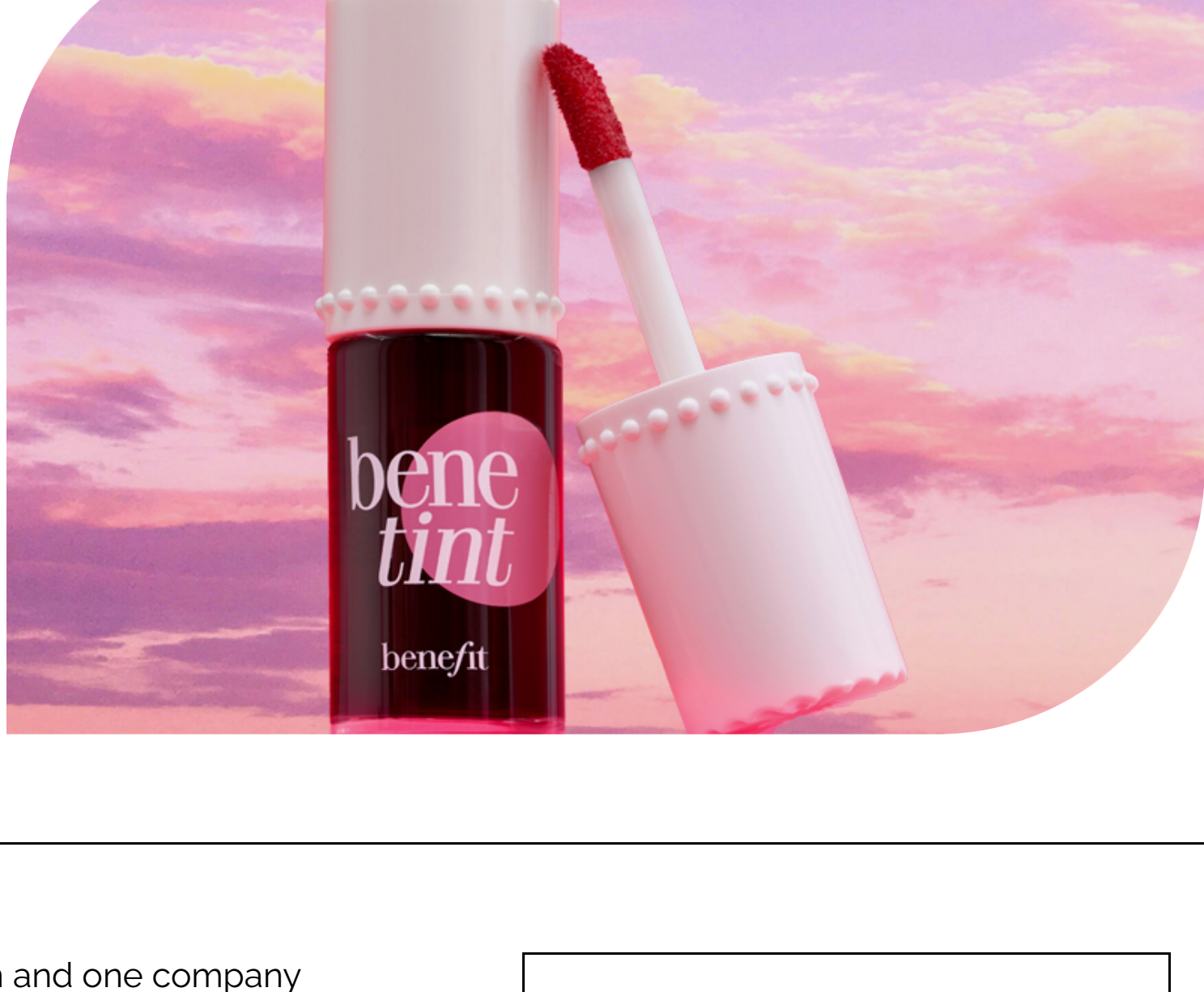


The untold story of Benefit's Benetint Cheek & Lip Stain #223395

By Amanda May | Published: 23-Apr-2025

Colour Cosmetics Marketing

The LVMH-owned brand reveals how its 49-year-old product transformed from a nipple tint to one of the beauty industry's most iconic make-up items in our 'Untold Story' series



Having a viral cosmetic in your product arsenal is every beauty brand's dream and one company that has achieved this goal is **Benefit** with Benetint Cheek & Lip Stain.

The 49-year-old red liquid stain has cemented its place as a make-up bag staple thanks to its ability to create a sheer, natural and buildable rosy flush on the face and lips that is non-drying, with one bottle of Benetint now sold every 11 seconds globally.

It is a mighty feat for the **LVMH**-owned brand and even more incredible to think that the product only came to be thanks to a surprising request by an exotic dancer – that's right, Benetint didn't start life intending to be a lip and cheek tint (full story revealed below).

Now, more than 14 million Benetints have been sold globally from 2008 to 2024, with three million of those sales occurring last year alone.

"Benetint's story is not just about a beauty product, it is a story about who Benefit as a brand is," says **Sarah Harbon**, General Manager of Benefit Cosmetics UK & Ireland.

"There is an entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of this product and that is how we still like to operate now – to find solutions to problems that we didn't know until that moment existed.

"Benetint has always been a good seller and now this product, which is so old, has grown faster over the past 12 months than it has grown at any point in its history."

But, how has a lip and cheek stain, which comes in very humble packaging, remained a cult classic nearly 50 years on, especially when it sits within one of the beauty sector's most dynamic spaces – the blush category?

Harbon reveals how Benetint Cheek & Lip Stain became, and has remained, a category-defining make-up item in the latest installment of *Cosmetics Business*' 'Untold Story' series.



More than 14 million Benetints have been sold globally from 2008 to 2024

How Benefit's Benetint Cheek & Lip Stain came to be...

Benefit began in 1976 as a small boutique in San Francisco, California, which was called the Face Place before the company rebranded in later years.

The cosmetics brand was created by sisters and make-up artists Jean and Jane Ford, who Harbon describes as "maverick" in nature.

"As characters they were really larger than life – identical twins who were also models," she says.

"They were very creative about how to create products and had strong beliefs in what they wanted the beauty industry to look like.

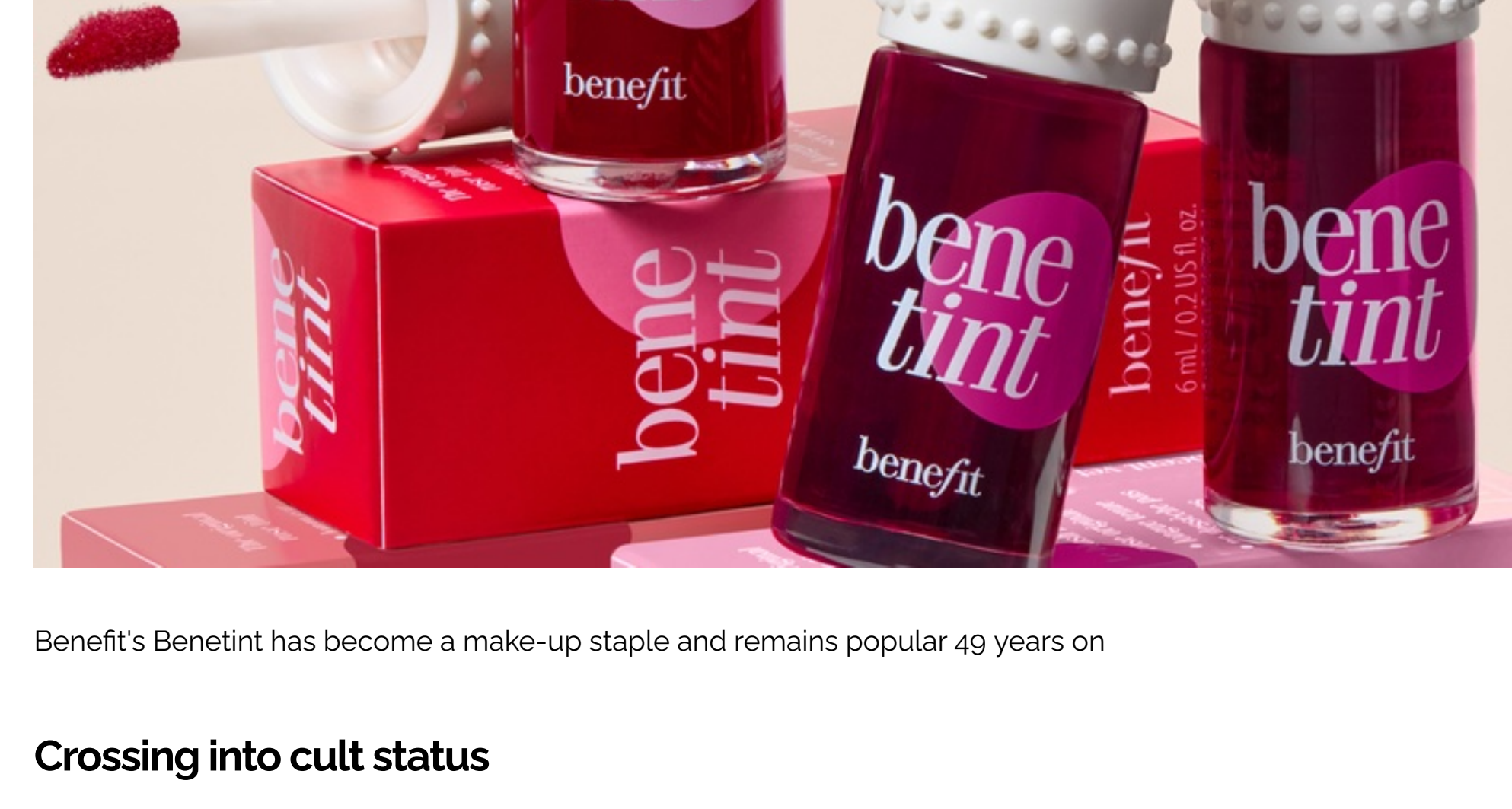
"It was a very liberating time for women in San Francisco back then – everyone was burning their bras – and it was very much about women taking back and not being seen as an extension of their male counterparts."

Benetint Cheek & Lip Stain was created in the same year but not with the mission to perk up consumers' lips and cheeks – the founders originally created the product as a nipple tint for exotic dancers.

"An exotic dancer came into the boutique and needed something to enhance her assets, shall we say, and so Jean and Jane made her something in their kitchen," says Harbon.

"When the dancer spoke to them about what she wanted [a stain to make her nipples stand out more], the sisters told her to come back tomorrow and they went away and made it."

The Ford duo boiled rose petals and carmine to produce the red stain and the customer loved the end result so much that she told other exotic dancers in the Mission District neighbourhood about it.



Benefit's Benetint has become a make-up staple and remains popular 49 years on

Crossing into cult status

From there, Benetint became a mainstay in Benefit's core product offering but as a transfer- and water-proof lip and cheek tint, and slowly grew in popularity from there.

"I don't think Jean and Jane necessarily originally thought the stain had real big commercial value to it, they just knew that they were selling a lot of it," says Harbon.

"It is a universal [product] that suits everybody, which is effective and super simple to use.

"And you don't have a product that is nearly 50 years old for it not to work."

Harbon explains that Benetint has always fallen into the "very good seller" category for the majority of its life cycle – "it has never gone away and has always held its own," she adds.

However, Benetint's story has been kept alive over the years because the company has continued to innovate around the productivity of the product, ensuring it continues to match consumers' evolving needs.

From creating a smaller version of Benetint ten years ago – a 6ml in comparison to the original 10ml – so that there was less product waste, "because a little goes a long way with the stain", says Harbon; to switching the brush applicator to a doe foot applicator for more precise application.



Benefit has extended Benetint's shade range over the years to meet consumer demand

"For years, a lot of customers thought Benetint was a nail varnish when they first looked at it on the counter because it came with a brush inside," explains Harbon.

"So, we added a doe foot applicator to help customers understand [what it is for], while we also have a huge army of professional make-up artists on Benefit counters [in stores] teaching customers how to put it on."

Benefit has also added extensions to the franchise over the years to keep Benetint at the forefront of make-up lovers' minds – and in their kits.

It has expanded the range with more shades to suit all skin tones, ranging from pink Floratint, coral Playtint and soft red Lovetint, to orange Chachatint and cerise pink Gogotint.



Three million Benetint were sold last year alone

Next phase of growth

However, over the past year, Benetint has become "a product that is on fire", says Harbon, and that is down to a new generation of make-up lovers discovering the item and spreading the word via user-generated content on social media.

As such, the business has taken note and put the product front and centre in its marketing, such as via a computer-generated imagery (CGI) campaign in 2024 which saw big drops of Benetint's stain dropping onto the city of London, UK.

The activation garnered more than 397,000 likes and 1,231 shares on Instagram alone.

"Truth be told, the last couple of years is probably the first time we have ever marketed Benetint," says Harbon.

"The teams have always done a really brilliant job demonstrating its benefits, and customers love it because it makes an immediate difference as soon as it goes on your face, but last year we ramped up its awareness."

This included a personalised in-store service which ran for a couple of weeks, where customers could have their name engraved on Benetint's cap.

A limited edition Benetint bag was also created – an exclusive piece of apparel to carry your cheek and lip stain in – which **taps into Gen Z and millennials' love for beauty merchandise**.

"The really wild thing for me is that a customer who found out about Benetint when they were 30, for example, are now 80 and have recommended it to their kids; and now we have also got 20-year-olds who are looking for the product, so we have a massive expanse of three generations of women who have fallen in love with Benetint," says Harbon.

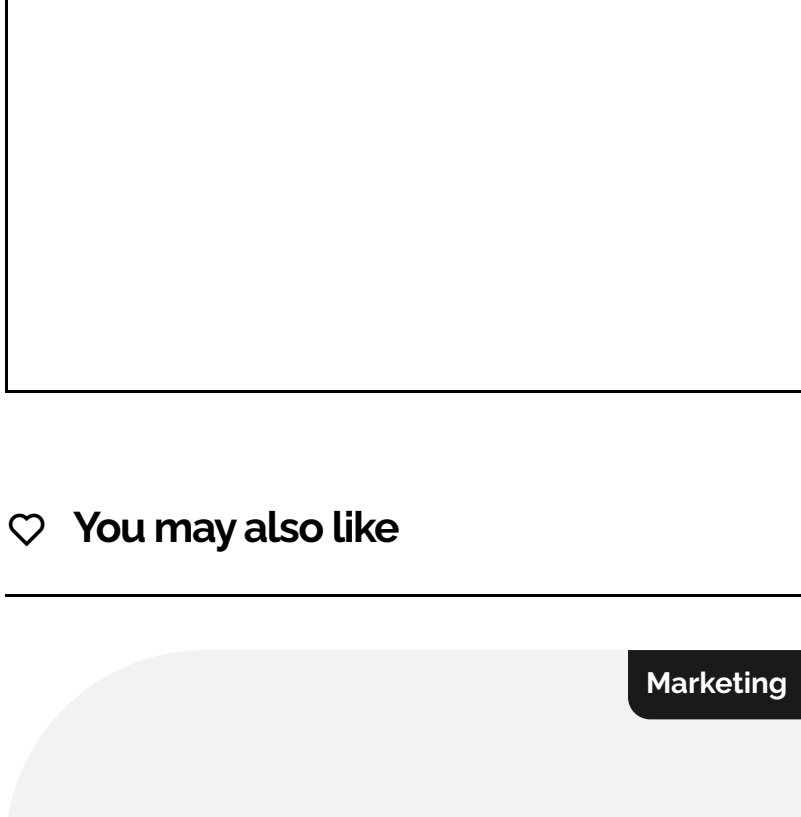
"[This fascination] is only getting stronger, and there really are not many products that are so universal like this."

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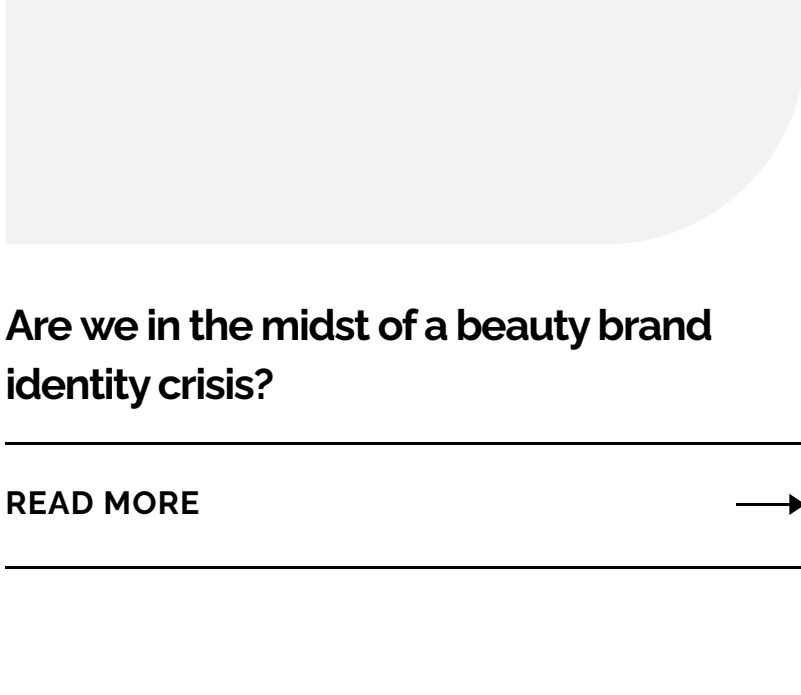
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