

STAR-STUDDED FACES

Pimple patches as practical fashion accessories



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

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Thanks to my mother's genes, which she had partially passed down to me, I spent most of my adolescence with delightfully clear skin, without scrambling between home remedies

and dermatologist visits to cure the quintessential teenage experience of battling acne.

This bliss, however, did not last very long, as I experienced the harrowing feeling of an acne breakout as an adult, all thanks to my poor lifestyle choices.

And I did not know how to be casual about it, always feeling the compulsion to pick at the pimples on my face, turning a small bump into a bleeding welt that inevitably left scars.

So, when I discovered the wonder of modern science called a "pimple

patch", I realised this was a solution tailored to my specific problem.

I started using pimple patches in university, leaving them on all day and receiving comments from my peers reminding me to take them off, as the clear, medicated hydrocolloid patches were generally used as an overnight treatment to reduce inflammation. This was, however, a conscious choice on my part, as my problem was less with the appearance and more with the existence of the pimple itself and the tingles on my grabby fingers reminding me that I must pick at them.

Thankfully, I was not alone in this monumental struggle, as I soon discovered bright, colourful patches in various shapes had hit the market to appease the restless. So, of course, I had to buy them in the brightest pink colour, walking around all day with several star-shaped patches stuck on my face with nobody thinking it's accidental. In fact, I even found patches in the shapes of cat paws or faces as well as different pop culture characters like Hello Kitty, Cinnamoroll, or Kuromi, which had people asking me where I got them from, and my friends soon followed suit in purchasing pimple patches that suited their own aesthetic styles—pink hearts, blue stars, or even holographic butterflies.

The social acceptance of visible pimple patches meant the idea of covering up blemishes with a tiny sticker soon became something of a fashion statement, embracing creative expression. The concept of this isn't really new either. I dug around a little and found out that the idea behind this existed as early as the Roman Empire. In fact, it was practically a trend in 17th-century Europe, where patches made of fabric, paper, or even

leather were cut in different shapes to cover up blemishes. This was known as "mouche", a French word that translates to "fly", as the contrast of a dark patch against pale skin was thought to resemble the insect sitting on the skin. It was thought to heighten beauty by drawing attention to the fashionable imperfections, much like the pimple patches of today.

Unlike historic times, however, pimple patches of today do more than just sit pretty, which is a given considering their original purpose arose from practicality. Most pimple patches are made of hydrocolloid, a gel-forming polymer adhesive that heals by absorbing moisture from the area it's applied to. There are both medicated and unmedicated variants, generally containing active ingredients like salicylic acid that work against acne. Hydrocolloid bandages are commonly used to treat superficial wounds, which is the same principle behind pimple patches. A recent trend has emerged: cutting hydrocolloid rolls to custom sizes to target breakout areas, generally for a fraction of the price of tiny sticker sheets.

The effectiveness of pimple patches may vary depending on your skin type. I have had people tell me that while the medicated, transparent ones have worked wonders in controlling acne, the whimsical, colourful ones don't really do much. Others have had differing experiences, and in my book, anything that keeps me from scarring myself permanently is a win. The cutesy colours and shapes are just a fun bonus.

Reference:

Doing History in Public (2025). *'Turning Botches into Beauty': The Early Modern Origins of the Pimple Patch.*

The rise of rage bait entertainment

FAIZA ADIL

Ever wondered why so many people keep complaining about shows and games they indulge in, yet refuse to put down? The answer is simple: the angrier something makes you, the more likely you are to keep thinking about it.

This is true for many things in life: social situations, pop culture, politics, opinions, and media. Before we get into all of this, let me first dissect the beating heart of this system: rage bait. While this is a fairly new term to put on this emotion, the entertainment industry has been profiting off your anger for a long, long time. They walk on a thin line of making you mad enough to keep watching, playing, listening, and participating out of sheer anger instead of protecting your peace by quitting halfway.

In an age where engagement is money, the goal is quite simple – create content that annoys your audience just enough. Enough to click, hate, and share instead of scrolling past. There exists an influx of influencers and social media accounts that profit from your negative interactions. It takes "all publicity is good publicity" to new heights, creating a business model that revolves around it.

The worst part is, by the time you realise you've been rage baited, it's often a little too late, considering the realisation comes after you react. But more than that, there exists a tragic loss of control for the audience who don't exactly sign up to be manipulated into engaging.

In the past, entertainment was mostly made to appease, but when traffic makes more money than *good* content, you can expect to see content that thrives off being provocative. Sometimes, it's a Colleen Hoover book you just cannot believe people publish and make movies out of, sometimes it's another season of a show where a girl never runs out of her French visa, and sometimes it's the influencer with way too many hot takes. Made worse by our horrendously short attention spans, the rage-baiter can rest assured that something else will occupy you soon enough.

Unfortunately, the damage this does to you is not isolated to just rage. Constant engagement with this kind of content is bound to recalibrate your brain, engineering it to find boredom in

content that does not provoke you. Knowing you are being manipulated does not mean that you become any less manipulable; if anything, the loss of choice and control contributes to how angry a piece of content can make you. And how can slow, quality content compete with the instant dopamine hit of outrage?

All forms of media incorporate rage – reality television, for example, thrives on conflict, and characters are increasingly offering up arguments, fights, and opinions to elicit reactions from the audience. This is an old trick repackaged and resold thousands of times, thanks to the internet's ability to clip, reshare, and grant an infinite afterlife to just about anything. If you don't like a movie, someone has definitely penned a scathing review you can share – and your algorithm will immediately begin to feed you posts that hate on said movie, driving up its engagement.

Not a fan of Taylor Swift? I'm sure your algorithm takes the occasional drive down the hate train to keep you engaged with all the other accounts that feel the same way. When it comes to video games, the worse you are at something, the more likely you are to feel an inherent urge to better yourself. All it does is feed an intrinsic need to beat an unbeatable odd, or, in other words, your ego.

The uncomfortable truth is, there's nothing we can do about it to change the media landscape as it evolves into a handful of cheap tricks to make a quick buck. The best we can do is disengage, and while sometimes it's fun to read through the comments of a post that really struck you the wrong way, you can do your part in not allowing rage bait content to keep getting so lucrative. Instead of having bad faith and understandably being angry about being manipulated, do yourself a favour and don't react. It's easier said than done, but a loss of choice and control in the media you consume is detrimental to how your brain is wired, and the best we can do is retain a semblance of that control.

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The return of Y2K culture

What does this mean for us now?

TINATH ZAEBA

It begins, as most things do nowadays, on social media and pop culture. The comeback of the 2000s is loud, glittery, pink, and very evident.

Album covers are full of metallic fonts; on TikTok, club beats from the early 2000s are everywhere. Butterfly clips, mini bags that hold absolutely nothing, platform shoes, and shiny lip gloss have returned. The clothes are not subtle or sensible. They do not care about practicality. They care about the fun of standing out. Nothing was about silence, and everything was about sparkle.

Y2K is crashing through the door, holding a digital camera, posing with peace signs, asking you to take a photo using flash.

When low-rise jeans evolved into baggy jeans and crop tops evolved into oversized drop shoulders, people embraced body positivity. Clothes became comfortable, and self-acceptance became possible. Now, it seems we are reverting back.

The early 2000s had a strong grip on the music industry, particularly in the club and pop genres. Songs were written to make people move, and that energy is returning now, partly because we are craving something that feels happy without requiring us to think too hard. The new pop girls, whether it is Tate McRae, Katseye, PinkPantheress, or Sabrina Carpenter, feel similar to an MTV production. Even people who never lived through the original Y2K era feel drawn to the music. There is a sense of freedom. It makes you want to dance, not analyse.

Even technology has been absorbed into the Y2K fantasy. Digital cameras are trending again. Not the fancy DSLR kind, but the clunky pocket cameras from the early 2000s. People want the grainy flash, the blurry lighting, and the imperfect photos. People are choosing that over the high-definition perfection of smartphones.

Films and television from the early 2000s are also coming back. Rom-coms from that era have turned into comfort rewatches, for good reason. *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Princess Diaries*, *13 Going on 30*, *Freaky Friday*, and *The Devil Wears Prada* are everywhere on TikTok edits, fan accounts, and Instagram screenshots.

Shows are also following the same formula. Love triangles, prom episodes, and the slow-burn romance with the missed text that feels like the end of the world. Series such as *The Summer I*



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

Turned Pretty, the *Gossip Girl* reboot, and even *Bridgerton* borrow the similar emotional pull that early 2000s teen dramas perfected. These stories do not ask you to solve anything; they give you makeover scenes, misunderstandings, dramatic kisses on staircases, and a happy ending waiting for you like a reward. In a world that feels unstable, these films and shows offer certainty. They give us a world where the girl gets the job, gets the guy, finds herself, and does it all in pink heels and a tiny handbag.

Fashion has followed the exact same emotional pattern. Baby tees, crop tops, and animal prints are back. People want to wear miniskirts with no regard for practicality. They want to be bold, colourful and a little bit ridiculous. It is easy to see the appeal. The Y2K look says you do not have to take yourself so seriously; just put on the sparkly shoes and call it a night.

And since fashion always connects to beauty standards, the return of low-rise jeans and baby tees carries a deeper consequence. Those pieces are tied to a very specific body image. The early 2000s were strict about body image. Thinness was required. Magazines, adverts and pop stars all sent the same message: if you were not extremely thin, you did not belong in fashion. And while we talk about fashion trends returning, we do not talk enough about how the pressure to be small is returning alongside them.

Before, when low-rise jeans evolved into baggy jeans and crop tops evolved into oversized drop shoulders, people embraced body positivity. Clothes became comfortable, and self-acceptance became possible. Now, it seems we are reverting back.

And the revival is also about the culture that surrounded them. Brands that once defined the early 2000s are being pushed back into relevance, such as how Victoria's Secret, once criticised for pushing unattainable beauty standards is supposedly coming back. Y2K is not only returning through fashion; it is returning through expectation as well.

Another part of the Y2K era that is returning is the ranking of bodies. This shift explains the sudden rise in conversation about Ozempic. Ozempic is a medication for diabetes, but online it has turned into a secret weight loss fix for celebrities and the masses alike. People are using it even without medical need. It has become a shortcut to reach the same body ideal that Y2K glamour once demanded and is discussed openly on social media. Thinness is becoming a goal again, not for health, but for aesthetics.

What made it plausible was the makeover narrative. Movies told us the same story over and over again: the girl becomes worthy only after a transformation. Change your hair, your clothes, and your body, and then life will reward you. Today, the algorithm offers its own version: glow-ups, weight loss journeys, and aesthetic shifts.

So, the real question becomes, why now?

Sociologists such as Fred Davis explain that eras do not return randomly. We resurrect the aesthetics of whatever time felt emotionally lighter than the present. Y2K feels light, so we are using it to soften a world that feels painfully sharp now. It is not nostalgia, not really. It is an escape. The world today is overwhelming with climate fear, political tension, war, financial stress, and constant bad news.

Nostalgia can bring back joy, but we decide whether it brings back harm. If we are deliberate, Y2K does not have to be a repeat of the same pressures and exclusions. It can be a reminder that life can be bright and playful, without demanding that we shrink or perform to deserve it. Trends will always cycle, but how we engage with them is entirely in our control. We can take what once felt light and refuse to repeat what once caused damage. The revival is happening, and the responsibility is ours.

Reference:

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