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FAIRNESS AND WOMEN: A STUDY OF FAIR & LOVELY ADVERTISEMENTS AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

For a long time now, Indian society has had an obsession over fair skin. This has contributed to a tremendous demand for fairness creams and associated whitening products in the Indian cosmetics industry. Television advertisements have always had a major role in introducing new products to the masses. Research done over the years show us that Televisions ads has been the most effective way to deliver any message to the people – be it an ideology or a product. This research attempts to study the promotion of whitening creams through television advertisements and their impact on women users with the case of 'Fair and Lovely' fairness creams. Data was collected through a survey with a questionnaire as well as content analysis of Fair and Lovely advertisements before and after the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) released their final guidelines for skin lightening and fairness products advertisements in 2014 were carried out. On analyzing the data from survey and content analysis, it is found that television advertisements play a major role in influencing female users of Fair and Lovely. It was also found that there has been a significant change in the ethos of these advertisements after ASCI's new guidelines in 2014.

Fairness has been an obsession for the Indian society. In addition to the numerous ways in which we stratify ourselves, skin colour is yet another division. In India, the idea of beauty is often associated with fair skin. People here are judged, harassed and discriminated based on their skin tone. Having a fair skin is considered a supreme quality and that is connected with achieving other personal goals, such as marriage, empowerment, job opportunities, and self confidence. Society considers dusky or dark skin as unappealing. This has been one of the major issues that people of dark skin has overdone. Various dark skin or dusky women are unmarried or unloved because of their skin tone. Other than fair skin,

people have an obsession towards other appearance enhancing products or treatments such as plastic surgery, laser hair removal.

Due to these issues the need for fairness creams and other beauty products has risen in the recent years. As we can see, television plays a significant role in shaping the purchasing behavior of the users. Visual media has the potential to frame the mentality of the audience in a way that their perception on beauty has been stereotypical. The television advertisement not only spreads the awareness of the product but also conveys a message that directly shoots into the minds of the individuals. Indian media encourages fair skin more than dark skin. Various studies have come to a conclusion that television advertisements help in consumers buying behavior. Fair skin people are represented as successful and rich whereas dark or dusky skin represents unsuccessful and poor in life. This is a boon for fairness creams and other such beauty products. The growth of fairness creams and new beauty products have kept on increasing in the society. Advertisers portray their message in a way that convinces the customers to purchase the product. This study particularly focuses on Fair & Lovely television advertisements as it's the leader of fairness cream products in India. So far no study has been conducted to examine the impact ASCI's 2014 guidelines had on Fair and Lovely advertisements. This study focuses on the changing nature of the advertisements and how do people, specifically women users of the Fair & Lovely brand perceive it. The main objectives of the study are

- i. To find out if there is any change in the trend of Fair & lovely (F&L) television advertisements before and after the Advertising Standards Council of India released their final guidelines in 2014.
- ii. to examine the public perception of F&L television advertisements on women users
- iii. to investigate the effects of fairness cream television advertisements on women users of the product.

To achieve the above stated objectives, the following research questions were raised.

RQ1: What draws women towards such products?

RQ2: Is there a growing demand for skin whitening products? What is creating it?

RQ3: Is TV the primary medium through which F&L advertisements reach women?

RQ4: What is the public perception of the beauty standards set by TV advertisements?

RQ5: Do TV advertisements help in the purchase of the product?

RQ6: Has there been any changes in the tone of F&L television advertisements?

Methodology

This research aims to study the Fair and lovely fairness creams advertisements and their impact on the women users. Therefore survey method was used to collect opinion of the F&L users and a content analysis of Fair and Lovely advertisements was also done to study the impact of ASCI's new guidelines on the tone of the advertisements.

For the survey, questionnaire was prepared and circulated online among 100 women of the age group 18-60 years. This particular age group being selected is for the reason that 18-60 is the age group where women are conscious about their

appearance. The samples were selected from different parts of South India by sending online surveys to women users.

For analyzing the content of the advertisements, Three Fair and lovely advertisement before and after 2014 has been selected at random. The significance of 2014 is the release of a new set of guidelines by the ASCI for the advertising of skin lightening and fairness products which clamped down on advertisements that showcased dark skin as inferior and undesirable. For this purpose, certain parameters were set by the first author since no scale was available to study the same. They are tabulated and analysed.

Data Analysis

Majority of the respondents of the questionnaire was of the age group of 18-30 years.

Age of respondents	No. of respondents
18- 30 years	67
30-40 years	15
40 years and above	18
Total	100

On analyzing the data obtained through both the methods, the research questions were answered.

RQ1: What draws women towards such products?

Reasons for using fairness creams	No. and percentage of respondents
For skin lighting	50
Sunscreen	17
For fragrance	8
As moisturizer	25
Total	100

Half of the respondents (50%) use Fair and lovely for skin lighting purpose. 25% of the respondents use it for fragrance. 17% use Fair and lovely for protecting oneself from sunlight. Rest of the 8% use fair and lovely as moisturizer.

RQ2: Is there a growing demand for skin whitening products? What is creating it?

	No. and percentage of respondents
Yes	82
No	18
Total	100

Majority of the respondents agree that there is a growing demand for whitening creams. The rest 18% disagree that there is no growing demand for whitening creams. People who answered yes, were asked what they think is creating the demand for which 12% thinks the performance of the product is the reason for growth in demand. 30% of the respondents think it is the publicity of the product. 8% thinks the recommendation from friends and family is the reason for demand. 40% of the respondents think that in order to reach society's standards, people use fairness creams.

	No. and percentage of respondents
The performance of the product.	12
Publicity of the product.	30
Recommendation by friends/ family	8
To reach to the growing society's standards/ norms	40
Others	10
Total	100

RQ3: Is TV the primary medium through which F&L advertisements reach women?

	No. and percentage of respondents
Television advertisements	72
Social media hype	3
Print media	5
Family/ friends	20
Total	100

72% of the respondents got to know about Fair and lovely through Television advertisements. 20% of the respondents got to know through recommendation of friends and family. 5% of the respondents got to know through print media. The rest 3% is aware because of Social media.

RQ4: What is the public perception of the beauty standards set by TV advertisements?

	No. and percentage of respondents
It creates insecurities	35
I want to look younger than I am	20
I feel the need to look like the models in the advertisements	5
It does not affect me in anyway	40
Total	100

40% of the respondents does not get affected by the beauty standards shown in the advertisements. It creates insecurities for 35% of the respondents. 20% wants to look younger to their age. The rest 5% wants to look alike to the models in the advertisements.

	No. and percentage of respondents
Fair and lovely sets beauty standards that are unrealistic	87
The beauty standards portrayed in the advertisements are realistic and attainable	13

Total	100
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When asked specifically about Fair and Lovely advertisements, Majority of the respondents (87%) have an opinion that beauty standards set by Fair and lovely advertisements are unrealistic. The rest 13% agree to the fact that beauty standards set by the advertisements are realistic and attainable.

RQ5: Do TV advertisements help in the purchase of the product?

	No. and percentage of respondents
Always	17
Sometimes	55
Never	28
Total	100

55% of the respondents said that advertisements on TV sometimes help them in the purchase of Fair and lovely. 28% respondents said advertisements never helped them in purchasing of the product. Only 17% respondents claim that advertisements always help them in their purchase of the product.

RQ6: Has there been any changes in the tone of F&L television advertisements?

To answer this, a comparative content analysis of Fair & lovely television advertisements before and after ASCI released their final guidelines is done.

The guidelines state that advertisements should no longer represent fair skin as superior to dark skinned. The ads should not emphasize on any kind of social stereotyping based on the skin tone of a person. There should not be any demeaning of dark skin people. There should not be any negative expression by showing the graphical representation of the performance of the product. The ads should make sure that they would not exclaim anything that can offend anybody on the basis of their appearance.

YouTube has been used to collect the television advertisements. Before 2014, advertisements chosen were from the years 2004, 2007 and 2009. After 2014, it's from 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020.

Parameters for Content Analysis	2004	2007	2009	2015	2017	2019	2020
Presence of a story or a plot	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Change in overall lighting of the ad before and after the use of the product	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Does the ad equate fair skin with better quality of life?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Does the ad show growth in professional life after the use of the product?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Change in the type of clothing	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Use of the colour pink	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Use of colour connotations to showcase social standing	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Presence of gender stereotypes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
The product is shown as an answer to all the problems faced by the lead	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Use of Scientific jargons	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use of celebrity endorsements	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Product is used through recommendation	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Happiness is equated with fair skin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Use of emotional appeal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use of masculine - feminine appeal	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Use of sex appeal	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No

2004

The lead, Pooja is going to a ‘modern beauty company’ with her father requesting



for a job offer. Reaching there the staff rejects Pooja with a judgmental comment by saying “If these kind of girls wants to get pretty, Veda’s era won’t help them.” Listening to this, Pooja’s furious father open a treasure box which had the Ayurveda ingredients showing that these were used in Fair and Lovely Ayurveda. After using Fair and lovely, she goes to the same office where the same staff is

surprised to see the glowing face of Pooja. The advertisement ends by showing how Pooja finally got to achieve her dreams in modeling and becomes a star.

2007

The lead role playing in this advertisement of Fair and lovely is Trisha (Indian actress). The advertisement begins with Trisha taking music classes for her students. Trisha is upset for the fact that the male character standing next to her terrace enjoys her music but does not notice her. This makes her upset and she thinks that the reason for him to not gain his attention is due to her dark complexion. Her friend encourages her by recommending her to use Fair and lovely. After the use of Fair and lovely, there has been a major difference on her skin tone and her face is glowing. The advertisement ends with Trisha taking classes and she finally gains the attention of the male character and he looks amazed to see her. And then he approaches her. This makes her happy. This advertisement gives out a message to the viewers that women should be fair and beautiful to be noticed by the men.

2009

The lead role in this advertisement, Meera is a model who has been demotivated to model after her summer shoot due to the drastic difference in her skin tone which is dusky. The advertisement begins with Meera's friend running inside the house congratulating Meera for winning the modelling contract. The house is in a celebration and Meera looks upset and goes to her room. Noticing this Meera's friend goes behind her. She sees Meera sitting in front of the mirror upset and dull. She is demotivated and timid with the fact that her skin has changed from bright fair skin (calling it 'summer face') to dark calling it a 'winter face'. The advertisement then shows Meera's bright and glowing face after applying Fair and lovely winter cream. She is then shown as a successful model having her photo on the billboard. Her proud parents are really happy to see their daughter successful. This advertisement gives out the message that to get successful in a modelling field, one has to have a fair and glowing skin.

2015

The advertisement begins with the lead character's father showing her the 'handsome boy' to get married to. The daughter then disagrees with the father telling that she wants a job and to this father replies by telling that he is 6'ft tall and he is a surgeon. Next she is shown talking to YamiGautam saying that she agrees to her dad because of her timid mindset. Listening to this YamiGautam gives her Fair and lovely. After using Fair and lovely, the lead character is extremely happy and confident and tells her father that she wants to marry after 3 years when she is settled, and when she grows in her career, mentioning it as "equal-equal". This advertisement gives the audience a message that you need to look fair to fight back. It gives out the message that fair skin can give oneself confidence. The advertisement also links beauty with gaining progress, freedom, and equality.

2017

This advertisement is very different from the other usual advertisements that was released before 2017. As you can see there is no plot or story like the previous advertisements. There is no other characters other than Yami Gautam, the brand ambassador presenting to us the new features of Fair and lovely.

2019

This is one of the latest advertisement of Fair and lovely. Due to the advancement of technology, there has been use of graphics in the advertisement. Advertisements in the recent years have seen an immense change compared to the advertisements

before few years. This advertisement does not have any plot or storyline like the previous advertisements. The lead role in this advertisement is Yami Gautam and she is standing in front of the audience to present fair and lovely new HD Glow.

2020

The 2020 advertisement was released in August 2020. There has been a massive change in the brand name itself. "Fair & Lovely" has been renamed to "Glow & Lovely". The new name was launched by the brand ambassador Yami Gautam. The advertisement does not revolve around a plot and like the recent years, it cuts directly to the point and explains the benefits of using the product on the user with the graphic visualization of epidermis layer of the skin. It does not use a plot to tell a story of how Fair and Lovely can change your life.

Findings and Conclusion

Findings reveal that women users of Fair and lovely have an impact through television advertisement. Majority of the users are influenced by television advertisements. The findings tells us that there are users who use fair and lovely not just for skin lighting but for other purposed as well such as for sunscreen, fragrance and moisturizing purposes. Our findings reveals that users are unaware of the fact that advertisements show the performance of the product by using different lighting techniques showing each phases of performance. Women are aware of fair and lovely through television advertisements and it helps them in the purchase of the product. Findings reveal that there is a growing demand for fairness creams. Majority of the respondents does not find any difference in their skin even after the use of the product. Analyzing the age group of 40-60, majority have agreed that they would recommend Fair and lovely to their friends and family members whereas the age group of 18-30 has disagreed to recommend the product to others. The content analysis reveals that there has been a change in the advertisement pattern after the year 2014. The advertisement have met the Advertising Standards Council of India's guidelines where there has not been any stereotypical comments passed on by characters in the ad. There has not been any discrimination between the fair and dark skin. There has not been any portrayal of dark skin inferior to fair complexion in the ads after 2014. This research can be concluded by stating that television advertisements play a major role in influencing the women users of Fair and Lovely. There has been a change in the advertising pattern in ads after 2014 compared to ads before 2014.

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