

# Maybelline: The foundation of fairness

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Source: WARC Awards, Entrant, Effective Content Strategy, 2020

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Makeup brand Maybelline looked to an integrated campaign to reinforce its position in the booming Indian beauty market and become default choice for millennial and Gen Z women.

- While it had posted healthy growth year on year, Maybelline had never been able to gain a leadership position in a makeup market dominated for decades by one local brand.
- Recognising that young women were not buying into the foundation category because its limited shade range was out of step with their desire to own their unique skin tone with confidence, Maybelline reimagined the category, launching 18 custom-made shades to fit diverse Indian skin tones.
- Cementing its position as a trendsetting brand, its multi-channel campaign saw brand trust among millennial consumers grow by 35%, a hike of 25% in its awareness score and the 18 shades become a model the entire category copied.

## Campaign details

**Brand:** Maybelline

**Brand owner:** L'Oréal

**Lead agency:** Mccann Worldgroup

**Contributing agency:** Foxymoron

**Market:** India

**Industries:** Cosmetics, beauty aids

**Media channels:** Cinema, Content marketing, Point-of-purchase, in-store, Product sampling, Social media, Websites & microsites, Word of mouth, influencers

**Budget:** 5 - 10 million

## Executive summary

Maybelline wanted to reinforce its position in the booming Indian beauty market, which on the one hand has a strong legacy leader brand and, on the other, is experiencing an explosion of new brands via e-commerce. We found a relevant need-gap in the beauty landscape of India: the limited choice offered by the foundation category. Millennials were refusing to fit into the four fair shades available and hence were rejecting the category. Rather than asking women to fit themselves into discriminatory shades, we reimagined the category and launched 18 custom-made shades to fit diverse Indian skin tones, thereby cementing our position as a trendsetting brand.

## **Market background and objectives**

'Shringar' (beauty) has always been an intrinsic part of Indian culture, but today the beauty industry is growing more rapidly than ever, thanks to more women joining the workforce.

Maybelline entered India in the late 1990s, with an ambition to make the brand synonymous with makeup for Indian women. While we posted healthy growth year on year, we were never able to gain the leadership position.

### **Formidable competition**

The makeup market has been dominated by one home-grown brand for decades. Lakme has been around a very long time and has been a choice passed down from one generation to another. It controls more than a quarter of the market.

The entry and recent activities of other players, like Faces, Chambor, Colorbar, and so on, were also eating into our piece of the pie.

Thanks to the rise of e-commerce, there is a new international player entering the Indian beauty landscape every quarter and vying for the same consumers' attention. Younger consumers were gravitating to these newer formats and exotic ingredients.

Maybelline wanted to strengthen its position in a market that, on one hand, has a strong legacy leader brand and, on the other, is exploding with newer brands, formats and categories. We wanted to be seen as a trailblazer brand so that we could become the default choice of millennial and Gen Z women for any category of makeup.

## **Insight and strategic thinking**

The young women of India are confident, creative and looking to express themselves. They are breaking stereotypes every day and they don't want to confine themselves within boxes or define themselves with labels. They describe themselves as the hustle generation because they are achievers, go-getters and they work hard for what they believe in.

Individuality is valued and brands are expected to respect this. These young women reject conventional ideas and societal norms if they don't make sense to them. We wanted to get them to love Maybelline because they are the true trendsetters and the largest cohort when it comes to buying makeup.

A youth ethnography study revealed that young women were otherwise enthusiastic about makeup, but were not buying into the foundation category. Social listening helped us understand that the reason was not aversion to foundation but because they could never find their right shade.

While the generation before this had the desire to look fairer, this generation owned their unique skin tone with confidence and rejected the society-approved beauty norm of fair skin. They were refusing to fit themselves into the limiting and discriminatory choices foundations offered.

This led us to our insight: millennial Indian woman doesn't want to fit in; she wants things to fit her.

We realised the need-gap here and asked Indian women to help us develop the right shades for them. A pan-India product trial study was conducted to create 18 custom shades made for diverse Indian skin tones, to fit them right. Rather than asking consumers to fit into the colour range of the category offerings, we reimagined the category to fit into India's natural palette.

This led to our big idea: 'the foundation of fairness'.

## Implementation, including creative and media development





Maybelline FIT ME DSP #w\_Size: 40 x 27.8 Cms\_Sachin\_3-5-19



To speak to this younger generation, we took a youth icon, Alia Bhatt, as the face of the campaign. Our campaign launches celebrated the individuality and diverse skin tones of Indian women. A whole squad of authentic influencers were brought on board to demonstrate our shade range.

## Integrated campaign elements

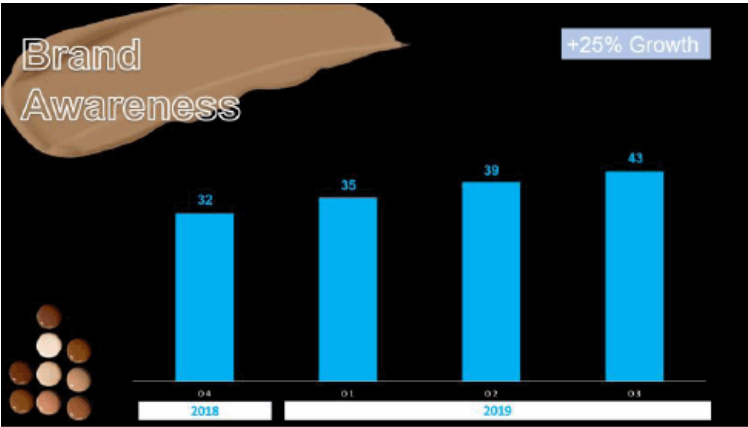
- **Thematic film** – Alia and the Fit me squad featured in our film, which championed the narrative of diverse women and their skin tones.
- **Print advertorials** helped women understand our product range and also educated them in how to choose and apply foundation.
- We developed easy **on-counter aids** to help women find their right shade. **Instagram stories** also helped women pick their 'fit' shade and buy it via the same link.
- We also focused on education and created **short how-to videos** – one with our makeup expert Elton Fernandes and others on how to apply foundation with different applicator tools like a blender or brush.
- We encouraged more women to try Fit me by making **sachets available at counters** for on-the-spot trials.
- **Online engagement** with our audience continued through our property of 'Fit me Fridays', through which we helped women create different looks using Fit me and other Maybelline products.
- **YouTube pre-rolls** with Alia helped us bust different myths around the foundation category and increase inclination towards usage.
- An **e-com takeover day was planned with Nykaa**, where the platform ran offers on the whole Fit me range and educated women on the use of Fit me through Nykaa TV.
- We then took the platform of 'Fit me as I am' beyond beauty and told stories of different women who had found their fit through **Humans of Bombay**.

This is how we as a brand made the shift from 'Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline' to 'Of course she's born with it. And there's Maybelline for her.'

# Performance against objectives

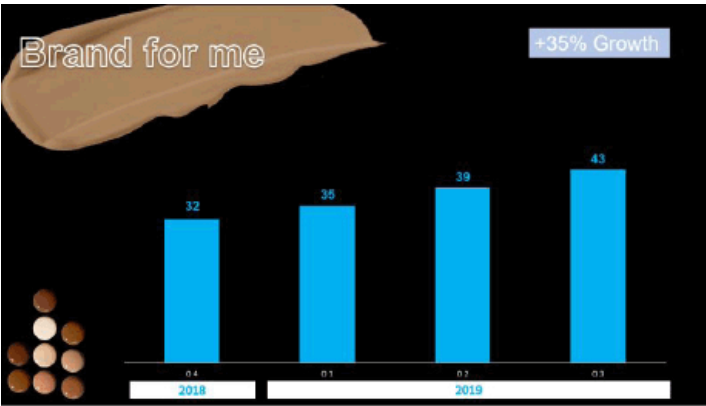
**Objective 1:** Generate awareness about our unprecedented launch of 18 shades; we aimed to increase the awareness and top-of-mind scores of the Maybelline mother brand and the Fit me franchise by 20%.

**Result:** We saw a hike of 25% in the awareness score, which also reflected in our top-of-mind scores.



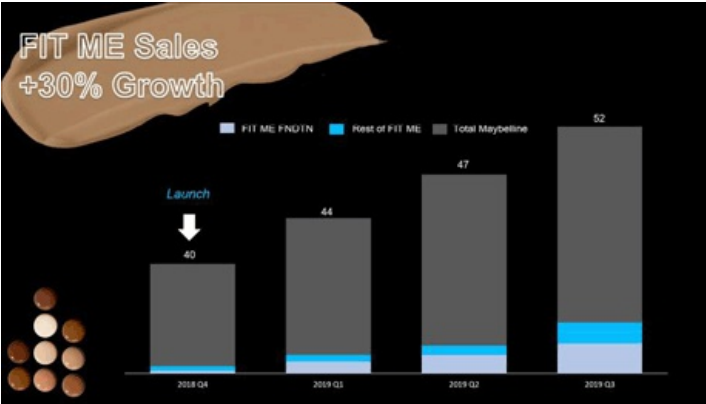
**Objective 2:** Get young millennials to believe that we have a shade that fits them right; our aim was to increase 'brand for me' scores by 25%.

**Result:** The brand trust factor among millennial consumers grew by 35%.

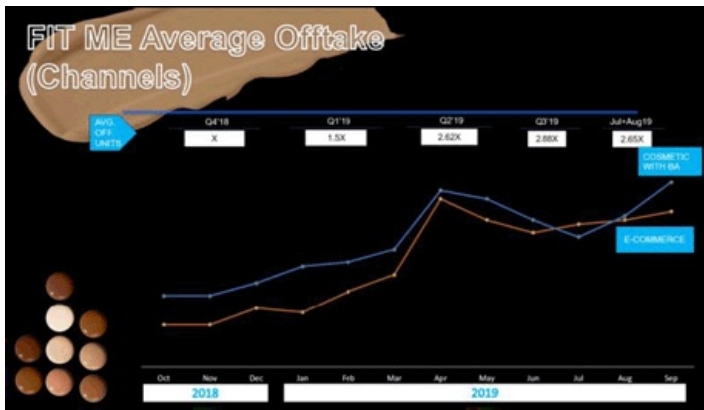


**Objective 3:** Increase offtakes month on month; we aimed to increase offtakes by 20%.

**Result:** Our offtakes went up by 30%.







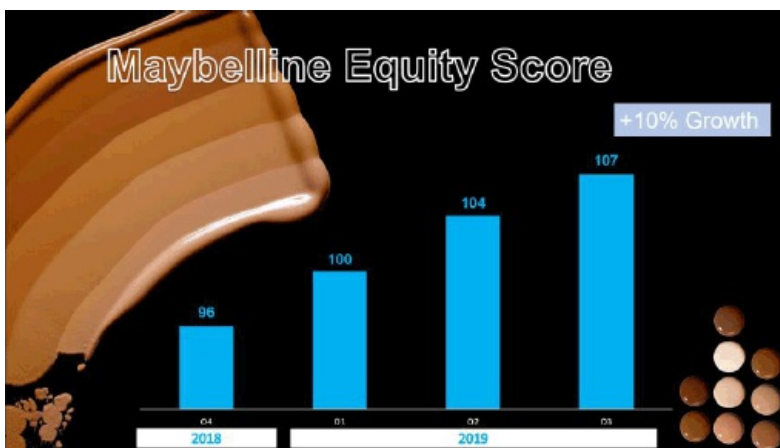
**Objective 4:** Encourage trial – this is a category where a good trial experience can convert someone into a lifetime user. Our aim was to increase the offtakes of the smaller SKUs by 15%.

**Result:** Smaller SKU – tube – posted growth of 20% in nine months.



**Objective 5:** Strengthen the perception of Maybelline as a trendsetter brand for millennial Indian women.

**Result:** Post the campaign, we observed a rise in equity score from 96 to 107.



## Lessons learned

Rethinking your strategy to bring in meaningful change is the key to winning.

We started with the consumer rather than our product. We studied consumer behaviour in-depth and this helped us understand that, deep down, women didn't want to reject the foundation category; rather they wanted the foundation category to be more inclusive. So we decided to take their help in formulating the shades they wanted. The resulting 18 shades of Fit me became a model that the entire category then copied. This campaign won our consumers' hearts because we walked the talk – inclusivity was ingrained in our very product and not just the communication.

This is how we celebrated women who didn't want to be defined by what society has deemed right for them, but to create their own path and find their own fit.

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