
BEAUTY STANDARD IN LOCAL BEAUTY PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS: AN ANALYSIS FROM LOCAL ADVERTISERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The beauty industry in Asia seemed to be one of the fastest-rising marketplaces. This is because physical appearance is a vital factor that is highly prioritized by an individual. Therefore, society is more enthusiastic about investing to sustain their overall appearance. Hence, beauty advertisement not only persuades their audience to purchase the product but also promotes beauty ideas that contribute to the standard of beauty that might not be favourable to society since it could bring negative impact. The study examines the implication of beauty standard in local beauty product advertisements on Instagram. An in-depth interview was conducted with advertisers to gain insights on the advertising perspective. The result concludes that advertisers should be more mindful towards the current beauty standard so that it would be in line with society's preferences which caused in the hike of brand loyalty and revenue.

Keywords: *Beauty Advertisement, Local Beauty Product, Cosmetic, Beauty Standard, Instagram.*

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is seeing a speedy development in its online business market, and Malaysia consistently ends up being one of its focal participants. Malaysia communicates in English as an effective second language, and a greater amount of its population are adapted to the utilization of digital advancement and social media since information travels rapidly (Kemp, 2020). This advancement has transformed the media industry to manifest digitally compared to traditional media which used to be the only news medium to communicate information.

Malaysia is one of the urbanized countries across the globe and has one of the highest technology internet advancement rates which represents a promising future for the digital business market. Its latent capacity has not gone unnoticed across vast various organizations (Kaur, Arumugam & Yunus, 2013). Malaysia has a 63% internet diffusion rate and 61% of

the population is active on social media platforms (The Digital Landscape, 2019). With the advanced market ready for speculation, Malaysia has grabbed the eye of most organizations around the globe to invest and communicate business growth which leads to the development of the country's economy.

Malaysian developed a rush of digital development for upcoming companies over the past several years because of the upsurge in digital platforms which are used to communicate with the targeted audience (Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation, 2020). It matches Malaysians' purchasing power which eases online shopping, optimistic attitude toward advanced digital marketing, and large financial plans which is due to Malaysia being an experienced country in the development of the digital advertising industry (Digital in Malaysia, 2020). Thus, the government sector has reinforced the development of the latest media technologies. The establishment of digital media and its accessibility is wide. Hence, connecting is permitted to spread broadly (Syed Agil & Azizah, 2008). Past research shows that the Malaysian populace makes use of the new media to gain up-to-date information compared to traditional media, particularly among the younger generation (Mustaffa et al., 2010)

Malaysia has the most incredible conditions for advanced advertising. Most cities in Malaysia are urbanized and the society is skilful, indicating an all-out proficiency pace of 94%. The nation's cutting-edge disposition thinks about its quickly developing internet populaces (Choi et al., 2020). While 26 million out of 32.16 million Malaysian populaces are currently on the internet, 81% are dynamic social media customers. Besides, the nation has an 83% Internet entrance rate, which is one of the most elevated in the Southeast Asia district. The new media brought the latest alternative in the transmission of rapid information to society. This has hiked the process of transmitting messages efficiently since it targets a wide range of audiences in a very limited time. Hence, this has altered the broadness of a person's decision-making skills as there are plenty of ideas and information which is made digitally and creatively to persuade and entertain the population in the country to make a better decision (Sutherland, 2020).

Normally, every social media user handles four accounts, driving Malaysia to encounter a huge expansion in investing time and cash on the Internet (Yun et al., 2020). The nation invested 7 hours and 57 minutes surfing the internet and 2 hours and 45 minutes are invested on social media platforms because of this, the nation has 83% recurrence on internet access every day. The dominance of the media in altering society's decision-making has spread the upsurge of new media. Massive growth in the media has offered plenty of cause for society to explore the latest information and to be informed of the current news and trends across the globe. Hence, the internet network provides quick information just a click away (Demertzis, Milioni & Gialamas, 2013).

Meanwhile, regarding online purchasing behaviour, Malaysia is likewise seen to be very satisfied with handling online buys. This is due to digital advanced alternation where society intends to smoothly adapt to it. As of now, it is at the most elevated level of portable online shopping among ASEAN countries with a 61% infiltration rate (Global ASEAN Reports, 2020). The fact that 98% of Malaysian adults utilize cell phones and trailed by 97% utilization of smartphones to serve social media platforms contrasted unlike PCs. This has permitted the nation to be ranked as the fourth with the most elevated portable social media entrance around the world and the first in Southeast Asia. In this way, advertisers guarantee that simple mobile-friendly procedures are created to cater to all generations (Taibi & Na, 2020).

The fast development of the online market is empowering in Malaysia. According to Huei Min Lee, Research Chief, broadcast communications research, IDC Malaysia, in the following five years Malaysia's broadband market will have developed at a greater level at a yearly development rate (CAGR) of 32.9% from 2004 to 2009 (Lloyd, 2005). The potential for internet-based shopping among Malaysians could not be completely acknowledged and there are enormous chances for development. Thus, organizations that are offering their items and services online need to construct purchaser reliability (BERNAMA, 2001). Improving and growing the accessibility of internet business products and enterprises ought to likewise be the focal point of computerized advertisers. As per Sue-Anne Lim, Dentsu Aegis Malaysia boss information official, this will be a significant feature towards more viable promoting techniques, particularly for Gen Z and people in the future (De Mooij, 2019). According to Statista (2022), income for the furnishings and apparatuses portion has amassed US\$586 million in 2020. Hence, it is required to display an 18.1% yearly development rate, and by 2024, aggregate a market volume of US\$1141 million (Kemp, 2020).

As per GetCraft's Malaysia Digital and Content Marketing Report 2018 study, content advertising is the most advanced chance for all advertisers, since it is the third most essential media spending plan in Malaysia entering the advancement of digital advertising. This implies that social media would be a profoundly significant stage to boost this chance. In accordance with this, advanced advertising techniques ought to rotate around brand awareness. As of now, 83% of Malaysians interface with the Internet every day. This implies that as the network in Malaysia consistently grows so will the chance for shoppers to peruse digital content (GetCraft's Malaysia Digital and Content Marketing Report, 2018).

Malaysian Beauty Market Growth

According to Global Data (2021), the Malaysian beauty market is predicted to expand from MYR 2 billion (USD 485.1 million) in 2021 to MYR 2.5 billion by 2026 at an annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.1% from 2021 to 2026. The revenue from high-quality beauty products has had massive growth in Malaysia since the influence of the pandemic is decreasing while the domestic profit is on the rise in the country. Besides that, international beauty brands are developing their study and formula to introduce many advanced beauty products to step into the Malaysian market (Łopaciuk & Łoboda, 2013).

According to Tournois (2014), the development of the beauty industry is parallel to economic development since it aids in the rise of income while society gets back into their normal day to day life which was seen before the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow customers to hike up their physical buying behaviour on beauty products. The increase of the older generation in their 60s happens to hike up the demands for anti-ageing, skin whitening and pore strip products. This gives the opportunity for beauty industries to hike up their ideas to settle into on-the-go products which is simple and innovative for the public who is constantly on a run.

According to Global Data (2021), facial beauty product gains a rapid value of 4.3 between 2021 to 2026. Followed by body care beauty products that comes up to a CAGR of 4.1% over the estimated time. When it comes to the brand, SK-II and Shiseido they are the popular brands in demand in 2021. Procter & Gamble, L'Oréal S.A., and Shiseido Company are the most innovative beauty companies in Malaysia in terms of quality and advancement (Łopaciuk & Łoboda, 2013). However, due to the rise of information and knowledge customers are more

aware of the long-term effect of certain beauty products which could be damaging to their skin in a long run. This has caused customers to opt for organic and natural ingredients beauty product that is estimated to rise in demand in the upcoming years (Global Data, 2021).

Due to the concerning factor of harmful chemicals in beauty products, customers are going online to research the beauty product based on the feedback and reviews of beauty influencers and other customers. This has brought a major responsibility to entrepreneurs and beauty companies to advertise their beauty products based on valid information regarding the benefits and safety of their beauty products through social media platforms (Jones, 2010).

Southeast Asia Beauty Standard

In most countries in Southeast Asia, beauty is classified as being fair and flawless (Aunul, 2015). Hence, females go through an extreme level just to attend to this beauty standard that is often portrayed in the mass media. Females spend thousands of dollars just on beauty products every year to achieve the desired look and to fit into society to be considered beautiful (Pounders, 2018).

According to Jones (2013), fair skin is often adored by females since it has a better social approach which leads to success. Fair skin is connected to traditional culture since they are labelled as people who are unbound from laborious work, rarely work outdoors must reserve themselves from getting sunburn, take good care of their natural skin tone, and are highly classified as a people living in privilege (Jones, 2013). Meanwhile, dark skin people especially males prefer fair-skinned females to be their better half especially when it comes to Indian society. Hence, marrying a fair-skinned female is believed to shower them with pride since they are married to a beautiful person (Pounders, 2015).

Likewise, according to MacCallum and Widdows (2018), fair and dark skin does define certain symbols and relationships. Usually, the colour black represents death, evil, harm, hate and ill-hearted. White is the opposite as it is considered pure, good, peace. This has worsened the circumstances when the media advertisement supports the cultural standard of beauty by only including fair-skin models with a great level of attractiveness besides communicating the economy and political vitality in the society.

The mushrooming of technology has led the advertising industry to prioritise females' appearance to sell a brand as it could establish more influence on beauty (Wolf, 2013). Hence, the physical look does create a massive demand for certain beauty products such as skin whitening products which have led more entrepreneurs to fall into the trend with almost no concern on health damaging effects. In most beauty advertisements, the exposure of fair-skinned models as ideal beauty persuades females to believe they could gain anything they want in life if they happen to attend that beauty standard (Davies, 2016). This seems to be a racist factor in beauty while it downgrades a female's abilities to only depend on their outlook.

Overall, it is found that the concept of fair skin has persuaded females that it is an ideal beauty standard that is adored by most people in Southeast Asia. Females are often pushed into circumstances that encourage them to project a particular culture which should be reflected in their physical outlook to gain society's approval that they are ideal looking females. Hence, the establishment of an ideal female is a deep-rooted social command within Asian society that could be identified in the mushrooming era (Luna, 2013).

In the Malaysian media, there was a controversial advertisement from Watsons and Slimme White (Hew, 2017). The advertisements emphasize on dark skin females as an ugly factor. They include a female who has darker skin which is meant to be mistreated by her partner. The advertisement was then taken down since advertisers criticise dark skin as black which brought controversy to Malaysian females as many were angry and offended by the advertisement message since advertisers are biased towards dark skin females and how they are treated based on their appearance in this modernised era.

The female's appearance is objectified and degraded, which causes a massive downfall in self-esteem and equally a hike in body shaming due to the unrealistic beauty representation of models in beauty advertisements. Female beauty is overexaggerated in beauty advertisements which causes the upcoming generations to feel insecure, odd, shameful, and disgusted when they happen to compare themselves with the image they see in the media (Aisha et al., 2020). Hence, the negative representation of beauty advertisements toward females includes unrealistic hopes, objectification, and sexualisation which cause females to feel pressured to attend beauty goals (Free, 2019). Author and BFM producer Freda Liu mentioned in one of the local newspapers, the *New Strait Times* (2017), that the advertisement frequently presents "*Fair and Ideal appearance*" in the media. She said,

Unrealistic media depiction of the idealised human form though Photoshop, making models look unrealistically skeletal or celebrities 9kg lighter, also portrayed the wrong impressions to the public, especially the younger women. Some men have an unrealistic expectation of beauty and unfortunately, women who are insecure about themselves fall prey to this.

(*New Strait Times*, 2017).

Celebrities, for example, are constantly under pressure to look good. They will be criticised by the society when they do not maintain their appearance. This is because they are considered a beautiful figure that is admired in the society. According to Rajendrah et al., (2017), former beauty queen and Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai, dubbed "*the most beautiful woman in the world*", was slammed by keyboard warriors for gaining extra kilos after giving birth to her daughter in 2014.

People are so insecure about how they look that they want to look like somebody else. The beauty industry is huge, and people are always looking for ways to improve themselves that is for sure. How obsessed and fixated people are with looking good depends on individuals. I believe the commitment to altering the perfect image have gone out of hand in recent years with the rise of various cosmetic enhancements.

(*New Strait Times*, 2017).

Beauty advertisements established more self-centred females by prioritising their appearance (Rusmadi, Syed Ismail & Praveena, 2015). Beauty advertisement's false reality happens to influence females to imagine and understand the unrealistic content towards beauty. Beauty advertisement has been establishing effective persuasion causing females to change their opinion towards beauty by being more particular in their overall appearance which caused them to compare with models advertised in beauty advertisements where beauty is also over exaggerated (Abdullah, 2019).

The significant of the study contributes to the knowledge and understanding of beauty standard on local beauty advertisement. By understanding these concepts, scholars will understand the depth of the current beauty standard and the purpose of advertisers implementing certain beauty standards in the local beauty advertisement. This could contribute to the excellency in promoting a healthier and more accepting advertising viewpoint so that it would be in line with society's preferences which caused in the hike of brand loyalty and revenue. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine the implementation of beauty standard in local beauty product advertisement on Instagram.

FRAMING EFFECT THEORY

The framing effect theory is known as a psychological setting that takes place in "three-dimensional and short-term setting in a set of communication content" (Bateson, 2000) that works in the form of metacommunication (Hallahan, 2008). The framing effect theory explains news and story that contains almost the same messages are portrayed creatively. According to Ahmad (2018), social pressure can manipulate an individual's attitude towards certain phenomena which could be a total contrast to an individual personality. The media plays a vital role in perceiving society's reaction to an advertisement. Advertisers frequently use certain qualities for a successful advertisement such as persuasive components, famous personas, highly attractive models and social ethics to market the brand (Ahmed & Ashfaq, 2013). Hence, a similar feature is applied in beauty products marketing. Persuasive aspiring advertising is one of the most prominent ads which affect most females. It have's trendy and cool mottos and taglines that is catchy and could aid in purchasing a certain product (Jan et al., 2019)

There are few psychological involvements in framing effect theory that is covered by most scholars (Iyengar, 1994; Kahneman & Tversky, 2003; Nelson, Clawson, et al., 1997; Pan & Kosicki, 2005). A moderator usually impacts the path and/or the relationship between media and society (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Here, the condition framing is known as moderator (Chong & Druckman, 2007). There are several research which has covered researching conditions that could eliminate the cause of framing (Druckman, 2001; Druckman, 2004). Hence, in this study the moderator would be the advertisers which will establish an effective yet persuasive beauty advertisement to be directed to the targeted audience in the society. To achieve the research objective, the theory will examine how advertisers frame their advertisements to influence their audiences into buying the beauty product advertised.

According to Fagley and Coleman (2016), the cause of framing is directed by the variables which are logic and have the possibility to achieve which is an uncertain decision. This research emphasizes that the framing effect prioritises the society to play the submissive character. This is where the framing effect focuses on running the favouritism (Kahneman, 2003). In this case, the advertiser will focus on the benefit, positive factors and the use of their product to stand out more compared to any other product in the market. This ensures the targeted audience is being persuaded into buying the product compared to what the audience have initially decided to purchase. However, this framing effect is not universal compared to the rest since it requires a certain degree of persuasion (Fagley & Coleman, 2010).

Besides that, the literature on framing (Druckman, 2001, 2004) shows that the framing effect influence the person's attitude which persuades them into what is being framed. Hence, it is essential to understand society's behaviours to ensure framing the message would be

effective. This is because advertisers framing their message productively could persuade and attract more attention to the product which could aid in the hike of revenue. Overall, framing includes the method by which a persona makes their choice based on what has been suggested and provided to them (Nelson & Oxley et al., 1997). Hence, a persona will decide on the list of beliefs which is on their mind to make the right decision. This is believed to be a valid, related and suitable belief (Pan & Kosicki, 2005) compared to the rest.

Therefore, the mediational procedures of framing are essential. This is because the researcher needs to examine the beauty standard in local beauty product advertisements on Instagram which involves the advertiser's point of view. It is essential to understand how advertisers frame their beauty advertisements to appear more persuasive and attractive in the lens of society. Framing an advertisement could lead to the focus and highlight the vital part of the beauty product which enables the product to stand out.

RESEARCH METHOD

Interviews were held in this study. It includes open-ended questions to communicate with the targeted respondents to gain vital data about the research topic (McLeod, 2019). The unstructured interview is ideal due to the need to build a bond with the targeted respondent since there is an opportunity for the respondents to be honest with their feedback. Since there is no specific format to follow, the researcher would find it easy to approach the respondents ethically to gain information for this study (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

The interview was held with four advertisers. The interviews were done via Zoom Video Call during the Movement Control Order (MCO) which has restricted physical movement to curb the spread of Covid-19. Four advertisers are chosen in this study to compare their feedbacks and to gain variety perspective and understanding of the beauty advertisement. This is because advertisers have many years of experience in the advertising industry which makes them compare the traditional beauty standard with the current beauty standard in local beauty advertisement. The criteria of the advertisers are explained in table 1 as follow.

Table 1: Profile of the informants

Criteria	Industry 1	Industry 2	Industry 3	Industry 4
Experience	Eight Years	10 Years	14 Years	21 Years
Position	Editor of Chief	Art Director	Managing Director	Executive Creative Director
Education	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's degree
Majoring	TESL	Graphic Designer	Business Administration	International Business Administration
Top Brands Involved	Silkygirl SO.LEK Cosmetic Chique Cosmetic	Simply Siti Elianto	Nita Cosmetic Pretty Suci Stage Cosmetic	Obsessed Cosmetic Sofina Hal

The interview session was audio-recorded and key points were written down in a notebook to carefully transcribe the information. Participants' issues of privacy were deliberated before the interview begins. Consent for the interview and audio recording was

obtained before the beginning of the interview. Besides, the audio recording interviews differ in length between 60 to 90 minutes. The data analysis will be done via Microsoft word manually as follows:

- Arranging the transcript by grouping them according to each respondent's interview.
- Individually dividing the transcript into each question.
- Adding extra information and insights gained at the end of the interview in a separate transcript.
- Accumulating all the information into a paragraph/theme.

In the end, the data is ready for analyse by mapping and interpreting the information. The information should make sense and be analytical to see the relationship between the question and the link between the data. The researcher is expected to gain all the essential information that is needed for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the advertiser's analysis and experience, Malaysian culture has an influence on beauty standards. Malaysians prefer females who have a pale or fair skin tone. This is because society undergoes a slow poison from a very young age that has been passed down for generations that fair skin is ideally beautiful. Besides that, advertisers also claimed that society shows a lack of interest when a darker skin tone female is portrayed in advertisements causing the popularity of fair skin beauty standard in Malaysia.

Beauty Potrayal in Beauty Advertisements

According to Ohanian (1991), beautiful people have great characteristics that could persuade a specific audience. Advertiser often frames their beauty advertisement targeting ideal beauty (*Fair, flawless and slim*) to target the majority of yellow, brown to dark-skinned audience and females who are insecure about their skin tone. Advertisers claimed that advertising these concepts helps to sell the beauty product by emphasizing the concern that the beauty product will solve the issue. According to Isa and Kramer (2003), Asians are desperate to achieve the Westerner's beauty standard that is considered ideal, since their beauty practices have been around for several decades. Besides that, it is one of the advertisers' marketing strategies to encourage society to be exposed to a major comparison by framing the local beauty advertisement focusing on the insecurities as it persuades society by altering their thoughts towards the product that it could bring solution.

Advertisers agreed that the aid of Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom and other editing tools are popular to correct models' imperfections that caused the impossible aspect of beauty standard. Especially when fair becomes white skin, thin becomes hourglass figure and scars are turned flawless. Hence, advertisers took this as an advantage and came up with a mushrooming of whitening products by framing their advertisement that fair skin is possible to achieve. Since fair skin beauty standard has been around for several decades, it has been easier for advertisers to understand the pattern, persuasive factor, ethical approach, and history of beauty standard based on their companies' data analysis over the years on how society adapt and react to certain beauty standard (Lee & Chen, 2011). Hence, fair skin models

are widely used in local beauty advertisement. Advertisers claimed this is why there is a huge crowd over whitening products in Malaysia. This is explained by the informant as follow.

“Fair & Lovely which was been very popular ever since to help lighten skin tones and this practice was brought forward that fair is beautiful, and everyone should strive to achieve it.”

(Industry 2, 7th May 2021)

“If we could see the trend of big Malaysian beauty brands like *Silkgirl* and *Bio-essence*. There will always be a selected whitening range. At one point, it used to be very popular. This is because the hype around whitening beauty products targets almost all audiences whether male or female. This became a norm for society to clog around the product coming up with reviews, discounts etc. just to promote skin whitening.”

(Industry 3, 11th June 2021)

“Qu Puteh used to be very popular among the Malay audience due to the instant result. Due to the frequency of the advertisement on TV3, has encouraged curiosity and the urge for audiences to give it a try.”

(Industry 4, 13th June 2021)

Advertisers gave society hope, comfort and joy to achieve fair skin if they happen to use their beauty products, since most models in beauty advertisement will be given the product for free and the reviews would be positive in most cases. Advertisers said that fair skin beauty is believed to be highly appreciated, admired and respected in society. According to Rasool et al., (2012), culture has a major persuasion on a person’s purchasing behaviour due to their needs and the latest trends which accommodate to their lifestyle. Hence, advertisement works as a powerhouse of influencing their audiences to achieve their goals by creating a hype around the product so that it will be recognised and considered by a wide range of audience. Hence, advertisers claimed that the beauty standard is the result of society’s cultural dilemma which turned into a benchmark of what society wants to achieve that is considered beautiful. While advertisers only focus on what the society wants to see in the advertisement by giving them confidence that they can achieve beauty success if they are willing to purchase the beauty product advertised.

Beauty Standard For Marketing Strategy

According to Greenfield (2018), there is a major difference between realistic and ideal since the ideal is often exhibited in advertisements which most females intend to adapt. Advertisers emphasized that the standard of beauty is created for marketing purposes. Advertisers claimed that the old age term of marketing is supply and demand. Hence, the marketing sector alters due to the demand they receive from society. This is explained by the informant as follow.

“Products are made to sell, and the rule of advertisement is you create a problem to a non-existent issue just to market the product. As an advertiser, we need to

present an anchor to hook our audiences. Hence, we include what audiences are interested to see.”

(Industry 1, 14th January 2021)

“If a brand comes up with a fair skin range, we need to find an idea to demonstrate the product. Hence, an attractive looking fair model is the main criterion because it represents the product. It is observed as the result of the whitening product. It is ideal for the models to speak on behalf of the product which will sell it since audiences are convinced of the product.”

(Industry 2, 7th May 2021)

“If the demand requires top models to be presented in an advertisement, hence, advertisers will somehow include top models because the product will market effectively.”

(Industry 3, 11th June 2021)

Advertisers claimed that there are demand on local beauty advertisement representing an ordinary yet simple looking model because society wanted to feel more engaged when they happen to see themselves in the faces of the persona in the beauty advertisement. All advertisers agreed that social media influencer plays a major role in promoting their beauty product. Hence, it is essential to deliver the advertisement message to society compared to bombarding them with images of beautiful models. Advertisers agreed beauty advertisement frame ideal beauty to motivate society to strive to achieve beauty perfection. This results in society normalising the concept of ideal beauty and they began to have the longing to match models they see in beauty advertisements. Hence, marketing changes are based on the current trends just to cater to the demand of their audiences. This is said by the informant as follow.

“20 years back there were also Korean beauty brands, it promotes fair skin, glass skin etc. but it was not a craze in society since we were mostly depending on bar soap, talcum powder and red lipsticks as a source of beauty product to be considered beautiful plus we live a reasonable lifestyle since these products are widely assessable and reasonable. The core beauty standard is still the same now but how it appears now seems a little different due to technological advancement. Beauty products are available online which ease the process for the younger generation to easily purchase them with the click of their finger.”

(Industry 1, 14th January 2021)

“The Chlorophyll trend is believed to give so many skin benefits and it went out of stock even though it has been in the market for several years. This trend is randomly created by ordinary people who went extremely viral on social media due to them explaining the benefits of chlorophyll and what they benefit from it personally. Hence, there goes the trend which increases the demand for the product, and it is not necessarily advertised by influencers and celebrities.”

(Industry 3, 11th June 2021)

“Vitamin C supplements which have been widely used by many older people to strengthen their immune system during this pandemic. Now, the younger generation

is consuming Vitamin C to brighten their skin. So, the advertisers promote the product by making it assessable for a wider range of their audience. So, the twitch made by the advertisers helps to increase the profit of the brand.”

(Industry 4, 13th June 2021)

Advertisers mentioned that the trend, demand, and beauty standards are estimated to change in the future as it gives fresh ideas to a vast audience to consider. Therefore, the old beauty standard in local beauty advertisements which accommodate fair and slim beauty will not be popular. All four advertiser are firm that beauty standard is created based on society’s demand and what they admire concludes the idea of beauty.

Beauty Standard on Local Beauty Advertisements

Society gets more attracted to a beauty advertisement when it reflects on beauty standards while a model contradicts to it (Trampe et al., 2010). Advertisers claim that K-Beauty is the latest trend to achieve flawless skin. Advertisers claimed that, although K-Beauty does not emphasize fair skin since it is more into healthy natural skin it was never neglected by society. Therefore, this becomes an advantage for advertisers when they include K-Pop artists and Korean themes in their local beauty advertisements to have better engagement and to catch audiences’ attention towards the brand. Hence, advertisers claimed that due to the latest trend and demand in the marketplace, advertisers found potential in persuading their audience into K-beauty. Advertisers claimed it is easier to promote beauty products on Instagram since influencers are very active on this platform. A certain live session is held by advertisers to persuade their audience to achieve similar skin texture since society is given the capability to achieve skin perfection. Advertisers agreed that society is more prone to be manipulated by what they are aware of and the reviews on the media. Hence, the latest idea of beauty develops through social media so that more people will be exposed and accepted of the latest trend. This is explained by the informant as follows:

“Beauty products such as essence and serum which are one of the most expensive ranges in skin care are now one of the bestselling. This is because these products are manufactured in Korea which convinces our audience that the product is authentic. We market this product to the audience to ensure they could also achieve flawless skin texture.”

(Industry 2, 7th May 2021)

“Most youngsters are obsessed with it due to the K-Pop series if I’m not mistaken. Hence, Korean beauty products and foods are very popular lately. As advertisers, we include Korean celebrities in our ads due to high engagement and favouritism among Malaysians. So, the beauty standard is based on what these celebrities are into lately. As we can see they have very smooth and fair skin almost perfect. So, we emphasize on skincare here. We present a celebrity who has a perfect, soft baby-like skin. This would manipulate youngsters to achieve similar skin texture by including more skin-care products into the routine.”

(Industry 4, 13th June 2021)

Advertisers explained that local beauty advertisement establishes a void that is possible to be achieved by purchasing beauty product to lift society’s self-confidence towards achieving

ideal beauty. Due to society having a tough time achieving ideal beauty, there is somehow a continuous demand for beauty products which made it a prolonged cycle. This is explained by the informant as follows:

“End of the day, it’s almost the same ingredients in the beauty product but most probably a different quality and quantity and a change of name that sells. As long the product does justice to the audience, it will always be in demand.”

(Industry 4, 13th June 2021)

Advertisers agreed that the media that exhibit ideal beauty standards could reflect a negative attitude on how society feel about their skin and body as they would feel insecure about their appearance. This can affect an individual’s attitude beyond their self-esteem when they feel frustrated trying to achieve ideal beauty which is projected in the local beauty advertisement but failed miserably. The advertiser said that local beauty advertisement makes society believe that beauty comes with certain criteria by comparing themselves with celebrities, influencers, and famous faces in the media industry. Advertisers claimed that this publicity eventually works because society especially the ones from the middle class down felt that they are not good enough since they are rarely complimented by their peers. Hence, beauty standard gives an idea to society on the result that one could expect if they happen to use the product advertised. Advertisers framing their advertisement by providing the solution to the issue gives females the confidence that the concerning issue has a curable solution. This brings satisfaction to a female that they will heal from a tragic experience and credited as beautiful near future by applying beauty products that are advertised.

Society Affected by Beauty Standard

Advertisers claimed that society demands females to look their best and this could also be the result of cultural influence as well since they are brought up in a certain upbringing. It is an unspoken taboo in society that is created but advertisers took advantage to sell a beauty product. Advertisers are responsible for persuading the targeted audience toward the beauty product. Hence, social media influencers and celebrities play an essential role in generating traffic to the product. Every brand has a beautiful influencer attached to it. This works its magic due to the trust that is created by the influencer since they happen to try the product beforehand. However, advertisers also claim that there is no specific definition when it comes to beauty standards since the definition kept changing over the years. It depends on the level of sophistication of the client and the brand that is presented. This is explained by informants as follows:

“SK(II) Essene used to be all about physical beauty several years, back but in recent years they change their marketing campaign and celebrate the strong characters of females instead. It is all about going out and achieving goals. SK (II) stand for the idea of inner beauty that is parallel to being strong and that idea of beauty would make their audience feel the way they want to be without any restriction or bonded to society’s built perception of beauty.”

(Industry 3, 11th June 2021)

“Dove defines beauty by accepting females the way they are because people are unique and beautiful the way they are. But when it comes to brands like L’Oreal, they would say fair, tall and slim are beautiful. Hence beauty is diverse. It’s just up to society how they see this beauty standard.”

(Industry 4, 13th June 2021)

Advertising caters to society’s needs for beauty; it is specifically based on demands. Advertisers claim that there are individuals who want to look like specific models perhaps, so advertisers bring those kinds of models into the brand just to ensure the product gains its profit and persuade the targeted audience into buying the product. There is nothing relatively complicated, advertisers only want the brand to popularise and get its targeted revenue based on a good yet persuasive advertisement. Hence, advertisers claim that beauty standard only acts as a model of communication via image just to inform the targeted audience what to expect when they purchase the product. Local beauty advertisement only advertise what the public want to see in the advertisement.

To conclude, beauty standard does contribute to the effectiveness of an advertisement. However, it is mostly used as an idea of what to expect if a targeted audience happens to use the product advertised. Some advertisers do hike up the standard of beauty so that the advertisement will seem persuasive enough since society would adore what they see as beauty is supposed to be and this make the advertisement stand out compared to other brands. The advertisers frame their advertisement in a way so that it would be parallel to the objective they plan to achieve. This would influence society on the idea of what they want to achieve. The main objective of advertisers is to gain revenue based on the number of sales from the product. Thus, society’s demand is considered, and the standard of beauty contributes to attention grabbing factor. While local beauty advertisement helps in persuading the targeted audience by coming up with a unique approach of frame ensuring them to be attracted to the product and constantly purchase the beauty product. Hence, advertisers mentioned that the objective of the brand is to hike up their business revenue. Minor complains would not affect their business growth, but it is essential to be more sensitive towards criticism and try to improve the flaws near future so that it could cause a minimalised of bad comments.

CONCLUSION

The beauty standard is an idea of beauty that was established by the media which was propagated in the society. The advertisers took advantage of society’s concept of beauty and exhibit it through advertisements which seem overwhelming due to certain editing tools. This has contributed to the media being an informer on the perception of ideal beauty around the globe. Hence, society views the models exhibited in advertisements as the definition of how beauty is supposed to be portrayed. In most cases, the media often advertise a fair, flawless, and slim model as beautiful which could cause society to adopt that beauty standard which causes them to feel less confident being in their own skin while they do whatever it takes to change themselves to be socially accepted and to be considered beautiful. This led to colourism and racism in Malaysia.

Just to meet the beauty standard, society tries to change their appearance in various ways, especially with the usage of beauty products. This is to achieve the ideal beauty standard or to look beautiful and confident. Therefore, there is a push and pull when it comes

to society's preferences of how they pursue beauty. If society happens to react positively towards a fair-skin model, the advertisers will most probably include fairer skin models in their advertisements. It is based on the demand and preferences that an advertiser receives from society which engrave the future of beauty advertisements. The product which gains extra attention will aid in the increase of product purchasing behaviour that is believed to hike up the company's revenue. Based on the findings, beauty product is mostly advertised as a part of "achieving ideal beauty" which is equally inclusive. However, beauty products could be altered into an apparatus for selling beauty concepts. Particularly for advertisers, beauty product is highly advertised not to gain beauty but to sell beauty which caused the hike in revenue.

Hence, beauty to advertisers is a part of improvising their profit margin by expanding the range of products just to reach out to the targeted audience making them feel that the product is an ideal solution to achieve beauty goals. The findings of the research could aid scholars in understanding how advertisers portray ideal beauty in the Malaysian context. This is a vital source of information since it is rarely studied under the theme of beauty advertisement segments on social media platforms, especially Instagram. Hence, the beauty standard created by the advertisers does not align with female empowerment, but it is more into marketing the product.

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