

\_ Beauty

# Breaking the mould in a cookie-cutter beauty world

StrategiQ x MINTEL

Produced by our strategy team, powered by Mintel



**When we are so over-exposed to cosmetic surgery and a rise in cookie-cutter beauty, it's impossible to avoid the emotional impact and uptick of cosmetic procedures driven by social media, celebrities and unrealistic beauty standards from shows like Love Island.**

In a world where 93% of all cosmetic procedures being performed are on women, and with women more likely to stress over their appearance than men; what can beauty brands do to combat the growing need for consumers to feel 'Instagram perfect'? **How do you break through the noise of the injected beauty industry to make a real impact?**





# Contents

- 01 The stress of societal beauty standards
- 02 What is cookie-cutter beauty?
- 03 How social media is impacting the industry
- 04 Providing a safe space to talk
- 05 The solution: how can beauty brands drive change and stand out?
- 06 About Strategiq



\_ Doom scrolling and comparison

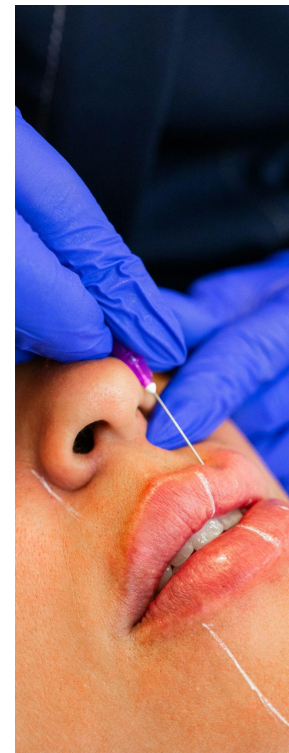
# The stress of societal beauty standards

**82% OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT SOCIAL MEDIA HAS HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR APPEARANCE**

*(Mintel, 2023)*

**To put it plainly: women are stressed about their appearance and social media is making it worse. 47% of women and 27% of men surveyed said that their appearance caused them stress during 2023. There is a concern among UK adults that the normalisation of beauty procedures is giving the wrong message to young people across multiple mediums.**

Mintel data found that 25-34 year olds are more interested in surgical and non-surgical procedures and that this is likely to be attributed to growing up during the evolution of social media and the 'Love Island era', which showcase a highly-filtered and enhanced beauty standard and foster insecurities.





According to a 2023 stem4 study examining body image,  $\frac{3}{4}$  children (including children as young as 12 years old) dislike their bodies. This increases to  $\frac{8}{10}$  when you survey young people between the ages of 18 and 21.

Social media was cited to play a significant part in the negative views children and young people have on their bodies, stating that *“when young people use social media apps to look for much-needed information and advice, they find themselves presented with a supposed reality that is distorted and harmful.”*

There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that points towards social media and online sources driving unrealistic expectations of how people should look. This provides a challenge to the beauty industry on how you break through the already negative stigma around beauty standard and contribute positively to the conversation instead.



\_ The impact on consumers

# What is cookie-cutter beauty?

The Tweakments Guide coined the term 'Cookie-cutter beauty' to define the phenomenon that everyone looks the same: *"you only have to look online or switch the TV on to see that young people today have the same lips, nose and cheek bones."*

**'Cookie-cutter beauty' is pushing 36% of women towards non-surgical procedures and it's increasing in younger people.**

**36% of people**



**Exposing themselves to non-surgical procedures like Botox**

**43% of people**



**Believe that having a cosmetic procedure puts pressure on others to do the same**

**1 in 2 people**



**Say that toxic beauty advice is causing low self-esteem**

*Dove Research*



That pressure of 'Instagram perfection' is leading to a shift in customer expectations, where **more people look to permanent solutions to their beauty issues**, the demand for temporary beauty fixes (i.e make up) could decrease. Young people are more impacted by what they see on social media, with 1 in 2 saying that toxic beauty advice is causing low self-esteem.

82% of people believed that there should be stricter regulations prohibiting underage people getting cosmetic procedures. There is increasing need for brands to provide more evidence of their safe practices, not only within injectables and cosmetics but with the way they manufacture their products.

“Data has shown toxic content online is **harming the mental health of today's youth**. If there isn't real change, young people will continue to pay with their wellbeing. We have a **responsibility to act and support a safer environment on social media**, helping protect young people's mental health. This means going beyond individual interventions to drive systemic change.”

**Alessandro Manfredi**

Chief Marketing Officer  
Dove



\_ Changing trends

# How social media is impacting the industry

**72% of girls felt better after removing toxic beauty advice from their social media**

*(Dove Self Esteem and Social Media Report 2022)*

**Consumers are becoming wise to the impact that social media is having, so much so that they are increasingly losing trust in social media. This growing distrust doesn't limit itself to UK audiences, globally there are movements to push towards either labelling social media images that include filters or edits, or banning them altogether.**

The Advertising Standards Agency ruled that 'filters should not be applied to social media ads if they exaggerate the effect of beauty products', back in 2021 following the #FilterDrop campaign.

So with this mistrust of social media, the positive body movement has been taking hold. The next trend to hit social media is known as 'Skinimalism', where people are using three simple products in their beauty regime, and consumers are finding ways to decrease the amount of products they use to create a more 'natural' look.







Dove, famously created the **'Real Beauty' campaign**, one of the first big beauty brands to celebrate beauty in all shapes and forms of the female body. This campaign was created to change the perceptions that young people have on their bodies and to limit the anxiety that social media caused by showing unedited photos. The movement that Dove created has allowed beauty brands to break through the noise that 'toxic beauty' and injected beauty has built in people's lives.



\_ The impact on mental health

## Providing a safe space to talk

**55% of adults feel voiceless to discuss their emotions and mental health**

*(Mintel)*

**So what does this all mean for beauty brands trying to break through the noise? Well, the positive thing is that people are becoming more and more aware of edited images and the impact social media is having on their mental health.**

The negative thing is that these photos continue to be shown, consumers continue to put themselves at risk to create the 'perfect look', and less than half of adults feel like they have an avenue to discuss their mental health.

This creates three opportunities that can help the beauty industry to stand out from the crowd:

- Create a digital and (where possible) a physical space for consumers to embrace their emotions towards toxic beauty
- Align social media channels, and product lines to continue the focus around natural beauty
- Highlight the importance of loving the skin you're in





Social media provides the perfect platform to give your consumers a view of how you're tackling these issues. With user-generated content, community engagement and a chance to show the differences between an edited and unedited photo, there are many ways that beauty brands can stand out from the crowd and tackle the issues that they industry faces.



\_ The solution

# How can beauty brands drive change and stand out?

**Ask yourself, how could a consumer view my products? Am I really considering the impact that this image will have on consumers? Could I be doing more to limit the impact of toxic beauty via my platforms?**

If any of those questions are difficult to answer, then you need to be having a conversation with your marketing team to determine your next strategy.

This report defined the issues and therefore the opportunities that you as a beauty brand have. So the **next step is to review your social media strategy, and potentially your wider marketing strategy.** The opportunity lies in how to define your products and present them to the world, how you create a community, and generate a safe space for people to engage with your brand. That means opening up your brand from being a faceless entity to being personable and ready for change.

This is the opportunity to build a campaign that focuses on the issues consumers are facing with toxic beauty and hitting them head-on with your brand's approach to safe practices, growing dissatisfaction of edited images, and the inevitable generation of consumers plagued by knee-jerk reactions to cosmetic trends.





\_ About us

# Exceptional experts. Good people. **Big energy.**

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**We were born in Suffolk, in 2013.**

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**We're a team of over 55 thinkers, strategists, creatives and marketers.**

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**We've got a huge amount of big agency and big brand experience.**

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**We work globally with offices in London, Manchester, Suffolk and the Midlands.**

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**We've won numerous accolades, from Dev to Search to Social Awards.**



\_ Our awards

# Attitude is everything.

Expertise alone is irrelevant. True excellence comes from attitude. From genuine passion and unwavering tenacity. From a culture of collaboration. From ambition, endurance and accountability.

**Our attitude defines what it means to be StrategiQ.**  
That just so happens to make us award-winning too.

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THE DRUM ELITE AGENCY

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CAMPAIGN BEST PLACE TO WORK

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UK DEV AWARD WINNER

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UK PAID MEDIA AWARDS WINNER

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UK SEARCH AWARDS WINNER

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THE DRUM RECOMMENDED





\_ Our belief

# It's always strategy

## **The strategic difference.**

We're not here to tick boxes. We're here to be a critical factor in clients' success. Helping shape their trajectory through expert insights and skilled execution.

Shoulder-to-shoulder. Getting there together.



\_ Our accountability

**One agency that delivers meaningful insights, finds opportunities, sets clear targets and executes under one strategy.**





\_ What we do

# Integrated digital marketing

From people, platforms, approaches and processes to challenges, risks and opportunities. We share the insights and guidance to help you achieve your growth aspirations.

## Strategy

Strategy

Consultancy

Data & Measurement

Insights

## Creative

Brand Identity

UX/UI Design

Video

Animation

AI Campaigns

## Marketing

SEO

Paid Media

Social Media

Email

Content

CRM & Automation

PR

## Tech

Web Development

Digital Transformation

Website Support



Speak to us: [strategiq.co/contact](https://strategiq.co/contact)

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