

Exploring the Signification of visible face makeup among Nigerian Women

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Abstract

This paper examines visible face make-up women wear in Nigeria. The study aims to highlight the signs of women make-up. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, which include oral interview and observation methods for data collection. Ten women and two make-up artist were used as informant in this paper. The data were analysed using semiotics theory. The study also shows that women wear make-up not only to be beautiful, but to join the moving train and for facial correction. There are specific laws and rules in make-up application that define the appearance code with the use of the make-up functional materials. Foundation goes on the face, mascara on the eyes and lipstick on the lips. All of these make-up functional have their various signs and symbols. Foundation symbolizes glue as it binds the different ingredients; concealer signifies weapon and so on. The observed makeovers that women wear in Nigeria are; gothic, nude, engagement/bridal, editorial, party and permanent. Each of them have their significance, for instance, the gothic make up signifies loudness, and nude signifies softness, and so on. The colours are also very significant in makeovers. The blue colour is a symbol of masculinity, red colour a symbol of power and yellow a symbol of hope.

Key words: Semiotics, make-up, signification, code, colours

Introduction

Make-up is the process of applying the product on the face while the complete made-up is called makeover. Face make-up is as old as man, it varies from culture to culture. Make-up is an integral part of most women's life in our society. The drive to decorate the body and face has its inception in prehistoric days when initially men used it to camouflage his form from predatory animals and to induce fear into threatening opponents (Corson 1972) with the passage of time, body painting and tattooing became linked to identity, being used to mark clan membership, as an artefact in ritual celebration and worship, and as a medium to adhere and attract the opposite sex. According to Noth (1990), the role of make-up as a symbolic medium has ancient origins and whilst the meaning and symbols painted on faces may have changed over the centuries, the myth and mystery associated with facial adornment has not changed.

Make-up is not a recent invention. Women and men wore make-up in ancient cultures, such as Egypt. While the use of cosmetics has changed over the years, today in societies the world over, women are the main buyers and users of make-up.

According to one of our respondent, some women cannot imagine facing the day without make-up on their faces. In extreme cases, women won't allow anyone to see them without their faces made up for the day, including their own husbands. Many women who go to functions or parties gain more confidence with make-up. This can range from a light application and lip gloss to a face complete with foundation, powder, blush, eyeliner, eye shadow and several coats of lipstick. The amount of make-up that makes a woman feel confident varies. The aim of this study is to describe the facial makeover worn by Nigerian women from the semiotic point of view while the various objectives are; to point out the significance of colours in face make-up, to classify the various make-up styles, and then discourse the implication of face make-up.

Previous works on Face make-up

Silverio (2010) investigates the make-up effects on self-perception. The purpose of the study was to determine whether wearing make-up directly affects a woman's personal image as perceived by her. The research was conducted using female students as Old Dominion University. Survey was used to gather data relating

to the research. The findings of the study shows that women do feel more put together when they wear make-up and that wearing make-up did make them feel more sexy and desirable. It was concluded that while make-up can provide a bit of self-confidence, wearing too much can do just the opposite. The study relates to the present study in the sense that it provided empirical evidence on effects of make-up on woman's personal image but differs in the areas of methodology and theoretical framework. The study did not apply any theoretical framework for the analysis of data but the present study is anchored on semiotics theory.

Ogilvie and Ryan (2011) carried out a study on "lipstick" more than a fashion trend. This paper explores and discusses why women purchase and wear lipstick and behaviours associated with its use. A study of 300 female lipstick users were interviewed using a semi structured question naive. The findings of the study indicated that women use lipstick in a significant way to transform and present themselves, using it to reflect their daily fluctuations in moods identity. Behaviours associated with lipstick use are steeped in ritual and cultural customs. Lipstick facilitates life transaction as consumers undergo a period of liminality. Lipstick has a variable role to play in constructing self-identity and providing understanding in how women experience appearance in their daily lives. This study relates to the present study in the sense that it is provided empirical evidence on the use of lipstick by women which form part of the present study but differ in sense. That the present studies discusses lipstick in addition to other visible face make-up of women such as foundation, mascara and face powder.

Buegeler (2015) investigates "Make-up, your: social expectations and perceptions of make-up use". The study explores whether the possible health risk associated with make-up use as factors that women consider in determining whether or not to wear make-up. The findings of study suggests that in childhood and adolescent, make-up use is a type of performance in which young girls mimic the behaviour of maternal figures and female peers. Throughout college, however, make-up use becomes routinized and it's reinforced by cultural

expectations which are maintained by the accessibility of information on the internet that markets cosmetics products. This study relates to the present one in the sense that it provided a useful information on the possible health risk associated with make-up use which is one aspect the present study intends to address but differ in the sense that the present study in addition to the effects of make-up on women will also discuss the role and what this make-up signifies to the users.

Ogilvie (2005), conducted a study on the semiotics of visible face make-up: the masks women wear. The study explores the signs of visible face make-up and examines how women consume appearance in everyday life in contemporary Australia. Using a semiotic framework, it presents a novel new method of interpreting and gaining increased meaning into our everyday consumption phenomenon. The purpose of the study is to gain insights into why women wear make-up. The study utilizes an interpretative approach. The theoretical framework used to underpin this research is semiotics. The findings of the study show that women wear make-up to adhere to strict societal appearance code and from this code they derive benefits such as: power, status, sexual allurements and increased self-esteem. This study is relevant to the present study in the area of theoretical framework and method of data collection but differs in the sense that the present study focuses are; to point out the significance of colours in face make-up, to classify the various make-up styles, and then discourse the implication of face make-up. For more works on make-up see (Aguinaldo, E., and Peissig, J. J., 2019; Doyle, A., 2019 and Almanza, A., and Young, N., 2020). To the best of the researcher knowledge

1. Methodology

In order to explore the significant of the signs of women visible make-up, a survey design was used. The study employed qualitative methodology and the study of consumer behaviour and outlines the usefulness of techniques such as phenomenology in understanding everyday humanistic experiences. Adopting this methodology, the study uses a combination of qualitative techniques including observation and

interview. The use of observation and interview techniques were chosen in line with existential phenomenological principles to explore the symbolic nature of the medium and the emotional direction that visible face make-up represents to women. Ten women that wore make-up and two make-up artist were used as informants in this study. The feelings, experiences and behaviours of women who never wore make-up are not reflected in the study. Due to the nature of understanding, the signification of make-up, and in line with existential phenomenological principle, a face-to-face technique of interview was selected as opposed to other method of qualitative data collection. The duration for this data collection was three (3) months. The people interviewed are basically female between the age of eighteen (18) to (60) and the language employed for the interview was English. The least educational qualification among the respondent is a secondary school graduate. The need for this was to understand the symbolism of the sign of make-up from the perceptive of the individual provided data rich in emotions that was tested captured by a personal interview setting. For research ethical, names of respondents were not captured. The researchers did not put religion into consideration during the data collection. The job status of the respondents include; civil servants, business persons and artisans. The collected data were reviewed and analysed using a Semiotics framework.

2. Theoretical Framework

Semiotics can be defined as the science of signs and their meaning (Bonissac, 1998, Noth 1990). A sign can be anything that can be taken to represent something. The foundation of modern day semiotics is usually attributed to Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Peirce (1839-1914) (Noth 1990, Gottdeiner, 1995) who concurrently, but separately and individually developed the philosophies of the sign and its interpretation from two different perspectives. This study employed a Peircean Semiotic framework in the analysis of the signification of visible face make-up of women in Nigeria. It is targeted towards understanding what make-up represents and symbolizes to the individual. It was therefore important to utilize a model that allowed analysis of the respondents'

thoughts, feelings and experiences rather than the more structuralists' communication approach initially used for code identification (Hawkes, 1977). Peirce (1955) proposed three dimensions of semiotic analysis which include icon, index and symbol. The icon is a sign that conveys meaning because of its close resemblance to the object. For example, a painting or picture depicts an actual likeness to the object. Unlike icon, index does not arise the cultural custom but from some existential and casual connection between two entities. For example, a flash of lightening is an index for thunder that follows. An index works on the prior knowledge of the interpretant and the linkage of the two signs to create meaning. Through concept of index, Peirce shows how daily practice or a pragmatic understanding of the material world created meaning through experiences rather than through cultural codes. Symbols are the arbitrary rules that govern meaning. For example, the laws of language that guides sentence construction and understanding are symbolic. A symbol would no longer exist if there is no interpretant to make the signifying connection. It is a vehicle that stands for something else which is understood as an idea in the mind of the interpretant (Gottdeiner, 1995). In relation to make-up, this will include the law of product application. For example, lipstick is only applied to the lips and mascara to the eyelashes as this is where customs expect them to go except on special cases.

3. Functional material for Face Make-up

In the proper facial make-up, some essential cosmetics are functional. This essential cosmetic includes; face primer, the lipstick, foundation, mascara, face powder, eyebrow pencil or eyeliner, concealer, etc. The face primer is a creamy substance rubbed on the face to shield the skin and help the makeover stay in the face all day long. The Lipstick consists of colours generally applied to the lip to make it sensuous and colourful. Lipsticks are intended to add colour and texture to the lips and often come in a wide range of colours as well as finishes such as matte, satin and lustre. Lip stains have a water or gel base and may contain alcohol to help the product stay on leaving a matte look. They temporarily saturate the lips with a dye. Lip glosses are intended to add shine to the lips and may add a tint colour, as well as being scented or

flavoured for a pop of fun. Lip balms are most often used to moisturise, tint and protect the lips.

Lipstick was considered an important artefact by many in the ceremony of preparing the face. Lipstick was often the first and the last artefact to be used by women in their daily grooming rituals. Initially, because of its simplicity in application and the sensual implications associated with it and lastly because women tended to use less make-up in the aging process and lipstick was the last of these to go.

There are numerous lipstick brands such as moisturizing lipstick, used by women with dry lips to keep the lips soft and smooth. Matte lipstick has the effect of flat and not too shining lips for women looking for colourful and nice shade. Cream lipsticks are used mainly by women with small lips. Frosted/pearl lipstick to sparkle and glisten. Its negative effects are that it causes the lips to feel heavy, cracked and dry. We also have long worn lipsticks that is long lasting on the lips until one eats something oily. Wet lips are a brand of lipstick that are not coloured but shiny thick or gummy lipstick/gloss. The Mascara is used to darken, lengthen, thicken, or draw attention to the eyelashes. It is available in various colours. Mascaras have components to help lashes appear longer and thicker. Eyeshadow is a pigmented powder/cream or substance used to accentuate the area traditionally on, above, and under the eyelids. Many colours may be used at once and blended together to create different effect. A set of colours arranged either in a circular or square form may be applied on top of the eyelids to make the eye pronounced and sparkling. It should be noted that three or more eye shadow can be applied at once or mixed to arrive at a desired colour or effect.

The Eye liner as the name suggests this is usually in a pencil form or in a small container applied with a thin stick underneath the eye to create an impression of fake eye lashes or a tattoo liner which gives an inclusion of thicker fringe on the face of the user. Eyeliner is usually in different colours either in form of a pencil or a gel or liquid is used to enhance and elongate the apparent size or depth of the eye. For example, while the eyeliner on waterline and inner corners of the eye makes the eyes look bigger and more awake. Eye brow pencils, creams, waxes, gels and powders are

used to colour, fill in and define the brows. Make-up brushes are used to apply make-up onto the face. There are two types of make-up brushes: synthetic and natural. Synthetic brushes are best for cream products while natural brushes are ideal for powder products. When speaking of eye make-up, it is important to address three elements: eyeliner, eyeshadow and mascara. Each of these products can be used together or alone but their sole purpose is to enhance the eye and make it appear more prominent. Eyeliner is typically a line drawn around the eye in the lash line to accentuate the size and shape of the eye. Eye shadow is used on the lid, in the crease and on the brow bone to add depth and accentuate the eye. Last, mascara is used to tint the eye lashes to make them appear more predominant.

Sherrow (2001:106) says “for thousands of years people have applied various substances to add colour, depth and definition” make-up brush is brush used in applying make-up over the face. Every make-up has its own brush and proper use of this brush for its make-up gives the desired effect. Fan brush is used to clean up fallen product or gently apply powder to the face cheekbones, temples and cupid brows. Angled blush brush makes it easier to apply product perfectly on the cheekbones while beauty blender which is, spongy like is often dipped inside water to blend make-up as smoothly as possible. It also blends out harsh make-up lines and remove excess product. Lip brush is used to achieve a perfect line on the lip especially when one do not have a lip liner handy. The sculpted tip of the brush allows for precise application and lining of the lip, the short form bristle gives flawless overall coverage. Concealer brush is used to put on concealer for smooth and flawless coverage. Foundation is applied evenly on the face before other make-up are applied (except drawing the brow). It covers loopholes and gives the face a lit and some smoothness. Foundation is used to smooth out the face by covering spots, acnes, blemishes or uneven skin tone. They are sold in liquid, cream or powder or more recently in mousse. Foundation provides sheer, matte, dewy or full coverage (Lewis, 2000). Foundation is applied after primer to fill out pores, create a dewy look or create a smoother finish. They usually come in cream formulas to be applied before

foundation as a base. The concealer is also like the foundation. It differs only in thickness and its ability to cover spots, marks and blemishes in the face. It is also applied under the eye to cover blemish and also applied under the eyebrow usually after the eye pencil has been drawn to give the eyebrow an arc shape and to make it pronounced. In some cases, concealers are also applied on top of the eyelid before rubbing eye shadow in order to make it more pronounced, some also apply concealer on top of the lips before rubbing lipstick in order to make the lipstick sharper.

Concealer covers imperfections of the skin. Concealer is often used for any extra coverage needed to cover acne/pimple blemishes, under eye circles and other imperfections. Concealer is often thicker and more solid than foundation and provides longer lasting, more detailed coverage as well as creating a fresh clean base for all the rest of the make-up. The powder is applied on the face after all the make-up has been made to cover the greasy nature of the foundation and concealer. The translucent powder is a quick light dusty of powder sets those controls shines or oil. Face powder sets the foundation and under eye concealer giving it a matte finish while also concealing small flaws or blemishes. It can also be used to bake the foundation, so that it stays on longer. Tinted face powder may be worn alone as a light foundation so that the full face does look as caked up as it could. Face powder is also a key artefact in the grooming practices as clear skin and evenness of complexion was so often considered a necessary ingredient of beauty. Bronzer is a shiny substance usually applied to the cheekbone, the nose and often time at the upper line of the lip, to create a shiny effect.

4. Signifier and signified of Colour Codes in Face make-up

Colour plays a significant role in face make-up. The kind of colours used in make-up determine how loud or soft a person could look. It could also show if a person is an introvert or an extrovert. For instance, an introvert person may choose softer make-ups than an extrovert. Colours in make-up can also hide a person's feeling no matter how good or bad. As we all know from our early education, there are basically three types of primary colours, which are blue, yellow and red (black and white are not usually counted). All other colours are gotten from the three primary colours.

The Blue colour darken, as a result any colour gotten from its combination also carry its characteristics. Significantly, the blue colour is a symbol of masculinity in make-up, since it often carries its effect upon any colour it gets in contact with. Thus, it gives an older look to persons. Some shades of colour born from the blue family are; violet, purple, plum, oxblood, wine, lilac, blue purple, red purple, etc.

One of the prominent colours used in celebrations is the "red colour" The red colour family are orange, pink, baby pink, etc. The semiotic significance of the red colour is power, in this case the red colour has that domineer quality because it catches attention anywhere it is used. No wonder it is usually used for make-up for brides at their traditional marriages and engagement ceremonies as well as different in different ceremonials. The Yellow colour is another colour that attracts it is usually used in editorial makeovers. Its significance hope in that, it is a colour that tone down hash colours in makeovers. Other colours in this family include; orange, orange yellow, etc. Presented in in figure 1 below is a colour wheel that captures this illustration

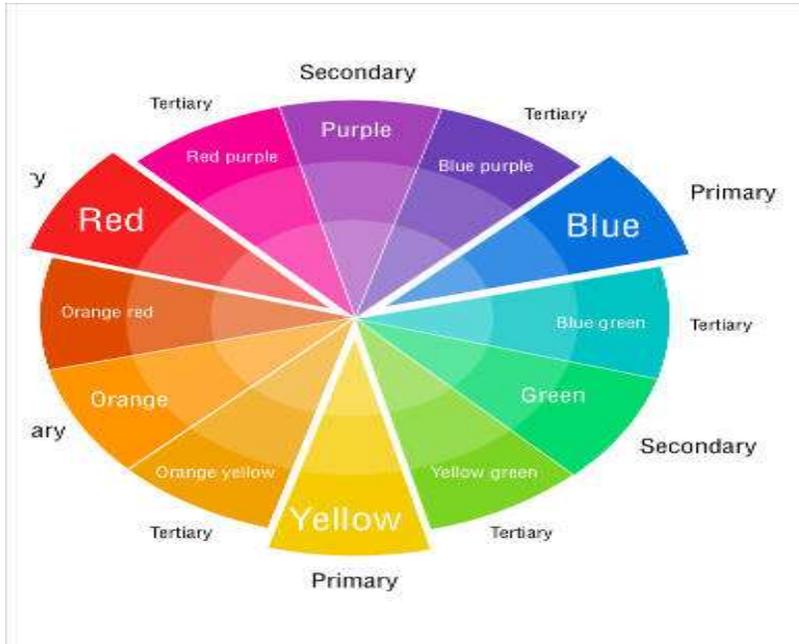


Figure 1: The Colour Wheel
Classification of visible facial Makeover

Women face makeover come in different styles. These make-up styles are; Gothic, Nude, Party, Editorial, Engagement, Bridal and Permanent make-ups.

Gothic face makeover: This make-up styles depicts “class.” It is seen as make-up for classic or big ladies. The significance of this make-up is that it makes one appear elderly, looking older than her age. This make-up portrays the real African women look in the past before the advent of flashy make-ups. Here the functional colours are usually dark colours to demonstrate the real African woman. As shown in the images 1&2 below the faces are wearing dark colours of make-up such as, black, dark brown, chocolate, etc. The gothic make-up is usually at classic parties like dinner party.



Image 1: Gothic face makeover



Image 2: Gothic face makeover



Image 3: Nude makeover

Image 4:

Nude makeover

The Nude makeover as shown in the image 3 above is a make-up style that depicts subtleness and mildness. The significance of this make-up is that the wearer wants to appear younger than her age. Thus, creating the impression that she is naturally beautiful. The basic colours in nude make-up are usually colours with combination of gold, bronze and white lip glosses that often calm the face. Nude is sometimes wearing by bridals at their white weddings and it is also an official make.

Engagement & Party makeover: The sharp colours such as red, oxblood, purple, etc. play major role in this face make-up style. The significance of this look is to catch the attention of the audiences being the celebrant of the occasion. The images 4, 5, below captures the make-up style.



Image 4: Engagement face makeover

Image 5: Party face makeover

With a close look at the image in 4 and 5 above the lip is pure red with mixture of several colour to tone the eye shadow.

The Editorial Face makeover: This make-up style is special. Ordinarily a women cannot just wear editorial makeover except for a purpose. Looking at the face on image 6 below the woman wore a gloss as eye shadow, which is uncommon for ladies who understand the rule of make-up. But this appearance is very significant, it is for business purpose. Thus, this make-up types present the wearer an icon of the occasion. In our data below, the make-up on the face of the first image appears in nude colours because the emphasis is on the hair of the make-up bearer.

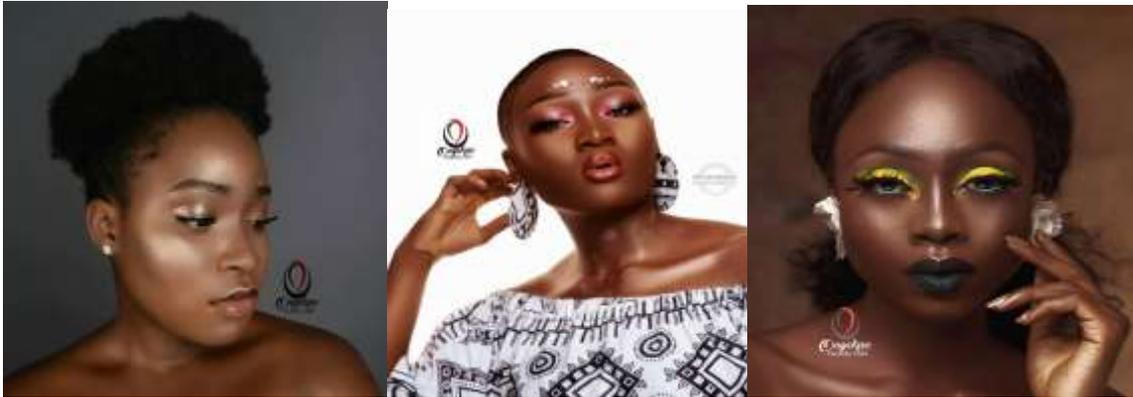


Image 6: The Editorial Face makeover

Permanent makeover: This style of make-up last for a very long time. Sometimes till the person dies. An example of this is the tattoo brows, pink lips, arranged nose, etc. This very come among foreign artist, actors and actress. The significance of this make-up style is that it is very convenience for the wearer. No pictorial captures for this class of makeover because is not found among Nigerian women.

Implication of wearing Face make-up.

Studies have shown that wearing make-up has some positive impacts on women in the work place. It is an undeniable fact that make-up does the magic as it helps create a favourable impression at the first encounter. Although appearance can be deceptive but it is good to create a positive image about oneself by appearing as a complete woman. We only get one chance to make a great first impression. If we feel good about ourselves, we exude self-confidence when a woman is complimented because of the way she appears, it raises her self-esteem. Make-up shows that women care about themselves and people tend to pay attention to them. It's fun to explore make-up skills. Applying make-up is an act and like any act, it is fun to express who women are as they express their creative skills. Putting make-up on face is like painting a canvas and creating a beautiful masterpiece. A woman's paint brushes, eye shadow, concealer and lipstick are colourful palettes always handy at all times. Women spend a lot of money on make-up. The make-up kits are very expensive such as the concealer if your skin needs covering up or may want to explore the various lipsticks or eye shadow colours or have good quality make-up brushes.

Make-up consumes a lot of time. When women are at their make-up table trying to get the right perfect blend, it takes time which is a loss of many hours. Some make-up product may cause an allergic reaction. A study of skin intelligences

found that one in four persons are allergic to substances in skin care. The prevalence of some of the terminal diseases are often associated with chemicals especially in fake make-up products. The way our body reacts to certain things are different, therefore it becomes advisable for women to know the type of make-up that is compatible with their skin. This will mean spending a lot of time experimenting with different products and observing your skin's reaction which may be a hassle. Make-up causes stress; you may be in a constant worry about your appearance due to the obsessive self-culture. Once you get yourself attached to wearing make-up, it becomes an addiction and an obsession, posing stress especially when it becomes a daily ritual, hence the need to strike the balance.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that colour play a significant role in women make-up; thus it is the colour that define and put women facial make-up in classes. Thus, the colours can be a symbol of masculinity, Africanism, purity, innocence, etc. It is observed that women wear visible face make-up not only for self-esteem, sexual allurements, as pointed out by some studies, but for corrections on the face as well as to look beautiful. The study also show that the various facial makeover of women signifies boldness, softness, and so on. Hence, a facial makeover presents the wearer as an icon in any occasion she is found.

In conclusion, make-up has power to make

women feel like the real person they want to be, thus making them have confident, agile, charming and always appearing presentable. Globally and naturally, researchers and scientists have proven that particular make-up products are unsafe for human use. Most often, safety concern centres on the presence of toxic ingredients in cosmetics that penetrates the skin and cause illness. These ingredients most often include heavy metals such as lead or cadmium. Most cosmetics products contain trace amount of their ingredients due to their natural abundance in the environment with varying quantity of heavy metals based on brand and products. Hence, they should be caution in the

use of fake make-up products.

Similarly, women wear make-up to enhance their beauty in the society. Women see the face itself as a window from which people may derive all sorts of information about the individual. Women wear face make-up for the mere desire to confirm to a societal code. Women perceive that the face is an intricate communicative tool, and the make-up upon it is a complex sign of one's status, level of conformity and overall standing within the community. We recommend a research on traditional facial make-up among women in Nigeria since make varies from culture to culture also based on religious background.

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