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## THE EVOLUTION OF MAKEUP AS A TOOL OF VISUAL IDENTITY IN MASS MEDIA

*The article's relevance is driven by the growing role of visual communication in the information age, where makeup functions as an element of aesthetic influence and a tool for expressing identity, social status, and cultural codes. In contemporary mass media, makeup has evolved into a symbolic system that reflects dominant beauty norms and encodes meanings related to individuality, protest, community belonging, or branding. The significance of the study is further reinforced by the transformation of media formats, the expansion of social media, and the emergence of virtual filters that create digital images based on predefined visual logic. The article aims to explore the evolution of makeup as a means of shaping visual identity in mass media, identify its communicative functions, and assess its impact on public image perception in today's media environment. The research methodology is based on visual-semiotic analysis, cultural interpretation, and symbolic reading of aesthetic codes across various media platforms. The historical dynamics, stylistic transformations, and functional polyvalence of makeup are examined about specific media types. It has been revealed that makeup operates as a communicative code interpreted as a signal of status, emotion, or style in television, advertising, and social networks. It has been proven that key issues include aesthetic standardization, limited representation of cultural diversity, and increased pressure on self-presentation due to digital unification. It has been established that makeup increasingly functions as a flexible visual interface adaptable to commercial visibility, virtuality, and platform-driven exposure demands. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the integrated analysis of makeup as a semiotic code functioning within the field of cultural transformation and the media industry. Future research prospects include studying the impact of artificial intelligence, virtual imagery, and algorithmic visibility on the evolving semantics of makeup in the digital context.*

**Key words:** visual culture, image semiotics, television, social media, communicative representation.

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## ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ МАКІЯЖУ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТУ ВІЗУАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ В МАСМЕДІА

*Актуальність дослідження зумовлена посиленням ролі візуальної комунікації в інформаційну епоху, де макіяж є не лише елементом естетичного впливу, а й засобом вираження ідентичності, демонстрації соціального статусу та передачі культурних кодів. У сучасному масмедіа макіяж набуває функцій знакової системи, здатної не лише відображати домінуючі норми краси, а й кодувати символічні значення, пов'язані з індивідуальністю, протестом, належністю до спільноти або брендом. Особливої значущості дослідженню надають зміни медіа-форматів, активізація соціальних мереж і поява віртуальних фільтрів, що створюють нові цифрові образи, підпорядковані власній візуальній логіці. Метою статті є дослідити еволюцію макіяжу як засобу формування візуальної ідентичності в масмедіа, виявити його комунікативні функції та вплив на сприйняття публічного образу в сучасному інформаційному просторі. Методологічну основу становлять візуально-семіотичний аналіз, культурологічний підхід, а також інтерпретація символічних форм у межах медійних форматів. У процесі дослідження проаналізовано історичну динаміку, стилістичні трансформації та функціональну багатозначність макіяжу залежно від типу медіаплатформи. Виявлено, що на телебаченні, у рекламі та соціальних мережах макіяж є комунікативним кодом, що відображає статус, настрій або стиль. Доведено, що основними проблемами є естетична стандартизація, редукція культурного розмаїття та тиск на індивідуальну самопрезентацію внаслідок цифрової стандартизації образів. У висновках підсумовано, що макіяж дедалі частіше функціонує як гнучкий засіб візуальної комунікації, здатний адаптуватися до вимог комерційності, віртуальності й платформенної видимості. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у спробі комплексного аналізу макіяжу як семіотичного коду, що функціонує в полі культурних трансформацій і медіаіндустрії. Перспективи подальших досліджень полягають у вивченні впливу штучного інтелекту, віртуальних образів та алгоритмічної видимості на зміну семантики макіяжу в цифровому середовищі.*

**Ключові слова:** візуальна культура, семіотика образу, телебачення, соціальні мережі, комунікативна репрезентація.

**Problem statement.** In the modern media space, visual images play a crucial role in communication and the formation of mass consciousness, and make-up has become an important tool for visual identity, going beyond the scope of purely cosmetic practice. Its functions include the creation of images on television, film, advertising and social media, adapting to changes in beauty standards, aesthetic tastes and socio-cultural contexts. From accentuating natural features to expressing individuality or status, make-up emerges as a cultural and communicative code. The study of its evolution in the media is relevant for a critical analysis of the processes of commercialisation, standardisation of appearance and the impact of media images on self-perception. The practical significance lies in the possibility of applying the results in journalism, advertising, cultural studies, fashion and make-up art, which will contribute to the conscious formation of a public image in the context of visually oriented communication.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The evolution of make-up as a tool of visual identity in the media covers a range of interdisciplinary studies, which allows us to distinguish four main areas: cultural and artistic, historical and media, socio-psychological, and platform and communication. Each of them represents a certain dimension of understanding the role of make-up as a means of self-expression, image construction and adaptation to the visual norms of public space.

The first direction is related to the cultural and art historical interpretation of make-up as an element of the stage image, visual stylisation and a tool for self-presentation. In the study of O. Proskuryakova stage makeup appears as an artistic means for transforming the identity of a pop artist, creating a symbolic visibility perceived by the viewer (Proskuryakova, 2024). V. Zabora emphasises external modifications as an element of personal image (Zabora, 2023). Researcher Y. Vereshchynska proves that makeup is a factor of facial attractiveness that directly affects the success of visual communication in the context of mass exposure (Vereshchynska, 2016).

The second area covers the historical and media aspects of make-up related to the transformation of appearance standards in the media, technological changes, and the representation of social identities. She considers make-up to be a tool for constructing gender and visual expression in the history of mass culture (Butterfield, 2024). P. Albarran traces the impact of the transition to HD television on the change in make-up trends in television news (Albarran, 2020). In their work, D. J. Kellie, K. R. Blake & R. C. Brooks demonstrate that makeup in the public

sphere simultaneously serves as a tool of self-expression and a source of objectification, influencing the way women are perceived in visual media (Kellie, Blake & Brooks, 2021).

The third area focuses on the socio-psychological effects of make-up use, its impact on self-esteem, emotional state and body reflection in the context of digital communication. Researchers M. McCabe, T. de Waal Malefyt & A. Fabri analyse how women balance the desire for authenticity with adherence to imposed beauty standards shaped by consumer culture (McCabe, de Waal Malefyt & Fabri, 2020). Researchers A. Kosmala, I. Wilk & K. Kassolik prove that regular use of makeup increases psychological comfort, helps overcome insecurity, and contributes to overall well-being (Kosmala, Wilk & Kassolik, 2019). J. Jairath & R. Daima highlight the role of pop culture in promoting non-standard beauty models (Jairath & Daima, 2021). A. Tran, R. Rosales & L. Copes found that even short-term use of cosmetics by beauty influencers has a positive effect on self-esteem and changes behavioural communication in the frame (Tran, Rosales & Copes, 2020). N. M. Anchieta et al. confirm that even simulated makeup application through virtual means can change subjective self-perception, which is especially relevant in digital formats (Anchieta et al., 2021). The ambivalent effects of make-up are explored by A. L. Mafra et al. (Mafra et al., 2022).

The fourth area highlights the role of digital platforms and algorithmic media in normalising visual make-up standards and shaping stylistic trends. Scholar A. M. M. Weare uses the example of Pinterest to analyse how tags, recommendations, and visual selections create an idea of “healthy” and “aesthetic” makeup that is internalised by users (Weare, 2021). The behind-the-scenes professional practice of make-up artists is described by K. Pottenger showing how the beauty industry in the media shapes labour and ethical models (Pottenger, 2021).

Thus, these works create a holistic picture of the evolution of make-up as a means of visual identity in the media. Despite the existence of separate studies, make-up as a multilevel communication code in the media has not been sufficiently studied. The issues of its historical transformation in the context of changing media formats, its role in branding a personality, and its connection with beauty ideologies in the digital age remain unresolved. A limited number of studies pay attention to the semiotic analysis of makeup on television, in advertising and social media, while the impact of standardised images and media standards on the psychological state of the individual and social representation remains almost unexplored.

This study aims to fill these gaps through a comprehensive analysis of the aesthetic, semiotic, and sociocultural functions of make-up.

**The purpose of the article** is to study the evolution of make-up as a means of forming visual identity in the media, to identify its communicative functions and influence on the perception of the public image in the modern information space.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks are envisaged:

1) to describe the historical evolution of make-up in the context of the formation of visual culture of mass media and analyse its transformation in various media formats;

2) to define the modern functions and semiotic meaning of make-up as a code of visual communication, to reveal its connection with the ideologies of beauty, individualism and personal branding practices;

3) to identify the main problems associated with the standardisation of appearance and the pressure of media standards, and to propose ethical and creative approaches to the use of make-up as a means of self-expression, taking into account cultural diversity.

**Summary of the main material.** Makeup as an element of the visual culture of the media has a long history, but its functions, forms and meanings have changed significantly under the influence of technological developments, social norms and communication practices. In every period, the media – from print to digital platforms – have conveyed not only fashion trends, but also certain ideas about femininity, attractiveness, status, and norms. From an element of a theatrical mask to a means of commercial branding, makeup has consistently adapted to new formats of image presentation, forming specific aesthetic expectations among the audience. Below is a generalised description of the main stages of make-up transformation in the media context (Table 1).

These stages illustrate not only the change in aesthetic approaches to make-up, but also the broader process of mediatisation of appearance, in which make-up is not secondary to the image, but a conceptually signif-

icant part of it. In different historical periods, makeup has served to enhance expressiveness in the context of limited technological capabilities (for example, in silent cinema), represent gender and social norms in advertising and television products, and has become part of mass culture, combining aesthetics, subculture and protest. In the digital age, especially with the proliferation of visual platforms and mobile apps, makeup is transforming into a flexible code of self-identification that can both reinforce socially acceptable images and disrupt them. Its communicative role has grown significantly: make-up has become a means of visual narrative that expresses not only individuality, but also values, mood, political position or cultural affiliation. In this sense, it is turning into a multimodal media message that is read in the context of interfaces, filters, hashtags and digital trends that are shaping new horizons of visual culture and mass communication.

Contemporary mass media is witnessing a profound transformation of makeup functions, reflecting the evolution of socio-cultural values and a shift in focus from normative beauty to its interpretations within the framework of individual expression and commercial positioning of the individual. Makeup is no longer seen solely as a grooming or decoration element, but is becoming an important means of encoding beauty ideologies that the media actively broadcast, constructing new standards of visual appeal. Various types of media images are being formed through television projects, social media, advertising campaigns, and blogger content, where makeup takes on a symbolic and representative meaning. Its use is increasingly linked to the need to create a sustainable visual identity that can be recognised, commercialised and adapted to the digital environment. At the same time, there is an increase in the individualisation of images, which, on the one hand, stimulates creativity, and on the other hand, increases the pressure on media users to meet visual expectations. This is especially true for influencers, for whom makeup is becoming a

Table 1

**Stages of transformation of make-up as an element of visual identity in the media**

Historical stage	Features of the use of make-up in the media	Socio-cultural context and impact
The beginning of the twentieth century.	Emphasis on facial expression in black and white cinema; dark lips, contoured eyes	Hollywood glamour, the first stars of the film industry
1950s and 1960s	Formation of a typical “female image” on television and in advertising	Aesthetics of dominant femininity, beauty marketing
1980s and 1990s	Bright, expressive make-up in music videos and glossy magazines	Pop music culture, personalisation of the image
The beginning of the 21st century.	Naturalism or conceptual make-up in cinema, fashion, reality TV shows	Pursuit of authenticity, criticism of appearance patterns
2010s to the present day	Make-up as part of the visual brand of bloggers and influencers on social media	Digital visuals, aesthetic algorithms, creative expression

*Source: compiled by the author on the basis of (Albarran, 2020; Anchieta et al., 2021; Butterfield, 2024; Jairath & Daima, 2021; Kellie, Blake & Brooks, 2021; Mafra et al., 2022; McCabe, de Waal Malefyt & Fabri, 2020; Tran, Rosales & Copes, 2020; Weare, 2021)*

personal branding tool and part of the algorithmically controlled attention economy (Fig. 1).

The trends presented here reflect contemporary approaches to the use of make-up in the media, which combine aesthetic preferences with deeper socio-cultural and commercial meanings. Make-up is not only a means of emphasising appearance, but also a tool for expressing ideological positions, individuality and personal branding.

For example, the “clean girl” aesthetic, popularised by personalities such as Hailey Bieber, emphasises minimalist make-up and well-groomed skin, emphasising natural beauty and a healthy lifestyle. This trend reflects the desire for simplicity and authenticity in the image, which resonates with the ideology of naturalness and ease (Vogue, 2025).

At the same time, the growing popularity of gender-neutral makeup reflects the social focus on inclusivity and the expansion of traditional gender roles. Brands such as Fluide create products aimed at everyone, regardless of gender identity, emphasising the universality and accessibility of beauty for everyone (NewBeauty, 2024; ELLE, 2023).

In addition, makeup is becoming an important element of personal branding, especially among influencers and public figures. Creating a recognisable style with makeup helps to commercialise an image and create a unique visual identity, which is important in the age of visual content dominance.

In the context of contemporary visual culture, make-up is not only an element of aesthetic design, but also a sign system that performs a communicative role, using both established and changing codes. In the semiotic dimension, makeup is a set of visual

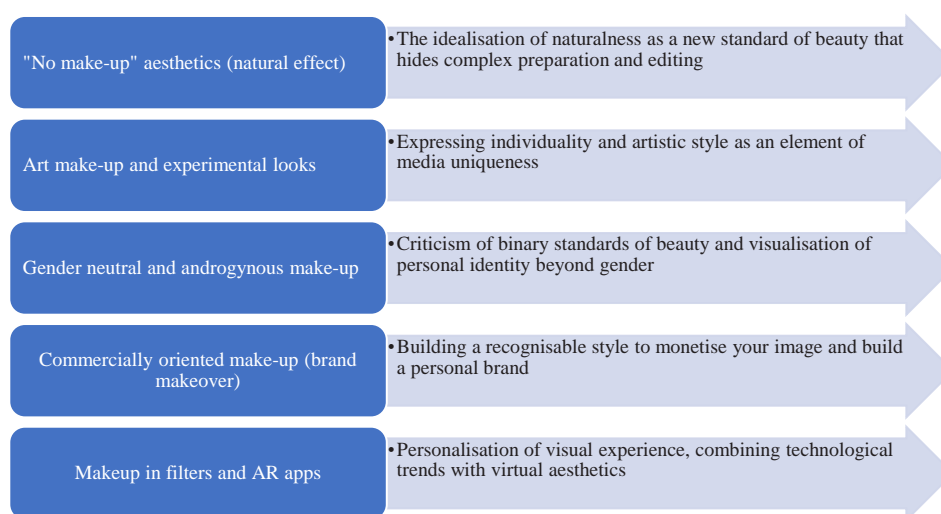
signs that are interpreted according to the rules of the social context, cultural discourse and genre specifics of media formats. On television, social media and advertising products, make-up does not just convey external information about a person, but also forms narratives of identity, status, intention or mood. Its structure can correspond to archetypes (for example, the image of a femme fatale or a “girl next door”) or create new visual codes that go beyond traditional typification. Makeup in the media also incorporates the symbolism of colour, texture, symmetry, stylisation – all these elements form a complex language of visual communication that is perceived by the viewer as subconscious or openly interpreted information (Table 2).

Table 2

**Semiotic codes of make-up on television, social media and advertising**

Make-up media format	Examples of semiotic codes	The communicative function of the visual image
Television	Tonal contrast, emphasis on the eyes or lips	Enhancement of emotional expression, matching the genre or role
Social networks	Symbolic colours, filters, glitch effects	Demonstration of lifestyle, social affiliation or protest
Advertising	Perfect symmetry, clean lines, corporate palette	Commercial persuasiveness, building brand association

*Source: compiled by the author on the basis of (Albarran, 2020; Butterfield, 2024; Jairath & Daima, 2021; Kellie, Blake & Brooks, 2021; Maybelline, 202; McCabe, de Waal Malefyt & Fabri, 2020; NBCU Academy, 2025; Sephora, 2025; Tran, Rosales & Copes, 2020; Weare, 2021)*



**Fig. 1. Modern trends in the use of make-up in media images and their connection with the ideologies of beauty, individualism and personality branding**

*Source: compiled by the author based on (ELLE, 2023; NewBeauty, 2024; Vogue, 2025)*



In television, make-up is used to enhance the character of a character or presenter. For example, news anchors typically wear low-key makeup in neutral shades to emphasise their professionalism and impartiality. According to the NBCUAcademy, it is recommended that TV reporters use matte textures and avoid excessive glitter to prevent unwanted glare under studio lighting.

On social media, make-up becomes a means of self-expression and identification with certain subcultures or trends. The “e-girl” style is characterised by the use of bright blush, graphic elements and eyeliner, which signals belonging to the relevant online community. According to Maybelline India, this style involves bold eyeliner lines, blush on the cheeks and nose, and fake freckles, which creates a unique and recognisable look (Maybelline, 2025).

In advertising, make-up is used to create associations with a certain lifestyle or brand values. Sephora’s “Black Beauty Is Beauty” campaign highlights the contribution of black culture to modern beauty standards, using makeup as a means of communicating this message. The campaign highlights how many of today’s trends and products have their roots in black culture and calls for recognition of this contribution (Sephora, 2025). Thus, make-up in various media formats serves as a powerful visual communication tool that conveys complex cultural and social meanings, shaping the perception and identity of both individuals and brands.

The standardisation of appearance through mass media influence leads to the formation of dominant aesthetic standards that supplant individual expressions of physicality and style (McCabe, de Waal Malefyt & Fabri, 2020; Kellie, Blake & Brooks, 2021). The systematic reproduction of similar visual images in television, advertising, and digital media formats contributes to the normalisation of a limited range of external characteristics as socially desirable or “ideal” (Butterfield, 2024; Weare, 2021). This forms a visual canon of beauty that is reproduced by clearly controlled make-up schemes, symmetry of facial features, standardised proportions and colour schemes (Albarran, 2020; Pottenger, 2021). Such a canon deprives consumers of the opportunity to express themselves and causes psychological pressure, which can manifest itself in dissatisfaction with appearance, body anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and depersonalisation (Kosmala, Wilk & Kassolik, 2019; Mafra et al., 2022). Constant comparison with media images, enhanced by filters, retouching, and special lighting technologies, creates a sense of inability to live up to a conventional ideal (Anchieta et al., 2021; Tran, Rosales & Copes, 2020). Supported by the algo-

rithmic selection of content on social media, these images form a closed aesthetic environment where deviation from the norm is perceived as a challenge or a flaw (Weare, 2021; Jairath & Daima, 2021). As a result, the influence of media is not limited to the formation of tastes, but is transformed into a tool for regulating behaviour, emotional state and self-identity, which is a serious challenge in the context of preserving psychological well-being and social diversity (McCabe, de Waal Malefyt & Fabri, 2020; Kellie, Blake & Brooks, 2021).

The ethical and creative use of makeup in media practices involves the rejection of imposing typical aesthetic standards and the transition to the concept of inclusive visual communication, where makeup is a means of self-expression, not correction or submission to dominant norms. In the context of cultural diversity, it is advisable to support practices that take into account ethnic, gender, age and stylistic differences in make-up, helping to preserve the uniqueness of each image. It is recommended to avoid stereotypical portrayals of ethnic groups and the marginalisation of non-standard looks, promoting an aesthetic of authenticity and experimentation. In commercial and media projects, it is important to involve models with diverse backgrounds, reflect real people with their individual traits, and expand the palette of beauty interpretations. Makeup artists, producers, photographers, and content makers should adhere to the principles of voluntariness, ethical consent, and respect for cultural codes when creating media images. The systematic promotion of makeup as an artistic medium with a focus on artistic intent, emotional expression and communicative function contributes to the formation of a new paradigm of beauty based on the recognition of diversity and the right to individuality.

**Conclusions.** It has been established that make-up in the media performs not only an aesthetic but also a communicative function, serving as a means of encoding socio-cultural meanings, self-presentation and branding. It is determined that on television, in social media and advertising, it is a semiotic code, the content of which varies depending on the genre, target audience and cultural context. The main problems are the standardisation of images, psychological pressure on the audience, and insufficient representation of cultural and gender diversity. It is recommended to use make-up as an inclusive means of self-expression, taking into account ethical representation. Prospects for further research are related to the analysis of the interaction of makeup with digital technologies, platform algorithms, and changes in the perception of visual identity.

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