

URBAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE UN-FAIR STANCE OF PRETTY 24 FACE CREAM

Dr M. Rajanikanth

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Law School, Hyderabad Campus

Abstract: In India, beauty is synonymous with fairness. It has been estimated that over 90% of the female cite skin lightening as the high need area (Patel, 2014). There is a clear skin colour prejudice observed in every part of India irrespective of class, caste and religion (Mishra 2015). The beauty ideals are governed by media, which glorifies lighter skinned models over darker skinned models. This obsession of media greatly influences the common public to like the lighter skin. The fairness cream market in India is estimated to 450 million USD with a growth rate of 15-20% every year. The advertisements of fairness creams shifted their focus from “becoming fair is becoming beautiful” to becoming fair is empowerment. This was the common stance of major face creams (rather fairness creams). Almost every major player introduced beauty creams with – “white” tag. There was much criticism against this white stance but still companies stick to the fairness stance. But to break the stereotype in fairness cream, Vini introduced a new cream “Pretty 24” with anti-fairness stance. In this regard this study has been conducted to know to what extent this anti-fairness stance is accepted by women. The study has been conducted in Hyderabad. A sample of 100 women comprising of students, working women and housewives has been chosen and a pre-structured questionnaire has been administered to them. The study has found that, though change is observed, even today majority of the urban women consider that light skin is synonymous with beauty and would prefer those fairness creams over the un-fairness stance of Pretty 24.

Keywords: Fairness Cream, Un-Fair Stance, Perception, Urban Women, Skin Colour.

Introduction: In India, beauty is synonymous with fairness. Not only in India, but in many parts of the world skin colour of the women is the basis to judge the women's worth. It is known fact that skin tone is unchangeable or fixed, still many women attempt to acquire light or fair skin by using cosmetics and other treatments. Anthropological and archaeological studies demonstrated the use of cosmetics for the aesthetic enhancement is a prominent practice throughout the history in every civilisation (Cash et al. 1985) and India is not an exception. The caste system, which was believed to be introduced in India around 1500 BCE, was blamed for creating the divisions in the Indian society based on colour. The social strata are called varnas, which means colour. The apex of Indian caste pyramid occupied by fair skinned Brahmins (the priests or gurs), followed by red skinned Kshatriyas (warrior group), Yellow skinned Vaisyas (merchants). The bottom of the hierarchy comprised dark-skinned Shudras, the working or labour castes (Shevde N 2008). Even Hindu mythology has some stories where even gods or goddesses want fair skin. According to one story Hindu goddess Parvathi, wife of Lord Shiva, changes her colour from black (dark skin) to white (fair skin) as Lord Shiva teases her as Blackie (Kali). This changed her name to Gori/Gowri, which means fair skinned (Padma Puranam). Still there are some exceptions for the colorism, like Draupadi, wife of Pandavas in Mahabharata. In many ancient Indian languages, the words 'fair' and 'beautiful' are interchangeable, and the most desirable brides are often described as those whose 'skin is as pale as the moon' (Russell K et.al, 1992). During the rule of British also the fair skin signified superiority, dominance and power, and dark skin represented weaker, inferior masses (Malik S 2005, Shevde N 2008). In matrimonial advertisements it is very common phenomenon that the groom mentions he needs a fair bride, or the bride mentions she is fair (Malik, S 2005). Indian admiration for skin colour, which is based on social, religious and historical aspects, led to the growth of skin-whitening product market, which is one among the biggest and fastest growing segments in India. Higher disposable income, changes in lifestyle and exposing to foreign physical attributes, like fair skin and blond hair, contributed to the growth of cosmetics Industry. Most of the Indian cosmetics companies focused on these aspects and are producing the products that, are perceived to, make the

skin fair. There are some kinds of reforms happening in the society these days against the colour discrimination. "Dark is beautiful", a new campaign endorsed by Bollywood actress Nandita Das with a slogan "Stay Unfair Stay Beautiful" promoting being black is also beautiful. Meanwhile to break the stereotype in fairness creams, Vini Cosmetics Ltd. introduced a new cream "Pretty 24". The study has been conducted to what extent urban women accept this anti-fairness stance of "Pretty 24" and to know their perception related to the cream and "anti-fairness" stance. Though the usage of fairness creams is popular in rural India (Belch, 2004), the study has been conducted to know the response of urban women as it can be extended to rural women in further studies.

Literature Review: Skin tone is prominent in different racial groups throughout the world. It might influence the perceptions of individuals and group identity and complicate coalition within and across racial groups. (T Jones, 2013) A Study conducted in Brazil and United States had shown that there was a correlation between skin tone and socio-economic status, and achievement. The study also found that there was a discrimination against dark skinned persons in these societies (Harrison and Thomas 2009). It is viewed that light skinned people are intelligent, trustworthy and attractive than their counterparts. (Hunter, 2005) The value of lighter skin is so high that the manufacture of products offering the prospect of lighter, brighter, whiter skin has become a multi-billion dollar global industry. Skin colour is the significant aspect in Asian and Asian-American identity (T Jones, 2013). For many cosmetics companies Asia a key market. South Asian women view light skin as a valuable asset and are among the largest consumers of product which promise skin- lightening. In countries like Hong Kong, Philippines, Japan and Malaysia skin whitening creams are sold in huge and number and companies are making huge profits. (T Jones, 2013) In India beauty is connected to different psychological factors like self worth and confidence. The confidence of women takes a beating when somebody criticises them they are not beautiful and they get demoralized easily and feel that they are worthless. It reflects in the advertisements in India that fairness is beauty and women would become confident after using a specific fairness cream. (Patgiri 2016) After Globalisation in 1990s Indian economy started booming which lead to the growth of urban middle class. Multinational companies targeted India for the expansion of their products. Indian women, for that matter Indian men too, passion to look lighter made many MNC to invest in personal care products. For all type of products they produce dark skin is associated with pain, rejection, and light skin is being youthful, attractive, modern and affluent (Glenn, 2008) They have developed various whitening products through their regional subsidiaries that target rural villagers to white-collar urban dwellers and affluent professionals and managers (Runkle 2005). Some of them claim that their fairness products are based on ayurvedic medicine, and traditional Indian formulae of using saffron, turmeric, papaya, almonds and lentils (Runkle 2004).

Indian Cosmetics Industry: Indian cosmetics industry is growing with a CAGR of 17.06% since 2010. The market size is expected to reach According to ASSOCHAM report (2016), Indian beauty, cosmetics and grooming market would reach USD 20 billion by 2025 from USD 2.5 billions. The fairness cream market in India is estimated to 450 million USD with a growth rate of 15-20% every year. The consumption pattern of cosmetics increased substantially among the teenagers between 2005 and 2015. Most of the corporate advertisers in India feel that Indian women are vulnerable to the advertisement. (Mohana and Monica 2015). 68% of the young adults felt that using the beauty products would boost their confidence. It has been estimated that over 90% of the female cite skin lightening as the high need area (Patel, 2014). There is a clear skin colour prejudice observed in every part of India irrespective of class, caste and religion (Mishra 2015). The beauty ideals are governed by media, which glorifies lighter skinned models over darker skinned models. This obsession of media greatly influences the common public to like the lighter skin. The advertisements of fairness creams shifted their focus from "becoming fair is becoming beautiful" to becoming fair is empowerment, for example Fair and Lovely ad showing women uses the fairness cream gets confident and settles in life. (Chavan M B 2016). This was the common stance of major face creams (rather fairness creams). The skin lightening creams account for 40% of total beauty products sold in India (Goon and Craven, 2003). Almost every major player introduced beauty creams with - "white" tag, like Fair and Lovely, which has 76% of market share, introduced Instant Fairness cream and BB cream, Garnier introduced "Garnier White Complete," Ponds introduced "Ponds White Beauty," Himalaya came with "Natural Glow Fairness Cream", along with "Olay Natural White," "L'oreal

White Perfect,” and Nivea Day care fairness cream and Vaseline. To break the stereotyping fairness creams Vini Cosmetics Pvt. Ltd introduced “Pretty 24”, a new face cream in to Indian cosmetics market.

Pretty 24: Pretty 24 is new face cream released by Vini cosmetics Pvt. Limited. It was established by Darshan Patel in the year 2009. In the year 2017, Vini has come up with the “Pretty 24”, a face cream, which they thing, would debunk the myth of fairness propagated by different skin care brands in cosmetics market. The personal care brands made the Indian consumers to believe that one could achieve fairness or white skin by applying their fairness creams. But according to, Darshan Patel, one can never change one’s skin tone with these fairness creams. One can minimise or repair the damage caused by pollution or ageing but cannot change the skin colour. So Vini started the positioning of Pretty 24 as a cream that brings shining to every face irrespective of the skin tone. Though it is a reform in Indian fairness creams and fairness cream advertisements the acceptance of such type of products and ads is questionable.

Objectives and Research Methodology: The major objectives of this paper are to know women perception about skin colour, to what extent they accept the fairness stance of the fairness creams and to what extent they accept and perceive the unfair stance of Pretty 24 cream. This paper is a preliminary investigation in to the Indian women’s perception towards a newly introducing cream Pretty 24, which is promoting in odd way against to the existing marketing promotional practices. Descriptive research design has been chosen for the study. The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were collected from Books, Journals, Magazines, and Internet. Primary data were collected from the chosen sample of urban women consumers using a pre-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect the demographic profile, an attitudes and perceptions of urban women towards fairness and unfair stance of Pretty 24 cream. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and closed questions. A sample 100 women, aged between 18 and 37, were chosen from different parts of Hyderabad city. Convenience sample selection was chosen for this study as it is a preliminary investigation. The data was collected personally by both the authors by administering the questionnaire to the selected sample. At the time of data collection the Television commercial of “Pretty 24” was shown to the respondents (in mobile phone). The collected data was reviewed periodically to check the deficiencies and errors. For the analysis of the data simple correlations and percentages were used.

Results: The questionnaire was divided in to three parts. The first part deals with demographic profile of the respondents. The second part deals with their attitudes towards fairness creams and third part deals with unfair stance of “Pretty 24”. The sample consists of 28% women belongs to age group 22-25 years, 25% women belongs to age group 26-29 years, 21% women belongs to age group 30- 33 years, 14% women belongs to age group 18-21 years and the rest belongs to age group 34-37 years. The sample consists of 29% students, 40% housewives, 26% working women (employed somewhere) and 5% self-employed (business). Among the sample, 22% of the women have a monthly household income less than or equal to Rs 25000, 36% women have a monthly household income between Rs.25001-50000, 24% between Rs. 50001 and 75000 and the rest with a monthly household income more than Rs 75000. It was perceived by us that the perception of women about their skin tone is the key for the purchase and use of fairness cream. Only 12% of the respondents felt that they are fair enough and rest felt that they need to improve their skin tone. It has been observed that 95% of the respondents use face cream and 70% of them (of the sample) are using it to look fair and the rest are using to protect the skin. It was believed by 72% of the women that skin colour could be changed with a fairness cream. 56% of the women said that their fairness cream contributed to their skin tone. 18% of the women are frequently changing their fairness creams (at least twice in a year) and 12% of the women never changed their fairness cream in the past 5 years. 63% of the women said that fair skin tone would give them the confidence and 16% of the women said that their confidence levels increased after using a fairness cream that changed their skin tone. 76% of the women said that discrimination happens based on Skin tone. 37% of the total respondents even opined that this discrimination is a world phenomenon. There was no direct correlation observed between age, Income and occupation, and the Usage of skin cream, changing of the skin colour after using fairness cream and perceptions about fairness creams. It can be concluded that Indian urban women, irrespective of their age, income and occupation, believe that usage of a fairness

cream would help them in changing their skin tone. The major focus of the study is on acceptance of "Pretty 24" with anti-fairness stance. The respondents were shown the 37 seconds ad of Pretty 24 – "Beauty is not about fairness". The three aspects mentioned in the ad "Fairness it not all", "Fairness is not possible with fairness creams", and "Looking fair is not synonymous with success". Among the respondents 51% of the respondents agreed the statement "fairness is not everything", 23% of the women agreed to the statement "fairness is not possible with fairness creams" and 57% of the women agreed to the statement "Looking fair is not synonymous with success". Only 7% of the respondents said that they might use "Pretty 24" in the future.

Discussion: Traditionally Indian women perceived white skin is an asset. Even the era of globalisation the passion for white skin is in the top of the mind of Indian women. It is deeply attached to Indian psyche (Mishra 2015). In the advertisements of the products, starting from jewellery and sarees to Cars and washing machines, white skinned models are chosen over dark skinned. Lighter skin makes the acceptance more likely for women and lighter skin is depicted as the parameter of beauty by Indian media. Some of the top actors even undergone cosmetic surgery to change their skin tone from dark to light and started endorsing fairness creams and products. Self perception of fair skin affects confidence levels of Indian women.(Malik S) In India, the lighter the skin tone or perceived skin tone of the individual, the higher their self-esteem and perception of his or her marriage ability (2005). The study also supports that discrimination also happens based on the skin colour. And the skin colour is considered as a social capital (Parameswaran 2009).

Conclusion: In 2014 Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), which is a regulatory body of advertising industry, issued guidelines for fairness creams. According to these guidelines advertisers are urged to refrain from reinforcing negative social stereotyping on skin colour basis. It clearly stated that fairness ads should not portray people with darker skin in a way which is widely seen as at a disadvantage of any kind or inferior or unsuccessful in any aspect of life particularly in relation to being attractive to the opposite sex, matrimony, job placement and promotions. But still the fairness creams are creating deceptive advertisements and women trust such type of false claims. Hyderabad based Banjara's, an ayurvedic hair and skin care brand, started campaigning "Proud of My Colour". We can hope that Pretty 24 and Banjara's skin care bring some reforms in the market place in terms of skin care advertisements. Though this study found that women urban women still under impression that their skin tone can be changed by using fairness cream and they don't go along with the unfair stance of Pretty 24, I suggest further studies in the field as the present study has been conducted with a small sample and restricted to Hyderabad city only.

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