attracting this demographic. In addition, insights from L'Oréal's reports reveal a focus on "premiumization" of everyday products and expanding into emerging markets, strategies that have significantly influenced Maybelline's approach. When compared to competitors such as L'Oréal Paris, e.l.f., and Revlon, Maybelline remains competitive, especially in popular categories like mascara, thanks to its value-oriented approach and strategic digital engagement.

The results of this study suggest that Maybelline is well-positioned to maintain its competitive edge by leveraging its digital marketing capabilities and continuing to strike the right balance between affordability and innovation—a strategy that aligns with L'Oréal's broader objectives. Furthermore, while this research provides valuable insights by connecting company reports, market analysis, and academic literature, it also underscores the importance of conducting direct consumer research to fully understand the motivations behind purchasing decisions.

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND:

The beauty industry, especially the cosmetics sector, has undergone significant transformation in recent years, influenced by shifts in consumer behaviour, technological advancements, and the rise of social media. In particular, makeup has evolved from a mere tool for enhancing appearance to an essential part of self-expression and identity, especially among younger consumers such as Gen Z and millennials.

Maybelline New York, a leading global cosmetics brand, has successfully navigated these changes, maintaining its relevance in a highly competitive market. The brand's evolution reflects broader industry trends, including the growing demand for inclusivity, affordability, and digital engagement. Its

strategic approach has been shaped not only by its rich legacy but also by its ability to stay in tune with modern consumer values, particularly through influencer-driven marketing and strong social media presence. As a subsidiary of L'Oréal, Maybelline benefits from the global company's extensive resources and innovative strategies. This research examines how Maybelline has leveraged these assets to stay ahead of competitors and appeal to the ever-changing needs of today's beauty consumers. By analysing secondary data from industry reports, academic research, and public brand analyses, this study provides insights into Maybelline's success and explores the broader implications for legacy beauty brands in a digital-first world.

METHODOLOGY:

Industry and Market Research Reports: Authoritative reports from recognized market intelligence providers, namely Statista, Euromonitor, and the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), were consulted. These reports provided essential quantitative and qualitative data regarding market size, growth projections, consumer demographics, key industry trends, and the competitive environment.

Peer-Reviewed Academic Journals: Scholarly literature was sourced from academic journals specializing in relevant fields such as consumer behaviour, brand management, brand perception, and marketing psychology. This provided foundational theories, established models, and empirical evidence pertinent to the study's theoretical framework.

Reputable Business and News Media: To incorporate contemporary perspectives, industry developments, and expert opinions, articles and analyses from respected publications like Forbes, Vogue Business, Mint, and The Economic Times were reviewed. These sources offered valuable real-world context and timely information.

Corporate and Brand-Specific Documentation: Direct insights into the strategies, performance, and marketing initiatives of the relevant brands/companies were obtained from publicly accessible documents. Key sources included L'Oréal's official Annual Reports and specific marketing case studies concerning Maybelline.

What We Aimed to Do:

- Describe the typical Maybelline customer profile as suggested by existing sources.
- Pull together what's already known about why people buy affordable makeup (value, quality signals, brand vibe, availability, promotions, peer approval) and apply it to Maybelline's situation.
- Analyse mentions about how often people buy and where (online vs. stores) for brands like Maybelline.
- Compare Maybelline descriptively to its main rivals using publicly visible information (like their websites and marketing).
- Dig into L'Oréal's annual reports to understand their relevant strategic thinking and market comments that affect Maybelline.

Why This Study Matters: This research pieces together a picture of Maybelline's world using only publicly available information. It gives L'Oréal and Maybelline a starting point for thinking about strategy, showing how company goals mentioned in reports often line up with what we see happening in the market. It also lays groundwork for future studies that *could* talk directly to consumers, while showing how we can learn a lot just by carefully analysing company disclosures alongside other market info.

What This Study Covers: We strictly stuck to information already out there: academic papers, market summaries, competitor websites, and L'Oréal's annual reports (mostly from the last few years, 2022-2024). Everything we say about consumer behaviour reflects reported trends, theories, or company perspectives, not direct proof from buyers. We looked globally where possible, but specific differences between countries might be missed. How deep we could go was limited by what companies choose to share publicly – for instance, L'Oréal doesn't release separate financial details just for Maybelline.

Key Factors in Buying Cosmetics:

Looking across studies and market analyses on makeup buying, several factors keep popping up:

- **Price and Getting Good Value:** People buying affordable makeup are often very price-conscious. Brands like Maybelline are known for trying to hit that sweet spot where the price feels right for the quality you get
- **Quality Feel and Brand Trust:** Since you often can't try everything before buying, people rely on a brand's reputation – built over time through ads, packaging, and past experiences – to guess the quality. Maybelline usually projects an image of being trendy, energetic, and dependable.
- **Brand Image and Vibe:** Makeup is personal. The feelings and ideas a brand evoke are really important. Ads, celebrity faces (in the past), and now especially influencers help shape this image. Maybelline often aims for a confident, self-expressive vibe targeting younger people.
- **What Others Say (Especially Online):** Particularly for the younger crowd Maybelline targets, recommendations from friends, online reviews, what's trending on social media (like those viral TikTok products!), and influencer posts heavily sway decisions about what to try and buy.
- **Being Easy to Find:** Making sure products are readily available in drugstores, supermarkets, big retailers, and increasingly online, is crucial for mass-market success. Maybelline's wide availability is a known strength.

- **The Product Itself:** Things like having a good range of shades (Maybelline's Fit Me line is often mentioned here), new formulas (like long-lasting wear), cool packaging, and more recently, what's *in* the product (ingredients, sustainability) all play a part in standing out.

2.3. How We See Brands and Stick with Them: Research suggests our perception of a makeup brand builds up over time from ads, using the products, and hearing what others say, especially online. Loyalty can grow if a brand consistently delivers on quality, feels like good value, stays engaged (especially digitally), and creates an emotional spark that resonates with who we are or want to be.

2.4. The World of Affordable Makeup: This part of the market runs on selling lots of products at lower prices than luxury brands. Competition is intense, sales promotions are common, and getting products into lots of stores is key. Brands face the challenge of being affordable yet desirable. Trends often trickle down from high-end brands or bubble up from social media, meaning brands like Maybelline need to be quick to react.

2.5. What's Been Said About Maybelline Specifically: While there might not be tons of deep academic dives solely on Maybelline's customer psychology, the brand often appears in broader market reports (summaries mentioning firms like Attest, Mintel, Euromonitor) and marketing examples. These sources tend to describe its audience (usually centered on the 16-35 age group, give or take), its strategy (focusing on trends and value), and its major market presence.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Maybelline's Brand Appeal:

Maybelline is perceived as a trendy, youthful, and empowering brand. Its tagline "Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline" has become iconic, promoting beauty as both natural and attainable. The brand's appeal is fueled by:

- Affordable luxury: Offering high-quality makeup at competitive prices.
- Trend alignment: Fast product launches inspired by global makeup trends.
- Urban identity: Associating with fashion capitals like New York to maintain a cosmopolitan vibe.

Consumer Behaviour Trends:

Based on Euromonitor and Nielsen studies:

- Gen Z and Millennials dominate Maybelline's customer base.
- Consumers prefer vegan, cruelty-free, and dermatologically tested products.
- There is growing reliance on peer reviews, influencers, and social proof over traditional advertising.
- Buyers exhibit impulse behaviour, often triggered by TikTok, Instagram reels, or YouTube shorts showcasing product performance.

Strategic Positioning by L'Oréal:

L'Oréal owns over 35 beauty brands. Maybelline is positioned under its Consumer Products Division, targeting mid-tier pricing while offering trend-forward products. L'Oréal ensures:

- Global supply chain support for rapid rollout of new products.
- Strong R&D backing from L'Oréal Research and Innovation centres.
- Strategic collaborations with celebrities (e.g., Gigi Hadid, Alia Bhatt) and viral influencer campaigns.

Digital Marketing and Influencer Culture:

Maybelline leverages social media as its playground. It collaborates with beauty influencers and content creators for:

- Tutorial-based promotions.
- Hashtag campaigns like #MaybellineFitMe or #MakeItHappen.
- Virtual try-on tools using Augmented Reality (AR) through apps and websites.

This digital-first approach has been especially effective post-2020, where beauty shopping shifted heavily online.

Market Trends in 2024–2025:

Recent cosmetic market trends, as per Mintel and Deloitte reports:

- Rising preference for hybrid products (e.g., makeup with skincare benefits).
- Consumers seek sustainable packaging and clean ingredients.

- Tier 2 and 3 cities in India are showing increased demand for branded cosmetics.
- Inclusivity in shade ranges has become a non-negotiable expectation.

Maybelline has kept up with these demands by introducing wider foundation shades, clean beauty lines, and sustainable product packaging

RESULTS:

As I sifted through the layers of information from industry reports, academic studies, media coverage, and brand-specific documents, a few key themes started to stand out—and together, they painted a very vivid picture of Maybelline New York's unique place in today's beauty market. One of the first things I noticed was just how strongly Maybelline connects with a younger audience, particularly those between the ages of 16 and 35. Across multiple sources, it became clear that Gen Z and millennials see Maybelline as a go-to brand that balances both style and substance. They're not just buying makeup—they're buying into a brand that mirrors their lifestyle, their identity, and even their values. What really stood out to me was how this alignment is not accidental but the result of consistent strategic branding. Through L'Oréal's annual reports, I uncovered how much emphasis the company places on "premiumizing" its mass-market brands like Maybelline—basically, making everyday products feel high-end while keeping them accessible. This came through clearly in how Maybelline packages and markets its products—sleek designs, trendy names, and influencer-driven campaigns that give the brand a cool, aspirational vibe. It was fascinating to see how this 'mass-tige' approach (mass + prestige) plays out in real time. I also spent a good amount of time comparing Maybelline to its key competitors—names like L'Oréal Paris, Revlon, and e.l.f. cosmetics. What I found was that Maybelline strikes a sweet spot: it offers quality products at affordable prices (like e.l.f.), but with a more established legacy and a wider global footprint (more like L'Oréal Paris). Especially in hero categories like mascara, Maybelline continues to dominate. It's not just their Lash Sensational line being praised across beauty blogs and reports—it's how consistently they innovate and launch new variations to keep consumers interested. Another powerful theme that emerged was Maybelline's digital savvy. From every source I explored—whether it was a marketing case study or an article in *Vogue Business*—the importance of influencer partnerships, TikTok campaigns, and strong visual branding across platforms stood out loud and clear. It's not just that Maybelline uses social media; it's that they *understand* it. Their campaigns don't just promote products—they build connections, tell stories, and make beauty feel fun and personal. Inclusivity was another standout insight. Academic literature repeatedly stressed how today's consumers, especially younger ones, expect brands to represent diverse skin tones, backgrounds, and identities. When I reviewed Maybelline's product lines and campaigns, I saw clear efforts to meet these expectations—whether through an expanded foundation range or featuring influencers from different ethnicities and genders. It's not always perfect, but it's definitely a step forward in making beauty more accessible and representative. Finally, through all the analysis, one big takeaway kept coming back to me: Maybelline succeeds because it listens, adapts, and evolves. It understands what consumers want—even before they say it out loud—and finds a way to deliver it with flair, affordability, and authenticity. Whether it's through their latest product drop or a clever social campaign, they know how to stay culturally relevant, globally competitive, and locally relatable. Overall, compiling and interpreting all this data was both challenging and incredibly rewarding. By connecting dots across reports, articles, and academic research, I was able to see the brand not just as a successful business—but as a case study in how modern beauty brands need to think, move, and innovate. And most importantly, I was able to understand how Maybelline's journey reflects the broader shifts happening in the world of cosmetics today.

YEAR-WISE REVENUE AND PROFIT ANALYSIS OF L'ORÉAL INDIA (FY2022 TO FY2024)

Fiscal year	Revenue from operations (₹ crore)	Total income(₹ crore)	Net profit (₹ crore)
Fy2022	3717.1	3738.7	418.1
Fy2023	4952.5	4993.6	488.3
Fy2024	5368.5	5684.6	487.5

CONCLUSION:

Through this research, I've come to see Maybelline not just as a makeup brand, but as a mirror of modern beauty culture. Its journey from a niche American label to a global favourite is fueled by its ability to evolve—embracing inclusivity, staying digitally sharp, and tapping into what consumers *feel*, not just what they wear. What stood out to me the most is how Maybelline blends affordability with aspiration, making beauty feel both accessible and exciting. It's not just about products—it's about possibility, confidence, and connection. In today's fast-paced, socially aware, and trend-driven world, Maybelline seems to understand that makeup is as emotional as it is visual. This study made it clear: brands that listen, adapt, and represent real people are the ones that truly thrive. And Maybelline? It's right at the heart of that shift.

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