Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry (review)

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Overall, this reviewer's assessment of *Brand Society* is positive. The only caveat I can make is that *Brand Society*'s message can *only* apply to those who "buy in" to the belief that brands are a valuable statement of identity and culture. There are many consumers who, for reasons of income, or individual preference, decide to go "off-message." Nonetheless, Kornberger has skillfully and persuasively advanced his argument by drawing on a wide range of disciplines. Sure, there are plenty of references to branding and marketing scholarship, as well as sociology and economics. But, in addition, as befits Kornberger's training, the argument is also reinforced by strong philosophical approaches and cultural and political perspectives.

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Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiv + 412 pp., [16] pp. of plates. ISBN 0-1995-5649-0, $45.00 (cloth); 0-1996-3962-0, $27.95 (paper).

In this well-researched and deftly organized study, Geoffrey Jones explicates the global beauty industry from its beginnings a century or more ago in the flower fields, kitchens, and laboratories of entrepreneurial women and men to its multibillion dollar industry status today. In some ways, the stories of small businesses innovating and thriving before falling by the wayside, being bought by bigger firms, or transforming into transnational corporations are comparable to those of other commodities. Yet the profoundly gendered and ethnic nature of beauty products—soaps, scents, toiletries, and cosmetics—differentiates them. Significant distinctions include the prominence of female business owners, such as Canadian-born Elizabeth Arden and African American Madame C. J. Walker, and the potential for immigrant and minority industry leadership, evidenced by Jewish beauty magnates Ernest Wertheimer, producer of Chanel No. 5, among other products, and Helena Rubenstein, who created her own eponymous line. Moreover, the intimate relationship of beauty products with the body and its daily care and the association of cleanliness and beauty (and ugliness and dirt) with particular types of bodies have had profound effects. Despite the movement toward market dominance by fewer numbers of firms, such as L'Oreal and Procter & Gamble, which currently claim over one-fifth of total world

sales, local preferences for particular products, brands, and cosmetic effects and their distribution via a range of outlets, including female direct marketing microentrepreneurs, persist.

Jones examines three areas of inquiry: the modern beauty industry's pioneers, the construction of the beauty market, and the beauty industry's successful campaign for legitimacy. The latter refers to the illicit sexuality attributed to "painted women" before the twentieth century, skepticism about products' safety, efficacy, and advertised claims, and to recognition of the impact of the beauty business on national economies and multinational corporate wealth. In addition, Jones considers "two distinct spectrums." The "first has health and hygiene at one end and artifice at the other," and the second "extends from luxury or premium products to the mass market" (p. 8). The book chapters are organized into three sections; each takes us forward chronologically and further afield geographically while also assessing distinctive themes of the industry's history as it developed. Throughout, Jones draws on interviews with industry insiders, documents from company archives, and an impressive range of secondary literature to provide portraits of individual entrepreneurs and succinct, yet often lively histories of significant enterprises.

The dominance of well-established French perfumeries as desire for perfumes—and the ability to purchase them—dramatically increased in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe, and America set the stage for developments in brand differentiation and market expansion. The stronger trademark protections in France than in other countries encouraged experimentation with synthetic fragrances, marketing methods, and product packaging. However, attempts at increasing sales via lower prices and mass markets did not always bring about hoped for returns, as many of the now primarily female consumers of perfumes rejected products when they lost their aura of exclusivity. Some firms did profit by branching out into additional product lines with names not associated with prestige goods and by controlling the pricing and placement of products. Frenchman Francois Coty, for example, built demand for his "accessible luxury" line by deploying associations of elegance with Paris and dispatching a professional male sales staff into the expanding number department stores. In the United States, Max Factor similarly exploited the glamour of Hollywood and its film stars to sell cosmetics and facilitate their transition from specialized theatrical use and questionable respectability to essential component of modern femininity.

Jones' analysis is most insightful when he contextualizes biographical vignettes within the history of capitalist development, consumer market expansion, and product diversification that resulted from Western imperialism. For example, Chapter 3, "Cleanliness and

Civilization," links the increasing demand for toothpaste with the availability of processed foods that caused tooth decay, as well as urban consumers' heightened concerns for maintaining fresh breath and white teeth. The association between "civilization" and soap not only propped up Westerners' sense of superiority over colonized peoples, infused advertising of brands such as Pears in slogans invoking "The White Man's Burden" (p. 85), but also became a measure of modernization within countries such as Japan.

By the mid-twentieth century, mass-produced beauty products were well-integrated into daily lives within industrialized nations and well-positioned companies such as Lever Brothers and Lancome outlasted the Great Depression, war, and genocide to take full advantage of the postwar period's escalating consumer demand. Product launches and subsequent promotion, which already required significant investment due to packaging and advertising costs, became even more expensive with the advent of commercial-sponsored television. Television advertising intensified concerns about youthful as well as clean and modern appearances and served the industry in persuading more people to enjoy, if not require, soaps, skin care regimens, cosmetics, and additional hair care products, such as dyes. Thus, despite higher capital investments, new firms, created by Japan's Shu Uemura, for example, were able to capture market share. Entrepreneurs and established corporations also found ways to innovate and profit from feminist criticism of dominant beauty standards, concerns about animal testing, and desires for greener products.

Beauty Imagined provides a wealth of information about the history of the global beauty industry. It also helpfully provokes further thought about how to write global histories, including what elements are needed and which strategies are most effective in making a study global in scope. Though it is certainly a logical and welcome approach that Jones takes to begin such a history in Europe and follow a dynamic trail that leads to the United States and then into the regions dominated by Western imperialism, what would a global history of beauty offer that began elsewhere and traced the path of capitalism's history by alternative routes? Undoubtedly, more local, regional, and transnational studies of beauty products' history, cultural meanings, and commercialization are needed so that historians can further reimagine the history of beauty and business on a global scale. This book gives them more than a solid start.

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