Color measurement instruments can provide you with color consistency, and ensure that your liquid lipsticks dry down to the perfect shade. Image Source: Pixabay user gornostai_nastya

Over the past few years, there's been a surge in popularity for liquid lipsticks. What began as a niche product made only by a handful of cosmetics brands has now become a staple in nearly every company's product line. Customers love liquid lipsticks because they combine the long-lasting wear and opaque pigmentation of a cream lipstick, but apply as easily as a sheer lipgloss.

Liquid lipstick is truly the best of both worlds for makeup fans, yet in order to take advantage of these benefits, objective color measurement is necessary to ensure that your product is as richly-pigmented as possible. Unlike a lipgloss or a lip tint, which can be a little sheer, a true liquid lipstick needs to be completely opaque, preferably with just one coat of application.[1] Although this is a difficult feat to accomplish, today's sophisticated color measurement instruments make the process as easy as possible.

Quality Control for Liquid Lipsticks Differs from Creams

One of the most common mistakes that cosmetics companies make when they formulate a liquid lipstick is that they treat the product just like a cream lipstick or liquid gloss. However, there is one factor that impacts liquid lipstick more than these other types of lip products: oxidation.[2] While a cream lipstick might oxidize slightly after application, this usually doesn't significantly alter the overall color of the lipstick— the cream looks about the same inside of the component as it does on a person's lips. Similarly, a gloss that never dries down will generally look the same inside of the applicator as it does on the skin.

A liquid lipstick, however, can vary greatly in color after it's been applied to the lips. Because this product goes on wet and has to dry in the air, exposure to oxygen alters the color, usually making it darker. For instance, it may appear deep pink in color inside of the bottle, but as it dries down completely on the lips its hue might transform into a deeper berry color due to oxidation. To account for this oxidizing effect and create the final hues you desire, you'll need to test your liquid lipsticks using an objective color measurement instrument like a spectrophotometer.

A liquid lipstick often changes in color as it dries down, meaning that its application is slightly different than a cream lipstick or liquid lipgloss. Image Source: Flickr user Abi Porter

Attaining the Perfect Shade

Your ideal liquid lipstick needs to have three qualities: an appealing, consistent color in the bottle, an opaque application, and a beautifully oxidized finish. Color consistency will be the easiest to measure and you can follow many of the same steps that you likely already use for your other lip products. Customers prefer to invest in makeup products that appear consistent both in color and smell, as this is a sign that the lipstick was manufactured properly, which means that monitoring color consistency is essential for meeting customer expectations.[3] To test whether your liquid lipstick formula is consistent, use a spectrophotometer to compare each batch you make to your perfect shade. You should be able to tell instantly whether your liquid lipstick meets your color

requirements while it's still wet. This also ensures that your lipstick will oxidize and dry down to roughly the same hue.

However, you shouldn't stop at this step. To create the best product possible, you should also use color measurement instruments to test your liquid lipstick's opacity and confirm that the product did indeed dry down to the same color as previous batches. In the past, some cosmetics brands changed the way that they made their formulas without realizing that it impacted the color of the lipstick after application. By only testing the wet version of your liquid lipstick, you risk making the same mistake. Your liquid lipstick might look exactly the same in the bottle as previous batches, but one new ingredient could react differently with oxygen after application, completely changing the final shade. This is why it's important to swatch your product on a substrate to test whether it goes on completely opaque with one application and that this application dries down to the exact shade that you want.

The color inside of the bottle doesn't always match how the lipstick appears once it's applied to the skin. Image Source: Flickr user Tatiana T

Your Color Measurement Instruments Need to Be Versatile

Another challenge unique to liquid lipsticks is that they require color measurement instruments that are capable of measuring both liquids and solids. Rather than purchasing a separate instrument for each step of your testing process (one for the liquid formula and one for the final, solid application), purchasing a single, versatile spectrophotometer allows you to capture the color data you need regardless of product form. This option is typically less expensive than buying two separate instruments and promotes better color quality control.

HunterLab Innovation

At HunterLab, we have been creating cutting-edge color measurement instruments for over 60 years. Today, we offer a complete range of portable, benchtop, and in-line spectrophotometers designed to meet the unique needs of our customers. Our versatile instruments allow you to obtain the most accurate color data possible regardless of whether you are working with solids, liquids, or powders. When combined with our customizable color measurement software, you can implement a complete end-to-end color quality control system for your liquid lipsticks. Contact us to learn more about our renowned products and world-class customer support services and let us help you find the perfect color measurement tools for your needs.

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