

LIBERAL ARTS

What Packaging Designs and Marketing Strategies Are Common to High-End Cosmetic Brands Sold in Stores, Such as Sephora?

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According to Mintel’s 2018 article, “Global Colour Cosmetics Sales to Exceed US\$48bn, as Mintel Identifies 4 Growth Areas,” the cosmetic industry is more competitive than ever before with an estimated \$48.3 billion net worth. This project intended to discover what characteristics a brand and its products would need to be highly successful in such a saturated market. To answer this question, I conducted secondary research targeting consumers aged 18–35. My goal was to determine trends in cosmetic

brand, product, and packaging design that consumers associated with high-quality and elevated status. These are characteristics afforded to products such as Too-Faced, Urban Decay, and NARS, which are sold in Sephora, a high-end makeup store leading the market. The results revealed that product weight, size, design, font style, and color scheme were the factors a consumer felt distinguished products of lower quality from those of higher quality. I conducted user testing with women aged 18–21 to gain insight from real consumers and analyze their preferences. Participants completed activities to determine which products they associated with the highest quality, such as comparing and evaluating product weight and shape. Additionally, they selected their favorite font and color from a list of those used in popular brands, without the brand showing, to reduce implicit bias. I created the prototype brand “Nuke Proof,” that incorporated many characteristics from my research, including distinctive packaging, hyper-focused product specialization, a cohesive theme, and unique brand experience.

Research advisor Bradley Dilger writes: “Ms. Hickey’s data-driven research about branding strategies in high-end cosmetics offered a unique approach to engaging design thinking. She embraced the challenge of user-centered design, drawing on a broad base of market research and careful testing to shape her prototype. This project is well-researched, well-designed, and well-written.”



This was the packaging prototype for the product I created for my brand *Nuke Proof* that incorporated the characteristics I found in my research.