Creative Brief: e.l.f. Beauty — Fresh Face

Campaign Headline: Makeup Without the Makeover.

1. Target Audience

Audience at a glance

- **Age:** 18–27 years old, primarily Gen Z adults.
- **Demographics:** All genders; college students, recent graduates, and young professionals; beauty consumers who are value-conscious and interested in accessible products.
- **Geography:** Primarily U.S.-based consumers in urban and suburban communities.
- **Psychographics:** Value authenticity, individuality, and self-expression; enjoy experimenting with beauty but do not want to feel restricted by one standard; are influenced by digital beauty culture and social media.
- **Consumer mindset:** Makeup should be a personal choice, whether that means a minimal everyday look or a full-glam routine.

In-depth research

The primary target audience is Gen Z beauty consumers who enjoy makeup as a form of self-expression but want the freedom to decide how much or how little they wear. This includes consumers who prefer a minimal, everyday look as well as those who enjoy experimenting with more dramatic styles. Research from YouGov (2024) found that only 6% of Gen Z respondents wore makeup daily, suggesting that makeup is not necessarily an everyday routine for this generation. Additionally, Collage Group's personal care research found that 37% of Gen Z makeup consumers value authenticity in beauty recommendations, while 38% value people who do not try to hide their physical flaws. The campaign will center on individuality rather than a single definition of beauty.

2. Media Placement

Media strategy at a glance

- **Primary medium:** Out-of-home (OOH) advertising.
- **Formats:** Digital billboards, bus shelters, posters, and online (social media)
- **Proposed locations:** High-traffic areas near college campuses, shopping districts, and destinations frequented by young adults.
- **Purpose:** Build visibility outside social media and reach consumers throughout their everyday routines.
- **Brand alignment:** Extend e.l.f.'s existing digital marketing presence into physical environments.

In-depth research

The campaign will appear primarily through out-of-home (OOH) advertising, including digital billboards, bus shelters, and pedestrian-facing posters in high-traffic areas frequented by young adults. The campaign will also extend to digital platforms, including social media, to reach Gen Z where they spend much of their time online and reinforce the campaign's messaging across multiple touchpoints. Combining OOH and digital advertising will help e.l.f. connect with young consumers both in their everyday environments and online. This also complements e.l.f.'s established marketing approach. The company has previously incorporated OOH into its integrated campaigns, including an activation featuring more than 40 digital screens at Moynihan Train Hall in New York's Penn Station.

3. Campaign Goal

Campaign objectives at a glance

- Build awareness of the fictional Fresh Face line ahead of its April 26 launch.
- Generate interest and encourage consumers to learn more about the product.
- Reinforce e.l.f.'s positioning around accessible and inclusive beauty.
- Communicate that makeup is a choice and a form of self-expression, not an obligation.

In-depth research

The primary goal is to build awareness and generate interest in Fresh Face ahead of its April 26 launch on National No Makeup Day. The campaign will introduce the new line while reinforcing e.l.f.'s commitment to accessible and inclusive beauty. Its central message is that

makeup should be something people choose because they enjoy it, not something they feel obligated to wear to change their appearance.

4. Current vs. Desired Brand Perception

At a glance:

- **Current perception:** e.l.f. is known for affordable, accessible beauty products, trend-driven marketing, and a strong connection with younger customers who consume a lot of digital media.
- **Desired perception:** Through Fresh Face, e.l.f. wants to reinforce its image as an inclusive beauty brand that encourages individuality, confidence, and personal choice.
- **Perception shift:** Move beyond affordability and trends to emphasize how beauty can support self-expression without creating pressure to change one's appearance.

Paragraph:

Consumers may currently associate e.l.f. with affordable products, accessible beauty, and trend-driven marketing, particularly through its strong presence on social media. With Fresh Face, the goal is to build on that existing perception while highlighting a more personal side of the brand. The campaign aims to position e.l.f. as a brand that encourages consumers to express themselves in whatever way feels right to them. Rather than suggesting that makeup is necessary to look or feel better, Fresh Face communicates that it should be a personal choice.

5. Why We Need This Advertisement

The opportunity at a glance

- Beauty content across social media can reinforce narrow and highly edited appearance ideals.
- Young consumers are increasingly part of conversations around authenticity and unrealistic beauty expectations.
- There is an opportunity for e.l.f. to communicate a more inclusive approach to beauty.
- Fresh Face positions makeup as a way to enhance personal style rather than change one's appearance.

- The campaign makes room for every makeup preference, from minimal looks to full glam.

In-depth research

Social media beauty content often shows edited images and unrealistic beauty standards that can influence how young people see themselves. A research study examined 508 undergraduate students' perceptions of TikTok face filters and beauty standards and found that 82% believed North American culture places too much emphasis on appearance, while 84% felt society creates pressure to have the "right look." Fresh Face gives e.l.f. an opportunity to contribute a different perspective. The campaign will communicate that makeup can enhance personal style without suggesting that someone's natural features need to be changed.

Advertising/Headline

Main headline: Makeup Without the Makeover.

Supporting tagline: However you show up, show up as you are./ unapologetically you.

The headline introduces the Fresh Face concept by communicating that makeup does not have to transform someone's appearance. The supporting tagline builds on this message by celebrating individuality and personal choice. Together, they position makeup as a form of self-expression rather than an expectation, reinforcing that consumers should feel comfortable showing up however they choose.

OOH:

Proposed placements:

- Digital billboards: High-traffic intersections and major shopping and entertainment districts in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago.

- Bus shelters: Near university campuses, college neighborhoods, and busy pedestrian corridors.

- Street-level posters and junior posters: Shopping districts, entertainment destinations, and areas surrounding college campuses.

Rationale:

OOH advertising will introduce Fresh Face to consumers in their everyday environments, extending the campaign beyond the digital platforms where beauty conversations frequently take place. Digital billboards in major urban markets will provide broad visibility and introduce the campaign to a large audience, particularly in areas with high concentrations of young adults.

Bus shelters and street-level posters will provide more opportunities for consumers to engage with the advertisement at a closer distance and for a longer period. These placements are particularly relevant near university campuses and shopping districts, where the primary target audience frequently spends time.

Creatively, the OOH advertisements will use bold typography, close-up photography and a range of makeup looks to communicate the campaign's message. Rather than featuring only minimal makeup, the visuals will represent different preferences, from natural looks to full glam. This reinforces the idea that there is no single way to express yourself through beauty.

Print Placement:

Proposed placements:

- Allure magazine: Full-page advertisement in a beauty-focused print issue.
- Teen Vogue: Full-page advertisement in a print issue or sponsored digital edition featuring beauty, fashion, and culture content.

Rationale:

Print advertising will allow Fresh Face to reach consumers who actively engage with beauty, skincare and makeup content. A full-page advertisement in Allure would place the campaign within an established beauty publication, reaching readers who regularly explore new products, beauty trends and skincare routines. This provides an opportunity to introduce Fresh Face to an audience already interested in discovering new beauty products.

A placement in Teen Vogue would offer an additional opportunity to connect with younger audiences interested in fashion, beauty and self-expression. Its content appeals to younger audiences, making it a good fit for the campaign’s message about individuality and personal choice.

Strategy note

The tagline, "However you show up, show up as you are," aligns with Gen Z consumers who value individuality, authenticity, and self-expression. The campaign recognizes that makeup is a personal choice and that consumers should feel comfortable expressing themselves in whatever way they prefer. This supports the goal of introducing Fresh Face as a lightweight, no-makeup aesthetic line while reinforcing e.l.f.'s positioning as an accessible and inclusive beauty brand.

The creative strategy behind the wording is to make the message feel encouraging rather than instructional. The phrase "however you show up" acknowledges that people have different preferences and may choose to wear makeup differently depending on the day or occasion. Repeating "show up" creates a conversational rhythm and makes the tagline more memorable. The phrase "as you are" reinforces the idea that consumers do not need to change their appearance to feel comfortable or confident. Paired with the headline, "Makeup Without the Makeover," the tagline communicates that Fresh Face is designed to complement your personal style without creating pressure to look a certain way.