

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN BEAUTY BRANDS

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A breakdown of the communication strategies beauty brands used to address colorism allegations.

# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

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# Colorism in the Beauty Industry

- Meaning: Colourism effectively is the discrimination of a person on the basis of their skin tone (light-skin or dark skinned) and is often experienced by dark-skinned people of colour.
- Zero representation for POC
- The skin lightening industry is worth \$8 billion.
- The idea that black is 'unclean' fuels the skin whitening industry.
- It pushes a harmful narrative that eurocentric features are what is the most valuable in the beauty industry.

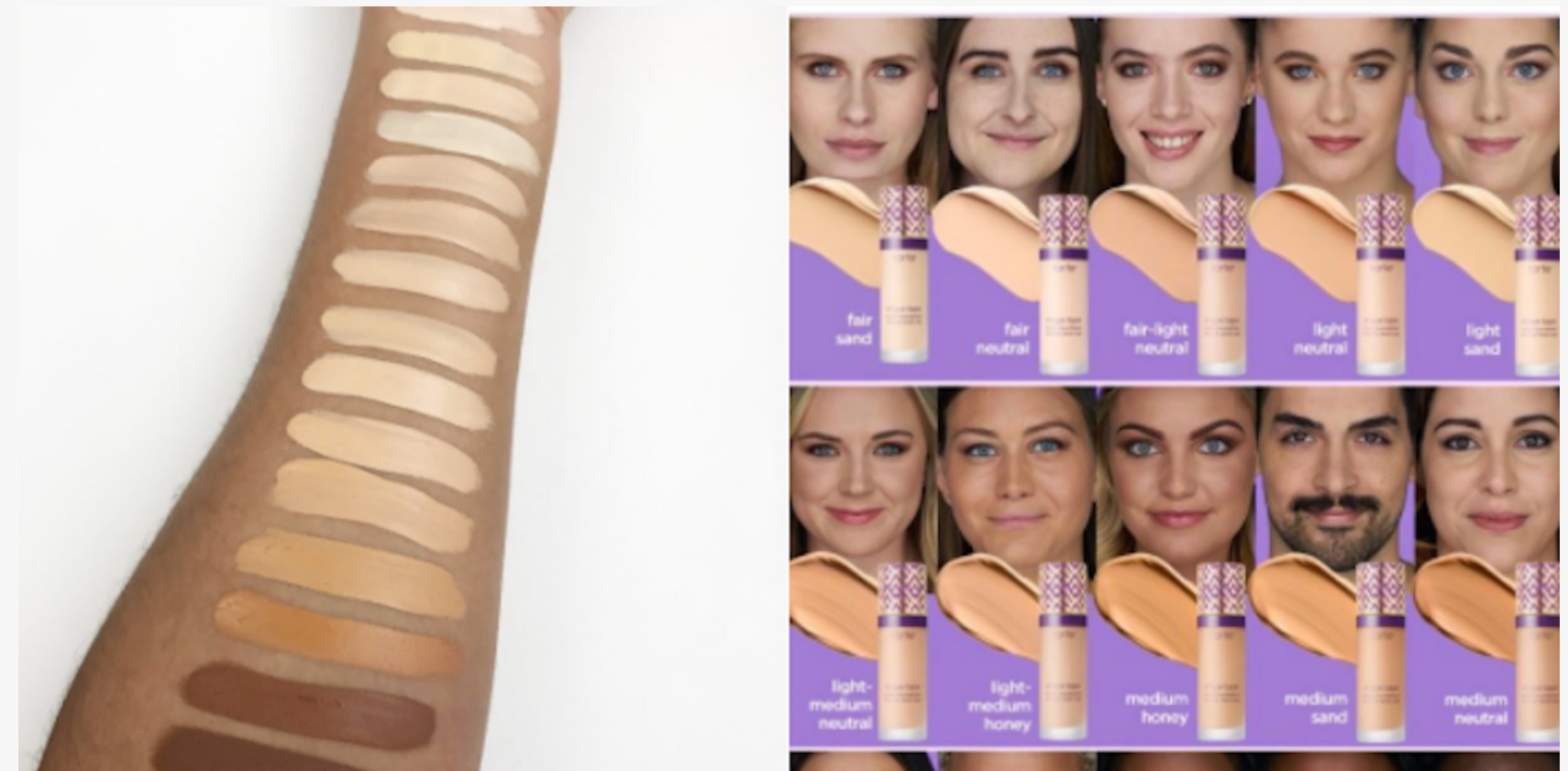


**This ad is  
for white  
people only.\***

# Tarte Cosmetics

## Background Information:

- January 15, 2018: Tarte's Shape Tape Matte and Hydrating Foundations were released
- Consisted of 15 shades and only three shades for dark-skin individuals.



# Media & Public Backlash:

- Before the official launch many social media users reacted to the lack of options for darker complexions.
- After the product was released Influencers and YouTube's showed their lack of support.



I am putting my Tarte Shape Tape video offline. Thank you for showing me the importance of showcasing my voice.. the Tarte shade range is an absolute mess and I should've spoken up about it more than I did. ❤️

4:13 AM · Jan 17, 2018



**Talia Mar** ✓  
@TaliaMar · Follow

**\*tarte announces they're bringing out new shades\***

**\*New shades\***

Fair light honey

Fair light honey warm

Extra fair light honey warm

Light fair warm honey

Light fair warm honey neutral

Medium light tan with a sprinkle of white chocolate

5:42 AM · Jan 18, 2018



# Apology Statement:

"You all know by now that we revealed our much-anticipated shape tape foundation . . . & the final shade range that we launched was definitely not a full representation of all of you.

It may be too little too late, but we can assure you this was not meant in any kind of malicious way. We all just got caught up in #shapetapenation and seeing your tweets asking for it .

. . We wanted to get the product out as fast as possible, and we made the decision to move forward before all the shades were ready to go. We know there is no excuse & we take full responsibility for launching this way. We lost sight of what's

really important in this industry, & for those who feel alienated in our community, we want to personally apologize.

We're doing everything in our power to bring those unfinished shades as fast as we can, at any cost. WE CAN AND WILL DO BETTER."

# Analysis:

- Tarte revealed they would be launching 10 extra shades, which they said it was always the plan and not in response to any criticism. (They turned off the comments on a Shape-Tape related post).
- "Additional shades are usually added seasonally, which makes sense because your complexion tends to be paler in the Winter and darker in the Summer months" - Tarte Representative
- Tarte Cosmetics also added that it will take longer to get the full range.
- Why not just wait until ALL the foundation shades are ready before releasing them?
- Customers have both power and legitimacy which makes them a dominant stakeholder.



# IT Cosmetics

## Background Information:

- Bye Bye Foundation was launched January 27th, 2018.
- 12 SHADES OF FOUNDATION with only three shades designated for dark-skin.



IT Cosmetics is owned by L'Oreal with access to the Multicultural Beauty Lab.



# Media & Public Backlash:

- As well as with Tarte, many social media users commented on the lack of shades before the official launch.
- Not only It Cosmetics public reputation was damaged but also a lot of information about L'Oreal resurfaced on social media.
- Many people pointed out the use of words like "fair" and "lightening" in product descriptions which "suggest a singular idea of beauty"



**techneeks**  
@sctechneeks · Follow



it cosmetics new foundation.....look at those 50 shades of white in the background



**Mai**  
@Maimaimaiiii · Follow



It Cosmetics was bought by L'Oréal for 1.5 billion dollars and they still can't invest that money into figuring out the color brown

# Apology Statement:

"Bye Bye Foundation is the first-ever full-coverage moisturizer from IT Cosmetics. It's a skin-care product, infused with seven key fermented ingredients plus SPF 50 physical-only sunscreen and full-coverage pigments. Typically SPF moisturizers with physical-only sunscreens have only been possible in a few shades – and at IT Cosmetics we've spent the past 2 years creating 12 skin-tone-adapting shades for this moisturizer (3 Light, 3 Medium, 3 Tan, and 3 Rich). And we continue to work hard to challenge this further. Due to the physical-only SPF in the product, we're not able to go darker than our deepest shade. Expanding our shade range is a top priority and we are working on it!"

# Analysis:

- IT Cosmetics is a company with more than 9,630,000 mentions on YouTube and a top-seller spot at both Ulta and Sephora.
- According to a rep for the Multicultural Beauty Lab, this division did not currently not work with IT Cosmetics, but is "planning to in the near future."
- Why not sooner? And what will it take, if not a multi-platinum-selling recording artist leading the way, to prove that broader spectrums of foundations do sell?



# Communication Strategies

- Two leading cosmetics brands, Tarte and IT Cosmetics, have faced criticism for their handling of colorism.
- Both companies failed to provide adequate shade ranges, which led to consumer accusations of colorism.
- Companies in similar circumstances often create strategies to restore their tarnished reputations.
- Different communication strategies were used by both companies to address these issues.

# IT cosmetics

- IT Cosmetics faced a similar backlash in 2016 when they released their CC+ Cream with limited shade options, leaving out people with darker skin tones.
- No effort to engage customers on social media or respond to criticism about the product.
- IT Cosmetics' apology and failure to address the issue's root left consumers feeling dissatisfied and disappointed.

# Tarte

- The company apologized for not offering enough shades in its foundation products.
- It promised to create products that were accessible to all skin tones.
- Through social media, they engage customers and respond to their feedback and concerns.
- By implementing this communication strategy, the company built a good relationship with its customers and used social media tools to collect feedback that was incorporated into its products.

# Overall

- Compared to Tarte, IT Cosmetics' approach to crisis communication was far more effective, but still lacking.
- IT Cosmetics demonstrated their commitment to diversity by engaging customers and responding to feedback.
- Consumers were unsatisfied with Tarte's lack of response, which damaged its reputation.
- Having learned from these experiences, both companies are better equipped to handle colorism-related issues in the future.



Positive results come from listening to customers and engaging with them.

Effective crisis communication goes beyond sending a statement.

As a result, they can avoid damaging their reputation and rebuild consumer trust.

# What can beauty brands do?

- Colorism is present in the lack of proper shade ranges that accurately reflect the true variety of skin tones.
- It's important to be aware of a brand's failure to be racially inclusive as this enforces racist ideals of beauty and keeps us from moving forward into a society that could, and should celebrate diversity.
- We need more representation of dark-skinned people and more products created specifically for their skin type.
- More diversity in the beauty industry itself, ranging from dark-skinned photographers, to make-up artists and bloggers.



THANK YOU  
FOR  
LISTENING

