Give Your Brand A Makeover: How Top Beauty Brands Stand Out
Introduction.

When it comes to beauty brands, there’s good news: the demand for digital content has never been higher, or more accessible for consumers. Research from Pew shows that women are more likely than men to use social networking sites and blogs, and that 74 percent of women are on social networks. Digital marketing has presented beauty brands with opportunities where other industries face challenges – it’s easier to create an engaging video tutorial for a hair product than to do the same for computer hardware. Social networks offer brands the opportunity to wow consumers with a variety of content, from blogs and infographics to microcontent and video. This vertical’s online content has had a spotlight on it since the success and proliferation of the Dove Real Beauty campaign, where marketers developed culturally relevant, highly shareable content that addressed the interests and concerns of the beauty brand demographic – real female consumers.

New digital and social platforms offer an ever-widening array of opportunities to reach new audiences and to re-engage existing ones, ultimately building two-way conversations that drive sales, engagement, and brand awareness; in addition to helping brands differentiate themselves from competitors. Beauty brands are also ahead of other industries when it comes to niche targeting and innovative, cutting-edge visual marketing. Though it’s true that other verticals can capitalize on the opportunities digital presents, the ubiquitous use of visual tools like Instagram and the staggering influence of beauty bloggers means that it’s crucial for beauty brands to take advantage of new social and digital advances in marketing. This guide will cover the content marketing strategies that five best-in-class beauty brands are using right now to engage their audiences online, both through proprietary platforms and in social media. Premium products can be a difficult sell in a tough economy, but each of these brands succeeds in providing content that keeps their customer base engaged and ready to convert readership into sales.
Since Bobbi Brown has always been simultaneously fresh-faced, sophisticated, and All-American, it’s no wonder that it places an emphasis on positioning itself not just as a beauty brand, but also as a total lifestyle brand. Through its highly visible social media campaigns and blog, hundreds of thousands of followers and readers religiously check in for the latest tips and tricks, tutorials, and trends from this cosmetic leader.

The Bobbi Brown brand boasts over 1,258,000 Facebook likes, 285,000 Twitter followers, 172,800 Instagram followers, and 31,000 Pinterest followers. With numbers like these, it’s clear the brand is succeeding on each of its major social channels. But what’s really instrumental to the brand’s success is its broad range of lifestyle content and direct conversations with consumers.

Given the type of woman Bobbi Brown wants to reach, the content mix across the brand’s social channels addresses not just makeup and beauty concerns, but women with a range of relevant interests. Successful audience targeting is accomplished through Facebook posts, Pinterest boards, Instagram photos, and tweets that talk not just about how a woman can get the Bobbi look, but how she can live the Bobbi lifestyle. Bobbi’s Facebook posts include personal photos from a trip to Africa, as well as a playlist created for Prince George’s birth. The brand’s meticulously organized Pinterest boards include product shots and how-to’s, as well as bridal boards and inspirational quotes from Bobbi herself. As for Instagram, images run the gamut from short video ads for new products to filtered snaps from events like press reviews at New York’s famous SoHo House.

While the Bobbi brand is sophisticated, its social voice is welcoming and engaging. The official Bobbi Twitter account not only mentions other big brands and partners who tweet at them, but also consistently replies to individual followers. One of the strengths of Bobbi’s social campaign lies in its ability to have direct conversations with its VIP consumers while retaining a voice that isn’t too stuffy for casual shoppers and new fans. Bobbi Brown’s blog mantra nods to its lifestyle content: “a blog based on truth, beauty, & being amazing.” Like its other channels, the blog content does not stick to the usual beauty content of tutorials, product reviews, interviews, and photo shoots. Instead, it reaches out to its audience by applying the Bobbi Brown voice and perspective to news and culture stories, as well as producing lifestyle segments that position Bobbi as an expert in women’s lifestyle issues like Home, Life, Happenings, Pretty Powerful, How-To, allowing viewers to quickly find what interests them most. The blog acts as an online version of a traditional magazine such as Vanity Fair: recent stories include a recipe for “Bobbi’s Brussels Sprouts (Faux) Pasta” right alongside a more traditional beauty blog post on “Old Hollywood Glam” that received 27,816 views and 2,975 comments – pretty amazing for a post that had only been published for one week.²

All the while, Bobbi’s blog keeps the brand’s persona front and center – it frequently features posts that include her first-person voice. Bobbi’s favorite products across industries
are regularly spotlighted alongside snaps from her family trip to Colorado, giving the consumer what feels like full access to Bobbi. With over 14 percent of online adults in America blogging themselves, the Bobbi Brown blog is able to tap into the “personal blogging” hobby that many women of Bobbi’s target demographic practice daily, thereby building an even stronger connection. Visually, the blog remains consistent with Bobbi’s other digital platforms. It’s important when planning the layout and visual elements of a blog to keep constant with the look, feel, and organization of other platforms.
• Decide if it serves you best to position yourself as a singular expert in the beauty industry, or if it makes sense to branch out into complement categories, like Bobbi’s brand strategy.

• Consider the implications for audience growth in both scenarios, and plan your content calendar and strategy accordingly.

• Reflect on the subjects that your target audience is interested in. Does it make sense for your brand to discuss topics ranging from manicures to Mandela, as Bobbi’s blog does, to capture the attention of its sophisticated and informed target audience?
Chanel is one of the world’s most prominent luxury fashion brands. Known for its elegant clothing, luxurious beauty products, and Parisian flair, the brand exudes cool, contemporary, and classic. Through behind-the-scenes videos of international fashion shows, interviews with popular models, and the latest couture news, this established brand brings its haute lifestyle to new audiences through social media. With over 12.6 million Facebook and five million Twitter followers, Chanel’s social audience dwarfs other fashion brands. While up-and-coming brands can reach new audiences through relevant themes and trends beyond their product, Chanel takes advantage of its audience’s longstanding affinity for the brand.

While Bobbi Brown posts everything from sailing to holiday shopping, Chanel remains Chanel-centric. While Bobbi engages directly with consumers on Twitter, Chanel does the exact opposite by not following anyone on Twitter. This sends a huge message about the level of exclusivity the brand hopes to convey. For all its popularity, there is nothing populist about Chanel’s social presence. It’s worth noting that while Bobbi presents her products primarily through visuals of the products themselves, Chanel gives its audience photos of beauty products on a model. This is a notable distinction: the visualization stage of the buying process versus the fulfillment stage. For Chanel, representing the fulfillment stage works well; large photos showing makeup on a (usually famous) face regularly receive 20,000-30,000 likes on the Chanel Facebook page. Chanel’s blog, “Chanel News,” is an extension of the tactics that make the other parts of its web presence successful. Chanel News reads like the New York Times Style section. It’s strictly promotional in nature, and details the various events (most of which are black-tie), that the company hosts globally: who was there, where it was held, and all the elegant details. Posts profile art openings, fashion shows, and product launches. Where Bobbi Brown wants to meet the consumer in her everyday life, Chanel creates an aspirational air of elite aloofness.

Chanel’s blog content also features separate pages for Karl Lagerfeld, Chanel’s creative director, as well as fashion shows, collections, celebrities in Chanel, and Coco Chanel herself. Chanel’s use of multimedia on its blog is innovative, featuring tracks from fashion shows and concerts, as well as video footage of runway shows and “making of” featurettes. Since 47 percent of internet users share videos from web sources via social media, creating video assets and sharing them as blog posts can help drive traffic back to your site.

A great overall mix of content can help reach viewers with different preferences, and Chanel’s blog succeeds in variety. The design of the blog contributes to the aspirational branding. It is minimalistic and clean, and some of its major design assets include large close-ups of products and events as well as high-quality stills from videos. The layout matches the elegance Chanel is known for, containing a single scrolling column and a small amount of text. An added benefit of large, high-quality images is that they translate well to mobile devices. In a world where 63 percent of American adults use their mobile devices to access the web, this is an important factor to keep in mind when planning blog content mix and design.
Always consider your brand’s audience and identity when determining whether to keep content broad or narrow. Think about what relates to your industry or company directly.

For a pedigree brand like Chanel to remain slightly aloof in its blog content and social tone aligns with the aspirational lifestyle the brand represents — that’s what consumers expect from it as a status symbol.

Do your product shots represent the buying process or the fulfillment process? Which is more appealing to your audience?

Chanel’s editorial-quality Facebook images often feature product on faces and nails rather than just simple product package shots.
Chanel's blog features beautifully-shot, high-quality video content that keeps fashionistas current on the world of couture beauty and style.
Consistent design and tone of voice accounts for the familiarity users can expect on Benefit’s social channels. To the knowledgeable beauty consumer, there’s no mistaking the sassy tone, retro fonts, and quirky seafoam-green-and-prissy-pink color scheme that define Benefit: the brand’s Pinterest account features an entire board celebrating the color pink, and a recent Instagram post reads, “Don’t let anyone with bad eyebrows give you advice on life.” Like its social content, Benefit’s blog posts are fun-loving and makeup-centric. This isn’t to say the blog doesn’t have varied content buckets: it covers beauty myths, how-tos, and product features. Sticking to one theme has its benefits (pun intended), making it easier to control quality and produce content in-house.

The words that come to mind when considering Benefit’s branding are retro, feminine, and sassy, and Benefit’s social presence and blog show a seamless continuation of these characteristics with their spunky mix of beauty-related posts. Benefit’s over 1.5 million Facebook fans, 22,900 Pinterest followers, 355,000 Twitter followers, and 781,300 Instagram followers are treated regularly to beauty content that centers on the brand itself.

Just because Benefit sticks to beauty alone doesn’t mean it’s not engaging. One recent post showcasing various gift sets received 1,564 shares on Facebook and 266 retweets. This kind of engagement is indicative of the fact that beauty brands don’t necessarily need to branch out into other verticals if they are willing to stay on-brand and execute beauty content in a way that speaks to their specific demographic. Benefit’s blog design shows off the brand’s retro vibe, with swirly, 50s-inspired fonts and prints. Where more sophisticated brands such as Chanel focus on high-quality photographs, the Benefit blog is heavier on text, though each post also features a visual component. For a more casual, accessible brand, this strategy works well.
Benefit’s instantly recognizable color scheme and sassy tone of voice contribute to its simple yet successful social strategy.

**Takeaways**

- Only want to focus on beauty in your brand’s digital presence? As Benefit shows, it’s all right to stick to what you know and what your consumers expect as long as you offer a little variety.

- Remember that to retain audiences and to keep them coming back, you’ll need to create a brand personality, tone, and atmosphere that is familiar to your fans. This will help your content stand out as well.

- Know your strengths on social – if visuals are your strong suit, going all out on Pinterest and Instagram can help you stand out and acquire followers in a less traditional way.
Benefit’s retro vibe and witty tone are evident in its blog design.
In order to build a consistent online presence, Sephora has a bit of a challenge. Since it’s a retailer that sells a large range of beauty brands, its marketing materials need to address and appeal to tons of mini-audiences. By juggling truly engaging digital experiences alongside curated user-generated content, Sephora can hold the attention of a variety of beauty brand audiences. Sephora claims over 5.9 million Facebook likes, 1.3 million Twitter followers, a staggering 313,500 Pinterest followers, 2.5 million Google+ followers, and 1.2 million Instagram followers. While brands like Chanel and Bobbi Brown are present on only a select few social media channels, Sephora has dived right in and spread itself across almost all. This passion for embracing all possible avenues, including new kid Google+, is indicative of Sephora’s wide-ranging social strategy.

This innovative content is evident on the brand’s Facebook page, which houses apps built specifically for the channel. One app encourages UGC (user-generated content) by allowing Sephora customers to take photos of themselves in-store in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and New York for direct upload to the page. This app plays into the art of the selfie, encourages sharing (“Look! I’m on Sephora’s Facebook page!”), and straddles the line between the retail storefront and the digital world, creating a cohesive brand experience.

While recycling content across platforms can be economical, Sephora creates unique content for each of its social properties. For reaching social-obsessed consumers who might check several platforms, having different content on each can reinforce a brand’s value to the consumer as an expert on beauty.

One place that the brand could do a better job of creating unique content between platforms is on its Google+ page, which mirrors Facebook consistently. However, the brand’s enormous number of followers indicates that it isn’t hurting terribly from the overlap. In fact, Sephora’s presence on Instagram. Its use of the instacollage is inspired, and since Sephora stocks so many brands, collages offer a great opportunity to display a variety of products in pairs and trios, giving the consumer ideas for gift sets or products that work well together. “The Sephora Glossy,” the company’s blog, does an excellent job of executing beauty-centric content while showcasing its many brands, driving traffic to stores while increasing digital engagement with helpful how-tos, playlists, and other thoughtful posts. As Pew Research notes, 66 percent of consumers engage with a brand after purchase. To create loyalty, it’s important to have a blog like Sephora’s where your brand can be integrated into your consumer’s daily routine.7

Sephora’s blog is divided into five content buckets: news, inspiration, how-to, people, and video. “News” features text articles with big visuals to accompany them, and the video page is primarily composed of—you guessed it—video tutorials, serving a variety of content for an audience with diverse needs and preferences.
One of the interesting page types that Sephora experiments with is an “inspiration page.” Other beauty brands should take note of this integration of a Pinterest-like board that drives sales directly from the blog. Sephora’s inspiration page features beautiful, high-quality photos of different makeup looks in a collage with no text. When readers click on the photos, they are taken to a sub-page where products used to create the look are featured, giving readers the opportunity to buy right from the blog. As a platform that over 25 percent of women on the internet use, leveraging the same concept behind Pinterest helps Sephora win over their target demographic.

Another clever feature on the Sephora blog is the “People” page, which features profiles of women in the beauty industry giving beauty advice. Posts include an interview with nail artist Naja Rickette: “the master manicurist on Formula X, interplanetary nail looks,” as well as Laura Slatkin of Nest Fragrances: “Slatkin pays a visit to Sephora HQ to talk about the floral, spicy world of fine fragrance.” These endorsements give credibility to the brands that Sephora sells, and also leverages the social followings of the people the blog profiles. Sephora’s blog design takes into account not only overall branding, but also the functionality of each page. Instead of applying the same template for each page, Sephora carefully implements designs that allow viewers to fully engage with various types of content easily.
Sephora's clever photobooth Facebook app allows for UGC and easy sharing.

Sephora claims over 5.9 million Facebook likes, 1.3 million Twitter followers, a staggering 313,500 Pinterest followers, 2.5 million Google+ followers, and 1.2 million Instagram followers.
Sephora’s proficient use of the Instacollage makes the most out of the platform’s capabilities.

Takeaways

- When putting together a content strategy for a blog or social campaign, it’s important to think about how blog content can be used across channels. Also consider how new and disruptive social platforms can engage users.

- How can content contributors’ and influencer networks be used to increase the number of people who see your content?

- Embracing UGC can be one of the best ways to both engage your audience and add to your content pool.
Maybelline.

**Overview**

For mixing multiple types of content together with a healthy dose of user generated content and promotion, there is no better example than Maybelline. The younger, trendy brand is rocking social media and blogging in exciting ways. There are two qualities that distinguish Maybelline’s social campaign: the interactive nature of its posts, and the way its platforms have been linked together to encourage click-throughs from one Maybelline property to another. Building up audience participation in real-time and creating a complex content map is what innovative digital brands do, and Maybelline totally hits the mark.

**Social**

While Maybelline’s over 4.6 million likes on Facebook, 47,100 Pinterest followers and 362,680 Instagram followers tell a story about how successful a brand has been at building a following, metrics such as post likes and shares tell a story about how engaging its content is. Often, Maybelline’s Facebook posts linking back to their blog garner not only thousands of likes, but dozens of shares and hundreds of comments.

The brand’s team has clearly considered each platform’s unique marketing potential, and Twitter is no exception: Maybelline’s presence here (with over 217,000 followers) shows the brand taking full advantage of Twitter’s conversational nature. The account is written in a first person voice that’s “reporting live from Maybelline’s headquarters in New York City” and talks in real time to its followers in a friendly, conversational tone.

While Instagram offers fewer chances for cross-platform traffic than other social sites due to its lack of hyperlinks, it does offer the chance for direct conversations with consumers. Maybelline capitalizes on this by keeping its Instagram content aligned with what its audience members post on their personal accounts. Rather than posting over-produced images sourced from stock photos, the account features organic images with authentic copy. Like its social campaigns, Maybelline’s blog is intuitive and interactive. Its content focuses on beauty and fashion, while its social channels consider the user’s beauty experience every step of the way. The interactive nature of the blog’s content really makes the platform shine. Instead of just sharing an image of a makeup look alongside a “Five Easy Steps to Achieve the Look” post, the blog takes a page from the world of social media and involves the audience with a built in call-to-action: Maybelline does this by placing another look next to the original one, encouraging users to click on the one they like best, driving engagement and interaction with the brand directly on the blog. Those who vote are treated immediately to the current tally of votes. Pushing for this level of interaction encourages audience members to be active rather than passive participants in the blog and builds up brand affinity.

**Blog**

Maybelline is not a premium or luxury brand; however, it is evident that the designers put great care into the appearance of the blog, ensuring cohesiveness with the overall branding. Maybelline’s target demographic is young and hip, so it’s fitting that the blog has a vibrant aesthetic with pops of bright color. It’s more difficult to mix and match video, photo, and text content and make it look polished, but the blog succeeds with help from bold fonts that tie it all together visually.
Maybelline’s conversational tone of voice contributes to its Instagram account’s popularity.
Maybelline’s blog is optimized for sharing across social.
Left: Using a first person voice can buoy genuine interactions on Twitter.

Right: Maybelline smartly links this already-engaging Facebook post to its blog, increasing consumer time spent with the brand online.
One way you can do Instagram right as a brand—use it like a real person.

Maybelline does an excellent job of thinking outside the box. By stretching your imagination to find ways to integrate channels and enabling users to create content, you’re also helping to stretch your overall marketing budget. The lesson? Get your audience to do the footwork for you. The key is thinking cleverly about how to create interactive, as well as engaging, content.
Conclusion.

As these five best-in-class beauty brands demonstrate, creating an engaging mix of text, photo, and video content can help to target consumers online in fresh ways. When considering how to approach building a content strategy for your brand, it’s important to consider the following factors:

- **How broad will your content be? Will it extend beyond the beauty vertical? What content makes the most sense for your audience?**

- **What is the aesthetic of the content? How will its appearance contribute to a fully branded experience?**

- **What will the individual content pieces and pages look like? How will the design impact users and how they access content?**

- **What is the tone of your content? How will this correspond to overall branding?**

- **What is your competition doing to reach audiences and promote their brand? How can you compete while standing out?**

- **How can you get creative with ways to engage your audience and encourage them to contribute their own content to your channels?**

You have already taken a vital first step in reading this guide! Now that you’ve discovered the tactics behind the successful content of esteemed beauty brands, you are on track to determine the approach to creating content that will work best for you.

**Sources**

10. [http://theglossy.sephora.com/articles/category/People](http://theglossy.sephora.com/articles/category/People)