

# ‘For radiant, white skin’

## A critical view of advertising for skin lightening products in India

Student: Hima Mehta

Student Number: 344113

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Supervisor: Dr. A.M.M. Hermans

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Erasmus University Rotterdam

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how skin lightening brands in India promoted their products between 2013 and 2018. This thesis provided a more contemporary view on how skin lightening products were marketed in India, moreover, the advertising for skin lightening products for females and for males were compared.

To conduct the analysis, critical discourse analysis was applied, to understand the interrelationship between power, language and ideology. To conduct CDA, a total of 102 India television advertisements for skin lightening products were analyzed. The sample represented 47 products and 11 brands.

The results indicated that skin lightening brands promoted the ideal that light skin is ‘beautiful’ and more ‘desirable’. Advertisers used strategies that are often associated with cosmetic brands such as a problem-solution model, and the push-pull model. Advertisers promoted the products using stereotypical gender roles, however, also challenged these roles. However, through all the advertisements, there was one ideology that remained constant, in India, light skin equates to beauty.

This thesis contributes to existing literature on skin lightening in India by providing a contemporary critique on advertisements between 2013 and 2018. Moreover, this thesis compares how advertisements are constructed for male and female audiences. On a social level, this thesis critically investigates media content which disseminates discourse on skin color bias, colorism and discrimination.

Key words: Skin lightening products, Advertising, India, CDA, Gender, Colorism.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

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Most of my so called 'trauma' was self-induced. As a kid [growing up in the 90s], I was fascinated by the idea of fair skin. It was probably because you'd hear elders in the family or movies, television, school, colleges associate beauty with being fair. I've gone through a phase where I obsessed over being fair. ... It didn't make a lot of sense then but in hindsight I am glad I got caught. Now I wish I could tell my younger self that it's OK. It's OK to be dark-skinned and I should focus on building relationships, a sense of humour, being a good person and on expressing myself better.

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Smrithi Rao (30) - Associate Manager, Myntra, 2016

The previous extract from the *India Times* is one of many stories in which individuals explain that they feel 'unworthy' or 'inferior' due to their darker complexion. Smrithi explains that the constant reiteration of the narrative that light skin equates to beauty has been troublesome. In *Beauty and the Norm* (2018), Liebelt, Böllinger and Vierke argue that there are certain beauty ideals that have become hegemonic on a global scale. However, individual geographic regions still have their own nuances and definitions for beauty. Nonetheless, the global beauty market has been dominated by 'Western' or more Eurocentric ideals such as 'light skin', 'straight hair', and 'round eyes' (Kilbourne, 2014). These beauty ideals are constantly being propagated by the mass media (Liebelt et al, 2018). The ramifications of the prevalence of such ideals can be seen in practices such as skin bleaching/lightening, nose correction surgery, double-eye lid surgery or even hair straightening, which are all very prevalent in Asian countries. Referring back to the quote by Smrithi, the idea of lighter skin tones being more desirable is not only recurring conversation between family members, friends and colleagues, it is an idea that is reiterated in media such as movies and television.

Scholars such as Appadurai (1990) argue that mass media or popular media can spread and intensify certain beliefs or ideas. In addition, media images such as in advertising are often photoshopped, faked, and artificially constructed creating unrealistic images that real people compare themselves to, this can affect self-image and self-esteem (Gill, 2007; Kilbourne,

2014). Therefore, it is worthwhile to study the media to understand not only the explicit messages, but also consider the implicit messages that are being distributed (Kilbourne, 2014).

A 2018 CNN report stated that the worldwide demand for skin lightening products has been on the rise. By 2024, the industry is expected to grow to \$31.2 billion from the \$17.9 billion measured in 2017. Asia, the Middle East and Africa are the largest consumers of such products. Glenn (2008) outlines that the largest market for skin lightening products is India and the Indian diaspora (people of Indian ancestry or origin who live outside of India); moreover, Jose and Ray (2018), explain that 61% of the dermatological market in India comprises of skin lightening products. For these reasons, India will be the focus of this thesis. Furthermore, the increase in the demand of skin lightening products as well as the hegemonic idea that 'lighter skin is more desirable' (Glenn, 2008; Hussein, 2010; Liebelt, et al, 2018) is encouraging to study Indian media content that portrays these hegemonic ideals.

Ideologies in media content are embedded both explicitly and implicitly (Gill, 2007; Kilbourne, 2014, Liebelt et al, 2018). However, to bring a more nuanced focus point to this thesis a single medium must be selected. Given that the goal of advertising which is to sell a product (Hardy, MacRury & Powell, 2018), the medium selected for this thesis is advertising. The television viewing market in India is large (Das, 2011), making television advertisements an ideal sample to analyze.

To summarize, the growth in the skin lightening market, specifically in India, in conjunction with the ideology that a 'lighter skin tone is more desirable', and the fact that media content such as advertising intensifies this ideology, leads to this thesis examining television advertisements for skin-lightening products in India. As a result, the following research question has been formulated: *How have skin lightening products in India been advertised on television between the years 2013 and 2018?* In order to compare advertising between products targeted at men and products targeted towards women, the following sub-question has been formulated: *What strategies are used when promoting skin lightening products for men and women, are there distinct differences depending on the intended gender of the target audience?*

Given the research question, this thesis will adopt a qualitative research method. This will allow a close examination of the advertisements to observe what ideologies are spread through them (Bryman, 2016). The method of analysis will be a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This is an interdisciplinary approach, where language is part of a social practice (McLoughlin, 2017). This means that by conducting CDA, the interrelationship between, language, power and ideologies will be examined (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this thesis, given the research question, CDA is a perfect fit, as it provides the opportunity to understand how

advertisements uphold hegemonic ideologies. Why CDA was selected and how it will be applied will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The brands studied in this paper will all be based in India such as *Emami* or *Hindustan Unilever*, an Indian subsidiary of *Unilever*. Moreover, international brands will also be studied such as *Procter & Gamble* and *L’Oreal*, which sells skin lightening products in India. More information about the specificities of the sample can be found in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 1.1: Scientific and Social Relevance

As will become clear in the thesis, there are many issues that this thesis will touch upon which are relevant on a social level. For example, media systems need to be monitored and studied as they are essential in disseminating and reinforcing ideologies (Appadurai, 1990). More specifically, advertising for cosmetic/beauty products creates images of an ‘ideal’ person, at times this ideal is unrealistic for real people to achieve which effects the way they view themselves and others (Glenn, 2008; Kilbourne, 2014; Ringrow, 2016).

In addition to investigating advertising as a media system, this thesis examines the discourse surrounding skin lightening products which is also problematic, as the discourse promotes skin color bias (Nadeem, 2014). The narrative advertisements for skin lightening products often follow characters who are ‘depressed’, ‘unhappy’ or ‘ignored’ due to their ‘dark’ skin, when they use the product, their life transforms (Glenn, 2008). These advertisements create unrealistic goals for real people (Kilbourne, 2014), and promote skin color bias (Nadeem, 2014).

In addition to social relevance, this thesis warrants scientific or academic relevance as well. This thesis is grounded in academic literature, with scholars such as Li, Min and Belk (2008) conducting qualitative research and scholars such as Shroff, Diedrichs and Craddock (2018), conducting quantitative research. However, a majority of studies focus on advertising of female products or advertising of a specific brand within print media or television. In addition, some of the literature used in this thesis dates back to a decade ago. This thesis aims to provide a more contemporary view of the advertising of skin lightening products in India. Furthermore, India has a large television viewing market (Das, 2011), making it ideal to study television advertising. In addition, this thesis will compare the discourse of advertising for female products against the advertising for male products. In this manner, this thesis poses both scientific and social relevance.

## Chapter 1.2: Chapter Outline

This first chapter of the thesis aimed to introduce the key elements of the thesis which will be investigated. In this chapter, the topic of skin lightening in India was introduced which highlighted how prevalent skin lightening products were in India. In addition, the topic of advertising was addressed which argued that advertisements should be critically assessed due to the influences it may have on individuals. Finally, the research question was presented which will guide the thesis.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework, this chapter enlightens the reader about beauty standards in India, the discourse of cosmetic advertising, with a special focus on advertising in India, gender roles in advertising and celebrity endorsements. This is followed by a discussion on skin color bias in India, finally, there will be a presentation of how skin lightening products are advertised in India.

In Chapter 3, the methodology is outlined. The first sub-chapter will explain what critical discourse analysis (CDA) is and CDA is the most suitable tool for analysis in this thesis. Second the chapter outlines how the data was collected including the search criteria and inclusion criteria. Next the sample will be introduced and finally the method of analysis will be explained.

Chapter 4 is the results and discussion chapter which highlights the findings of the thesis. The chapter is divided according to the themes that were derived through conducting the analysis. This chapter compares and contrasts the results to the research of other scholars presented in Chapter 2.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, the conclusion is presented. First a summary of the thesis is provided, this is followed by answering the research question. In addition, the challenges and limitations of the thesis are highlighted. Finally, recommendations for future research are provided.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

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Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.

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Immanuel Kant

This chapter can be broken down into five main topics. These topics are intended to guide the paper in answering the research question. In the first section, perceptions of skin color in India will be explored from a historical perspective. The second section researches what defines Indian beauty standards. The following section focuses on the field of advertising, focusing on how beauty products are marketed. Subsequently, this chapter will continue by discussing some theories and concepts such as colorism which will inform how to critically examine the sample. This leads to the final section of this chapter in which contemporary literature on the skin lightening industry in India will be analyzed.

### Chapter 2.1: Indian History Class

Beauty ideals worldwide have evolved over time; India too has witnessed changes overtime in what is considered to be ‘beautiful’ or ‘desirable’ (Liebelt et al. 2018). Analyzing the historical developments regarding societal attitudes towards skin color provides an insight into the colonial, racial, and caste-based undertones behind these attitudes.

The caste system is complex yet integral to understanding skin color bias, and religious discrimination in India (Hall, 2013). The caste system dates back to around 1500 BC, it was at this time historians speculate that the caste system was introduced in India (Shevde, 2008). “Indian society is sharply stratified and organized on socioreligious lines rooted in a system with a hierarchical caste order” (Hall, 2013. p. 71), meaning that caste defines which socio-economic group an individual belongs to. The caste system is a product of Hinduism and has roots in the Manusmriti (an ancient Hindu scripture) (Hall, 2013).

This division of the social groups formed the caste system which is still prevalent throughout India today. The caste system was initially broken down into five tiers, each with its own job categories (Shevde, 2008). The Brahmins formed the top tier and were the priests, Brahmins also had the lightest skin tones. The second tier comprised of the Kshatriyas, they

are the warriors or rulers. The Vaishyas formed the third ties, they made up the farmers and merchants. The fourth tier were the Shudras, who are the laborers. Finally, there are the Dalits or the Untouchables, they are considered too dark and impure to be part of the caste system and thus were shunned into collecting garbage (Dyer, 1997; Shevde, 2008). While discrimination based on caste is illegal in India, and such division in job categories as previously should no longer exist, remnants of the system can still be seen throughout India today with disproportionate representations of Dalits, in media and politics as well as the brutal treatment of Dalits such as lynching's (Hall, 2013; Hoff, 2016).

In addition to the caste system, the colonization of the Indian sub-continent further cemented discrimination in India. While many countries have colonized parts of the Indian sub-continent<sup>1</sup>, most research has focused on the British Raj as they had colonized India for a significant time in recent history. The British colonization of India from 1858 to 1947 furthered the existing hierarchies based on caste in the region (Shevde, 2008). During this period Indians were drawn to the power of the lighter skinned person whose skin tone connotated luxury and dominance. The colonization of India by the British facilitated the perception of the 'white' or 'lighter skin' person as superior, and as someone who possessed wealth and control, this was also the time when 'Euro-centric' ideologies started to gain prominence (Dyer, 1997; Li et al. 2008). Moreover, lighter skin was seen as a vehicle to overcome oppression and becoming the oppressor (Shevde, 2008).

Thus far the perspective of India and Indians has been discussed with regards to discrimination, however, the colonizers also played a role in maintaining a segregated India (Hall, 2013). The colonizers viewed themselves as the superior race on a mission to civilize the world or to turn an irrational population to a rational one (Hussein, 2010). Moreover, the Victorian Era was a time when Europeans strongly differentiated between the white and non-white. This was a time when white was strongly considered the superior race (Hussein, 2010). This leads to the concept of colorism which will be further discussed in Chapter 2.4.

## Chapter 2.2: Indian Beauty Standards

As Li, Min and Belk (2008, p.444) have argued, "whiteness or having white skin is considered an important element in constructing female beauty in Asian cultures". Their paper

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<sup>1</sup> Countries that colonized the Indian sub-continent include the Dutch, the Portuguese and the French (Shevde, 2008)

on skin lightning and beauty standards in Asian cultures highlights the role of skin color in the perception of beauty. This is idea that the lighter the skin tone the more ‘beautiful’ an individual is considered will be explored throughout this section. Li, Min and Belk (2008) highlight that in India the terms ‘fair’ and ‘beautiful’ are synonymous. But the question to pose here is how these terms became synonymous.

Parameswaran (2001), outlines that while Asian countries had their own form of beauty contests, the Miss Universe Contest founded in 1952 travelled to developing countries since 1992, with the contest being held in Bangkok that year. In 1994, the Miss World competition was held in the Indian city of Bangalore, attracting not only a large audience, however, drawing well-recognized celebrities as well as large corporations to sponsor the event. The economic liberation of India in the 1990s and the introduction of global beauty pageants have reinforced certain ideas (Runkle, 2004; Dewey, 2008; Mills & Sen, 2004).

Dewey (2008) continues to argue that the rise of international beauty pageants further cemented global beauty ideals in India. She reasons that a woman in India must not only keep up-to-date with trends set by icons such as beauty pageant winners or celebrities, women must at the same time conform to the traditional values set within society. Given the rigorous standards that these pageant contestants must adhere to, unrealistic ideals of beauty are set within the country. Keeping in mind the importance of skin color, contestants must also take supplements that can potentially be dangerous. Additionally, Dewey adds that it is not only the physical features of the contestants that must be altered, they are provided diction coaches who teach them accents combining both British and American nuances. These ideals are then transferred onto the public which take ‘Western’ beauty standards and apply them into the Indian context.

When Dewey interviewed dermatologist, Dr. J. Pai, she had this to say “Fair skin is really an obsession with us, it’s a fixation. Even with the fairest of the fair, they feel they want to be fairer. I feel it’s ingrained in us. When an Indian man looks for a bride, he wants one who is tall, fair and slim, and fairer people always get jobs first. We still lighten their skin here because it gives the girls extra confidence when they go abroad.” (Dewey, 2008, p.163). Dr. Pai presses on the importance of skin tone in Indian culture. There is a shift from wanting a lighter skin tone to needing a lighter skin tone.

This touches upon how color is viewed in India. Li, Min and Belk (2008) argue that black in Indian culture is associated with underprivilege. There are many negative connotations that people draw such as ‘wrong’, ‘dirty’, ‘dark’ and more, conversely, this is also seen as the opposite of ‘bright’, ‘good’, and ‘well-behaved’. A common phrase in India is ‘mu kala

kardiya', translating to 'you blackened your face'. This is seen as an insult where people may blacken someone's face with ink or other material for committing an act that the community deems unfit or unworthy. While the physical act of painting someone's face black might not always occur, the phrase is still used, especially when that person has committed something that the community may not agree with. An example of this which can be found in mainstream media is seen in the movie Sultan (2016). In the movie, the protagonist Sultan is made to sit of a donkey with his face painted black after he loses a bet. This is a sign of degradation for the character.

Light or even white skin is not only associated with positive messages in Indian culture but also Hindu culture. 'Whiteness' is seen as a sign of 'cleanliness', 'purity', 'beauty' and 'happiness'. It is also a sign of privilege and power. As will become clear in Chapter 4, the link between 'cleanliness', 'purity', 'beauty' and 'happiness' can also be found in contemporary advertising. Li, Min and Belk continue by arguing that in Hinduism, the dark-skin goddess Kali is a symbol of cruelty and destruction. This establishes a negative association for women in India with darker skin.

Liebelt et al write, "in this country, beauty is defined by fairness of skin" (2018, p. 245). They explain that light skin is a beauty norm within India. The paper includes a quote by Indian actress Nandita Das, "I am shocked to see the rise in the number of fairness creams and dark actresses looking paler and paler with every film, magazines, hoardings and advertisements showing only fair women" (p.246). Nandita Das is also an ambassador for an awareness campaign 'Dark is Beautiful'. The quote by the actress introduces the next piece of the puzzle, the increase in the availability of skin lightening products.

To conclude this sub-chapter, the before-mentioned literature indicates that there are three key points in history that have reinforced the desire for lighter skin in India. The first point was the establishment of the caste system in India. The second point in the colonization of India by Europe, mainly the British Raj. The third and final point is the economic liberation of the country in the 1990s which brought global beauty standards to India. Global beauty standards generally promote products using models with lighter skin tones, which implicitly emphasizes the desire for lighter skin (Hussein, 2010).

### Chapter 2.2.1: Establishing Fairness Products in India

Due to the economic constrictions before the 1990s, foreign brands could not be established in India without being affiliated with an Indian company (Hardy, MacRury & Powell, 2018). Through having an Indian subsidiary, corporations could be present in India. This can be witnessed through *Hindustan Lever Limited* (HLL) (now *Hindustan Unilever Limited*, HUL), a subsidiary of *Unilever* (Glenn, 2008). In 1971, HLL patented a product that not only started the skin lightening industry in India as it is known today but would also create the most well recognized brand, *Fair & Lovely*. The product was created by patenting niacinamide, a form of Vitamin B3, which acts as a melanin suppressor. The main active ingredient of *Fair & Lovely* is niacinamide, which *Fair & Lovely* argue is a safe option for skin lightening. The product was first marketed in the south of India in 1975 as a test, but by 1978 the product was available throughout India. Over the years, *Fair & Lovely* has become the most popular skin cream in India, constituting around 80% of the fairness cream market. *Fair & Lovely* is estimated to have 60 million consumers within the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, the brand is exported to an additional 34 countries (Glenn, 2008).

Over the years, *Fair & Lovely* has continuously been developing and expanding their product range, introducing new products to suit the different needs that people might have, such as *Fair & Lovely Winter Fairness* for the winter, or *Fair & Lovely Oil-Control Gel* for the summer. In addition, the brand introduced *Fair & Lovely Ayurvedic* (2003), conceived from the 4,500-year-old Indian medical system, which combines traditional Indian medicinal practices with the brand of *Fair & Lovely*. *Fair & Lovely* introduced their premier product line in 2004, ‘Perfect Radiance’, which comprised “12 premium skin care solutions” that included “international formulations from *Unilever’s Global Skin Technology Center*” including ingredients that were supposedly best suited for the Indian climate and skin types. The *Perfect Radiance* range maintains its premium status by being sold in select shops in major cities (Glenn, 2008). In addition to the *Fair & Lovely* product line, *Unilever* also owns the *Ponds* product line, which they also promote heavily through television and print media, with content tailored towards the local audience.

While *Ponds* is famous in Europe and North America for their cold cream, they are known in Asia for their skin lightening products. In addition to the television and print media advertising, *Ponds* is well-recognized in India through their sponsorship of the Femina Miss India Pageant. Glenn (2008), points out that contestants were encouraged to be as beautiful as

they could be, however, upon examining the photos of past winners, beautiful could be a synonym for being light.

A MarketLine report from 2019 found that the Indian skincare market witnessed a strong growth between 2014 and 2018. The report pinpoints two key factors for the growth, first India has the largest youth population in the world and second that there is a growing image conscious population. In 2018, the total revenue of the Indian skin market amounted to \$2,373.1 million. Of the whole skincare market, facial care accounted for the highest value in 2018 with total sales surmounting to \$1,909.3 million, or around 80.5% of the market. By stressing the fact that India has the largest young population and that there is a growing population who are becoming more image conscious, one can see that there are opportunities not only for existing brands to expand but for new brands to be established. Furthermore, men in India are moving away from unisex products, consuming more gender specific products. This demand is being met with an increase in supply for male skincare products, more specifically in the facial care segment. Manufactures have used this opportunity by including more male products under the name of their existing brands. The inclusion of male skin care products within the skin care market will be discussed later on in this thesis.

When conducting literary research on skin lightening products in India, it became apparent that *Fair & Lovely* was a rather successful brand with a lot of the literature focusing on this brand specifically. However *Fair & Lovely* is far from the only brand offering skin whitening products; upon visiting a local supermarket in Mumbai, the sheer number of products and brands dedicated to skin lightening becomes clear (see Figures 1 and 2). Figure 1 showcases the overhead sign labeled ‘fairness’ and Figure 2 provides a closer look at some of the products available in the store. This image also showcases what some of the more popular brands are in India; the vast market share of *Ponds* in pink tubes and boxes and *Garnier* in yellow packaging can be seen from these images. The images also showcase some other brands such as *Olay*, *Lotus Herbal*, *Lakmé* and *Himalaya*. However, to go back to the popularity of *Fair & Lovely*, this is depicted in bottom three shelves in Figure 2, where a number of products belonging to the brand are stocked. It should be noted that these images include a variety of creams and other facial products such as face cream, BB creams, sun cream, face masks and face wash. These images of the supermarket are indicative of the market dominance that Unilever holds, with them owning brands such as *Fair & Lovely*, *Ponds* and *Lakmé*. An

extensive list of skin whitening products available in India and their corresponding parent company can be found in Appendix A.

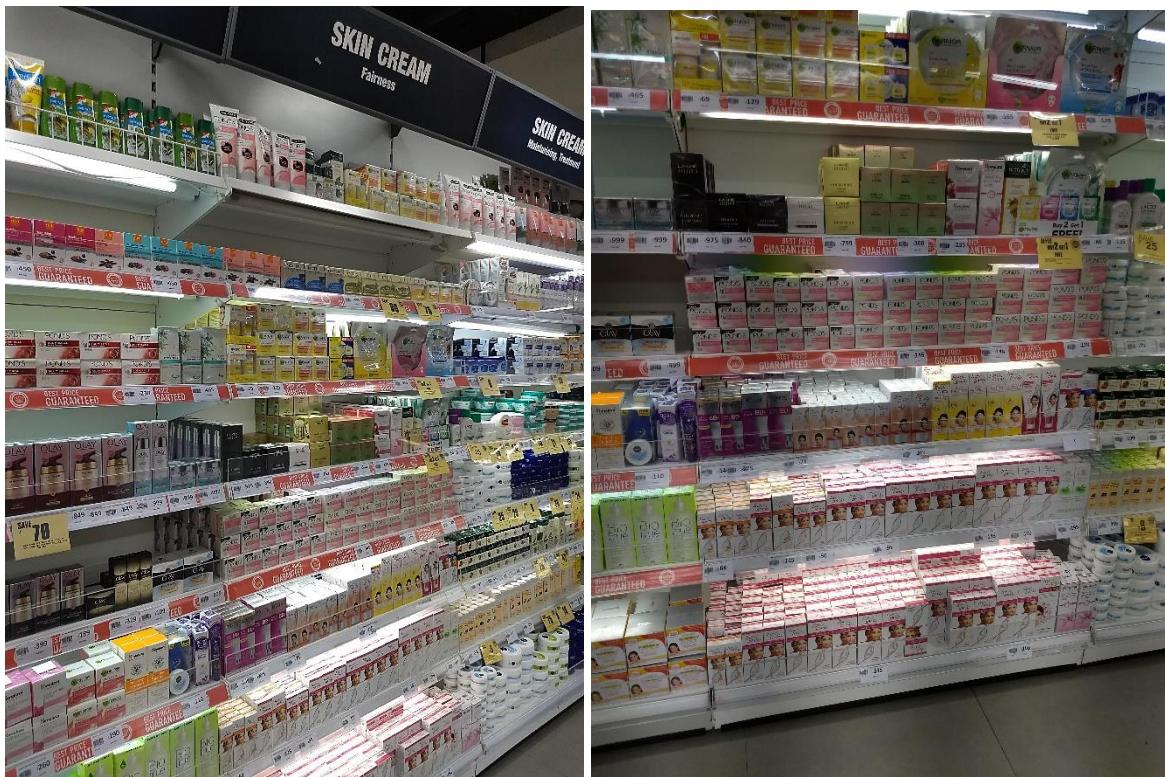


Figure 2: Photo of the skin care aisle in Big Bazaar, Figure 1:Close-up of the skin care aisle in Big Bazaar, Mumbai, India (2019)

To explore what brands of skin lightening products were available in India, further analysis was conducted on e-retail platforms, such as *Amazon* and *Flipkart*. Notice the red circle around the menu in Figure 3, as with the supermarket, the online retailer also has a dedicated section for skin lightening products. In Figure 4, one can see how *Amazon* breaks down the skin lightening products into further categories. In Chapter 2.2. a quote by Indian actress Nandita Das was presented, in which she expressed how shocked she was with the rise in the number of skin lightening products. The findings in the supermarket and online retailers echo this concern, the products are readily available in abundance and there are so many brands to choose from. However, there is one commonality between all four figures, that being that they are all products were targeted towards women.

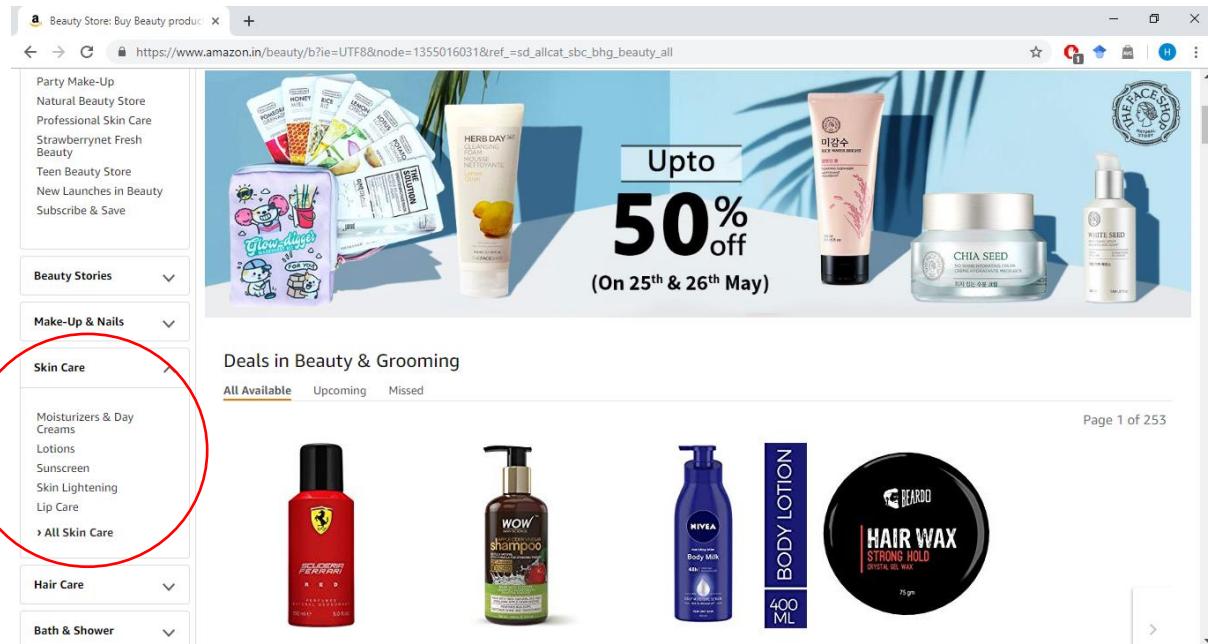


Figure 3: Screenshot from Amazon India, beauty section (2019)

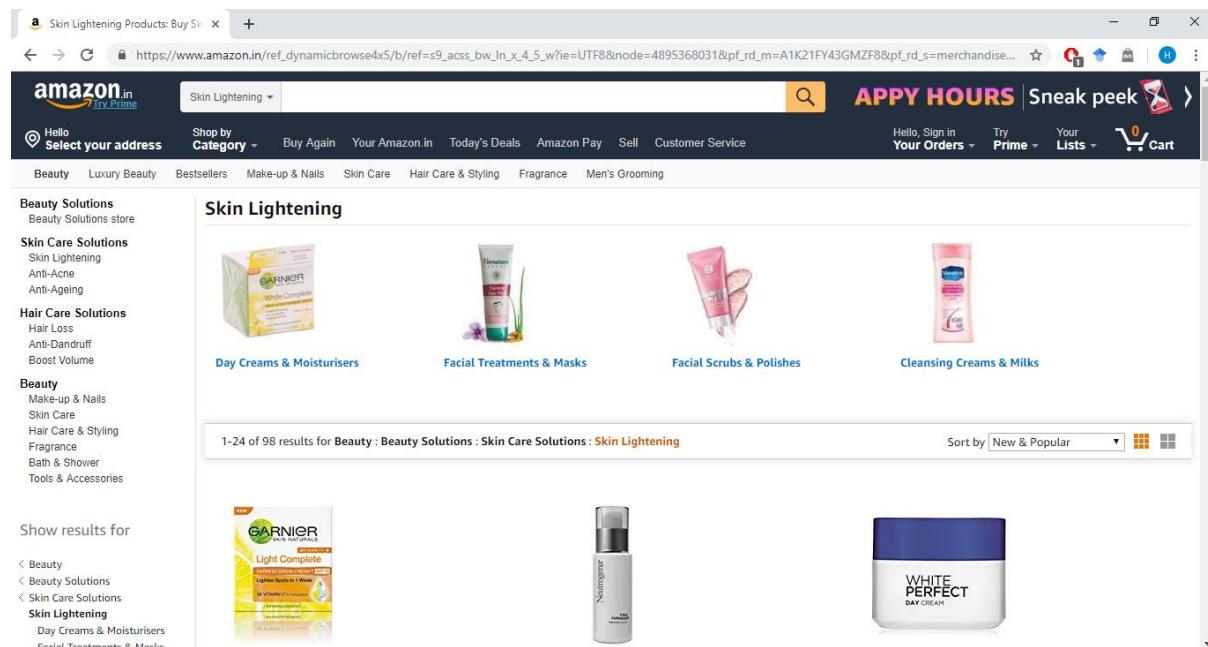


Figure 4: Screenshot from Amazon India (2019)

While the MarketLine (2019) report mentions that companies are now catering to the male market, this could not be seen in the initial analysis. All products presented thus far are aimed towards women. However, when scrolling down to the bottom of the first page on Amazon India, one face wash for men did appear. Regardless, it was not until search terms such as 'mens fairness cream' and 'mens skin lightening cream' were entered that results could be seen.

While researching skin lightening products aimed at the male target market, many more brands were discovered. Some were completely new brands such as *Urban Gabru Instant*

*Glow*, while some were a part of larger product lines such as *Garnier Men Power White*. However, the products that stood out on the e-retailers were *Men's Fair & Lovely* and *Fair and Handsome* by an Indian parent company *Emami*. *Men's Fair & Lovely* stood out as it belongs to *Fair & Lovely* which is arguably the most famous brand within skin lightening. *Fair and Handsome* stood out due to the name of the product, and the proximity the name has with *Fair & Lovely*. Although products aimed at the men were not as visible in the physical store such as the supermarket, there were many options on the online platform. However, these findings cannot be generalized as only one supermarket was visited.

In 2005, *Emami* launched *Fair and Handsome* and a new market emerged, fairness creams for men (Vats, 2010). *Unilever* followed the footsteps and in 2007 launched *Fair & Lovely Menz*. Tandon (2017), outlines that the male grooming industry has grown by 40% between 2012 and 2017, with more brands entering the market such as *Garnier* and *Nivea*. News media had to be used to determine this information as it could not be found through academic sources.

Despite identifying the fact that corporations of all sizes manufacture and promote products for men, academic literature on skin lightening is predominantly based on the female market or the female beauty industry. Dewey (2008), Glenn (2008), Johri (2011), Liebelt, Böllinger, and Vierke, (2018) and many more scholars focus on how products such as skin lightening can be detrimental to women both physiologically and psychologically. Yet, when it comes to the male market, these concerns are under researched. To address this lack of research, this thesis will compare the discourse of both male and female cosmetic advertising.

### Chapter 2.3: The Discourse of Cosmetics Advertising

To answer the research question, how have skin lightening products been advertised on Indian television between 2013 and 2018, it is critical that one engages in literature about the discourse of cosmetic advertising. To achieve this, the sub-chapter provides an in-depth understanding of the field of advertising. More specifically, the topics that this section covers include cosmetic/beauty advertisements, advertising in India in particular, gender roles in advertising, and celebrity endorsements.

The first point that should be addressed in this section is answering the question of what advertising entails, and why this is important within the context of this thesis. While there are countless definitions for advertising, for the purposes of this thesis, the term is defined as

follows: “Any form of paid-for media used by a marketer to communicate with their target audience” (Hardy, MacRury & Powell, 2018). In this definition of advertising, media refers to both online and offline content, such as advertisements on social media platforms or advertisements in newspapers. Gill (2007), argues that advertising can have substantial implications on individuals, and is a critical component within media production. Advertising can have both direct and indirect influence. Gill (2007) adds, that advertising has changed a lot over the years, especially when it comes to digital platforms which allow interaction. This is a key point, interaction with the brand, this will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

This paper will be focusing on one form of advertising which is television advertisements, more information on why television advertisements were selected can be found in Chapter 2.3.1. The selection criteria for advertisements is presented in Chapter 3. As the aim of this thesis is to study advertisements of skin lightening products, the sample consists of cosmetics advertisements.

In *The language of Cosmetics Advertising*, Ringrow (2016) outlines that the majority of cosmetic products are promoted on the basis of a promise, that being how the product will aid the user in enhancing him- or herself. In other words, the products promote that they can help individuals look prettier, younger, thinner and so on. While some attempts have been made to make advertising more gender equal, gender stereotypes media content still remain prevalent (Das, 2011). Women in advertisements are often presented as needing some modification or alteration so that they can conform to set standards (Gill, 2007). Ringrow (2016) also argues that media discourses make the assumption that women want to improve their appearance. This does not mean that women should not or cannot change the way they look, women should be able to dress and look the way they want to; however, problems arise when media discourse follows a single narrative, that being that women should look a particular way such as Eurocentric features (Gill, 2007; Li et al. 2008). When women do not want to use cosmetic products, or other practices to alter their appearance, media will portray them as going against the norm (Ringrow, 2016). The use of cosmetics is not under debate here, many women find using cosmetics enjoyable, however, an issue arises when ‘enjoyment’ disguises itself as expectation where women do not see the difference between choice and compulsion (Gill, 2007).

There are several tactics that marketers use when promoting a cosmetic brand. The problem-solution pattern is a commonly used tactic in which the product is promoted as a ‘solution’ to a ‘problem’ that the person might be facing (Ringrow, 2016). Originally introduced by linguist Michael Hoey, the pattern is often used in cosmetic advertising by establishing that there is a problem. The problem or problems can range from blemishes, spots,

dark circles and so on. Women are constantly being shown messages in the media about their body (Ringrow, 2016), the problem-solution pattern takes an issue such as dark circles as the starting point and consequently presents the product as a solution. The discourse of beauty advertisements assumes that women should take a proactive role in taking care of their physical appearance which is why the solutions are presented in the form of the product.

Thus far, the main focus has been on how cosmetic advertisements target the female market, however, as indicated above, there has been an increase in products aimed at men. Men's products place less emphasis on ageing and more on 'refreshing skin' unlike products for women which identify all types of problems such as ageing and blemishes. In general men do not face the same type of criticism about the way they look compared to the criticism that women face. For example an ageing man is not as problematic as an ageing woman, in fact grey hair on a man might even be more desirable, however, for a woman grey hair should be disguised (Ringrow, 2016). More about the differences in gender roles will be discussed in Chapter 2.3.2.

Based on Ringrow's (2016) research into cosmetics advertising, she proposes an updated version of Hoey's problem-solution model. The first level of the model is the optional situation which is what precedes the problem. This can be explained through the example of "we were all at sea. The boat sank" (p. 34). The first part is the situation which can be optional as it is not always presented, and the second part is the problem. The next level of the model is titled, the situation requiring a response which is the problem, such as the boat sank, or in beauty advertising, an example might be dry skin (*ibid*).

These problems can then be separated into three parts, this next level is what differentiates Hoey's model to Ringrow's model. The first problem category is labelled as fragmented aspect of appearance. The term fragmentation is indicative of the category in which each body part is considered as a separate problem, taking the face as an example, this could be fragmented into dark circles, dry skin, pimples and more. The second problem category is titled existing product. This concerns problems due to existing products in the market. Marketers will as a result spin the narrative to highlight other qualities of the product such as longevity, ease of use and more. Products could also be marketed as providing a solution without creating a new problem, such as moisturizing the skin without leaving it oily. To the consumer such 'problems' may not be visible until the advertisement points it out. Another example qualifying for this problem category are 'new and improved' products, which create new needs in the eyes of the consumers. The third and final problem category is labelled lifestyle and environment. This entails 'modern life' which is full of stress, work, busy lifestyle

by juggling personal and professional life and environmental issues such as sun, pollution, winter and so on. These factors are portrayed as damaging to the consumer and requires a product that would solve the issues. The idea here is that the product would act as a protective layer against these lifestyle and environmental hassles.

Advertisers can also use a combination of the three identified problems, such as (1) protecting your glowing skin (2) from the harsh winter (3) without making it dull and oily. Ringrow points out that consumers may be completely or partly oblivious to a ‘problem’ before it was mentioned in the advertisement. Marketers do create ‘problems’ for the consumer that they then must actively solve.

Following the three problems, the model introduces the next level which is the response or the solution. This can be broken into two segments, the positive evaluation and the positive result. Advertisers may also choose to use a combination of the two. What separates Hoey’s model to Ringrow’s model is the inclusion of response elements, these response options are optional. There are three response elements, first is the surface appearance discourse depicted through words such as looks or appears, an example would be, ‘visibly reduces the appearance of wrinkles.’ The second response element is transformation discourse depicted through words such as transformation and revolution, an example could be ‘transforming your skin’. The third response element is fragmentation of body parts in which advertisers mention specific areas, an example could be ‘covers dark spots’ (Ringrow, 2016).

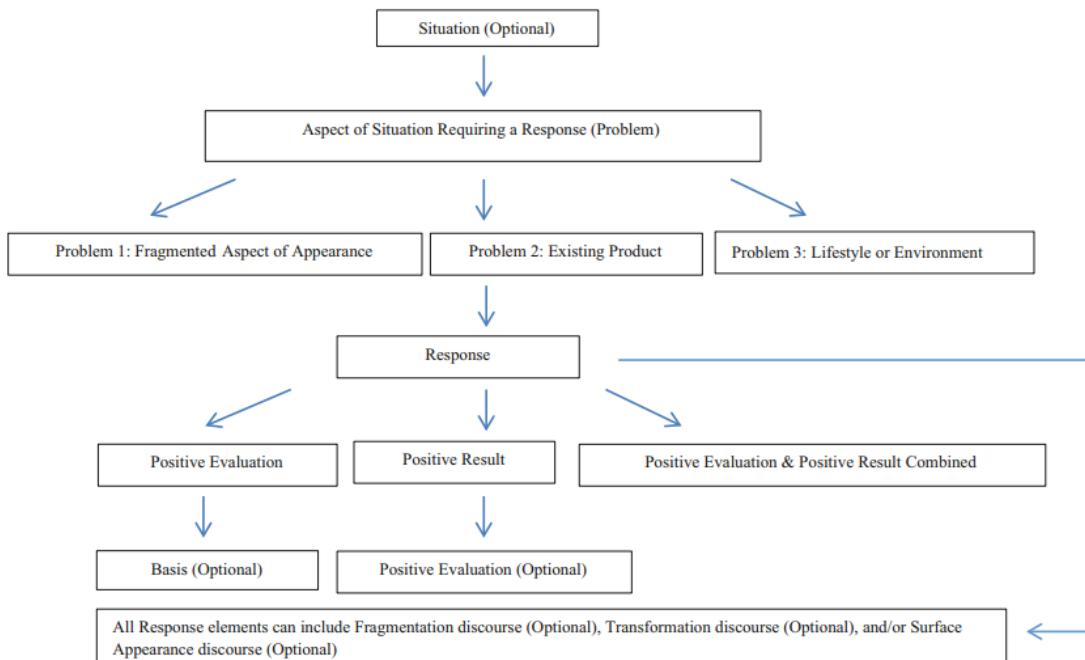


Figure 5: Problem-Solution Model (Ringrow, 2016, p.37)

Other than the problem-solution model, cosmetics advertisers tend to use another tactic very frequently. Scientific discourse is another commonly used tactic in advertising (Gill, 2007; Ringrow 2016). Brands use this tactic for a number of reasons, including differentiating their brand within the market, or to help the product seem more authentic. Ringrow (2016) presents the example of Alpha Hydroxy Acid (AHA), which is an exfoliant to treat acne, scars, wrinkles as well as lighten the skin. Although the use of scientific discourse is common for cosmeceuticals, many purely cosmetics products use this discourse too. This is especially prevalent when the product is presented as a solution from the problem-solution model.

Within the scientific discourse, advertisers use a number of tactics such as providing ‘measures of verifiability’ through providing statistics such as ‘80% of the people found this product useful (Ringrow, 2016). In response to the ‘artificial’ substances within a product, advertisers also rely on promoting the ‘natural ingredients’ used. Advertisers promote natural ingredients as a response to the growing demand for products to be natural (Dayan & Kromidas, 2011).

#### *Chapter 2.3.1: Advertising in India*

A 2019 MarketLine report for advertising in India outlines that the advertising industry in India grew by 10.5% in 2018, reaching a value of \$10,176.3 million. The industry is predicted to grow by 59% in the upcoming five years. Within the advertising market, food, beverage and personal/healthcare occupy the largest segments taking around 37.1% of the market. The MarketLine report elaborates that the growth in the advertising market over the past five years was driven by politics. Political parties such as the BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) have spent excessively on print, television and radio advertising.

In addition, improvements in technologies enhance the opportunities of advertisers; the quality and reach of broadband connections increases the number of people that advertisers can connect with (MarketLine, 2019). Despite this fact, traditional media such as print, and television advertising remain integral at present in India, and will continue to remain vital in the near future (MarketLine, 2019). To better understand the present and future of advertising in India, the history of advertising in India should be addressed.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Indian economy was beginning to liberalize the market, with foreign brands being able to trade in India, however, this was done by being affiliated with an Indian company/corporation (Hardy et al, 2018). In the 1970s and 1980s,

Indian advertising agencies maintain creative tradition but also exhibited global patterns. During the 1990s, large-scale economic changes encouraged international agencies to enter the Indian market (Hardy et al, 2018). However, corporations in the 1990s, opted for the joint venture model (Lynne, 2004). The joint venture model is a mutually beneficial model, in which the involved corporations/organizations profit from being associated with each other; in this case international or foreign advertising agencies would have the opportunity to understand the Indian market and Indian agencies would gain the opportunity to be connected to global clients (Lynne, 2004).

As of 2015, there is only one agency in India that belongs in the top ten despite having no global affiliations, this being the Kolkata based *Pressman Advertising Ltd* (Hardy et al, 2018). The economic liberalization of the 1990s allowed global brands to enter the Indian market allowing them to establish a strong foothold in the country. The top ten brands within the Indian market include three European and three US based corporations (Hardy et al, 2018). Despite the dominance of global corporations, there is still a large presence of national corporations.

When shifting focus to the Indian television industry, it can be seen how this too has evolved in the 1990s. Moving away from the governmental monopoly to introducing an abundance of television channels, was a challenging phase for print media which was the dominant medium for advertising at the time (Hardy et al, 2018). In terms of the global television market size in other words the number of television channels (Lynne, 2004), India has the second largest television market in the world after China (Hardy et al, 2018) this further cements the reason for analyzing television advertisements in this thesis.

Channels predominantly broadcasting entertainment programs in Hindi are the most profitable, these include Star Plus, owned by Twenty-First Century Fox, and Indian owned Zee TV (Hardy et al, 2018). It was reported that in 2015, television took 47% of the total advertising expenditure, newspapers took 30% of the share and digital platforms received 13% of the advertising revenue (Hardy et al, 2018). Half of the money distributed to television advertising was from large corporations such as *Unilever*, *L'Oreal*, *Nestlé* and *Coca-Cola* which produce FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods), such as skin lightening creams (Hardy et al, 2018).

### Chapter 2.3.2: Gender Roles in Advertising

Gender is a common category or variable that advertisers use to create differing strategies to target different groups. However, advertisers have been accused of portraying stereotypical gender roles which can hinder gender equality and be harmful to an individual's self-image (Matthes, Prieler & Adam, 2016). Advertising can have substantial influence through maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes, they often socially constructed images depicting one-dimensional images of men and women (Das, 2011). Apart from gender roles, advertisers use different types of messages.

Sheehan (2014) argues that messages in advertising are received and evaluated differently by males and females. While males tend to focus more on the primary message such as *buy this cream*, females go beyond the primary messaging phase. They consider other layers within the advertisement, thus the message they receive would be *buying this cream will make you more desirable*, thus men prefer a hard sell and women a soft sell (Sheehan, 2014). Additionally, both genders respond more positively when the imagery matches them, thus men would response more positively with male imagery and women to female imagery (Sheehan, 2014).

A study conducted by Das (2011) on gender roles in Indian television advertisements concludes that in comparison to 'western' countries such as USA, Australia, Denmark and France to name a few, women were less likely to appear as a voiceover in India. Conversely, as oppose to 'Western' countries, women in India would not be as likely to be limited to appearing in advertisements for categories such as beauty, home and food products. In addition, both men and women were more likely to be depicted as being in a relationship in the Indian advertisements.

There is a growing trend in Indian advertisements to portray women as liberated, however at the same time they have to be 'traditional', thus a woman must be 'nurturing', 'caring', 'family-oriented', 'working' and 'independent' (Das, 2011). Men in advertisements tend to portray 'strong' and 'independent' characters who are rarely unemployed (Das, 2011; Matthes et al, 2016). In addition to characters, advertisers use specific concepts when advertising to men and women.

Ringrow (2016) argues that the discourse of beauty advertising aids in maintaining a gendered market through highlighting gender differences. These gender differences are further heightened through popular media such as lifestyle magazines which reinforce gender differences. She further discusses that advertisers for female products combine an unrealistic

feature with a realistic one. In this manner they fragment body parts to allow the product to ‘fix’ the flaw. As corporations require consumers to constantly purchase their products, the ‘solutions’ are never made permanent (Gill, 2007; Ringrow, 2016).

Harrison (2008) argues that traditional masculinity is defined through social constructs, depicted through words such as ‘tough’, ‘competitive’, ‘active’, and more. However, the definition of traditional masculinity is evolving. Under the definition of traditional masculinity, it seemed that men were not bothered about their appearance, however, with social changes in conjunction with urbanization, it is more acceptable for men to be concerned about the way they look and act accordingly (Hermans, 2018).

While the definition of masculinity is changing, advertisers for male grooming products are careful that they do not deviate too far from traditional notions of ‘masculinity’ to ensure that men will still be comfortable to purchase cosmetic products (Harrison, 2008). This is achieved through the ‘push-pull effect’. The ‘push’ refers to making men more conscious and critical about their physical appearance, while the ‘pull’ refers to acknowledging ideologies typically associated with traditional masculinity.

Advertisements do not merely display characters in stereotypical gender roles (Das, 2011), they also use different strategies when advertising to men and women (Harrison, 2008; Ringrow 2016).

#### *Chapter 2.3.3: Celebrity Endorsement*

With the Indian economy opening up to foreign companies in the 1990s, there has been an increase in competition (Hardy et al, 2018 2010). The market operates on the notion of ‘survival of the fittest’. To effectively attract audiences, advertisers enlist celebrities to promote goods and services.

Celebrity endorsement is a common tool used by advertisers to increase brand recognition as well as influence purchase intentions and behaviors (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). Additionally, celebrity endorsements can also provide brands with a competitive advantage over other organizations; celebrities are a means to make a product stand out amidst the competition (Erdogan, 1999)

Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang (2009), argues that India is a very celebrity driven culture, celebrities within India enjoy greater power and have more influence over people compared to countries that are not as celebrity driven. This celebrity culture can also be seen in advertising,

where celebrities appear in 24% of the advertisements in India while in the US celebrities appear in 14% of the advertisements. Movie actors and cricketers appear most often in advertisements featuring celebrities in India, however, advertisements also feature other celebrities including athletes, television actors, politicians, models, popstars and fictional characters (Khatri, 2006). Indian celebrities often endorse more than one brand/product such as actor Shah Rukh Khan who endorses over 40 brands, including cosmetics such as *Fair and Handsome* (Patra & Datta, 2010).

While celebrities provide brand recognition, there are also downsides. Hiring celebrities to endorse a product can come with a hefty price; in addition, celebrities can overshadow the product or brand (Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang, 2009). When the focus is completely on the celebrity and not on the brand/product, consumers fail to recognize brands and advertisers fail to elicit purchasing behaviors in the consumer (Erdogan, 1999). Furthermore, using celebrities can be counterproductive when the image of the celebrity does not match with the vision of the brand or the narrative of the advertisement (Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang, 2009). However, the use of celebrities in Indian advertisements cannot go unnoticed, this will become clear in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 2.4: Theories and Concepts

In addition to providing insights into what colorism entails, this sub-chapter will highlight the particular concepts and theories informing this thesis. This includes exploring skin color bias and discrimination within India. Moreover, media theories will be explained highlighting the importance of why media content such as advertising should be critically studied.

### *Chapter 2.4.1: Colorism and Discrimination*

The underlying topic of the thesis is the concept of colorism. Scholars also use the terms ‘shadeism’ and ‘color stratification’ when referring to colorism. All three terms signify discrimination based on skin color (Hunter, 2007). As argued by Hunter (2007; 2013), discrimination is broken down on two levels; firstly, it occurs at the racial level, which includes labels such as Africans, Asians or Latinos. At the second level, there is specific focus on the

skin tone of a person and the changing attitudes and behavior people have towards people with different skin tones (Hunter, 2007). This second level of discrimination is labelled colorism.

When considering India, Indians with a lighter skin tone would face less discrimination when compared to Indians with a darker skin tone (Utley & Darity, 2016). It was further argued by Hunter (2007; 2013), that individuals with a lighter skin tone fared better in different phases of life such as finding a job or getting married. Importantly, colorism affects both men and women; however, women tend to face more discrimination as they are required to be ‘beautiful’ at all times, whereas for men, the presence of a good job or high incomes levels can excuse the fact that they do not have a lighter skin tone (Liebelt et al. 2018).

Hunter (2002) argues that lighter skin may equal higher social capital. Social capital is hypothetical entity that can be used across many aspects in life such as education, housing, status and prestige (Hunter, 2002). She mentions that for women, lighter skin is a form of social capital. This is because lighter skin is equated with beauty, which for women is capital. However, this is not always the case, there are other contributing factors such as economics, status and class which can hinder social capital (Reay, 2004) Social capital will aid women, as they can convert that to educational capital, economic capital or some other form of capital. The social capital that Hunter explains is based on the work of Bourdieu’s different types of capital (Reay, 2004). Apart from social capital there is economic capital (Reay, 2004). It refers to the wealth that one inherits, however, given the caste system mentioned earlier, many cannot climb up the ladder. People who are lower in the caste system hierarchy for generations, face more problems in gaining more economic capital. For these reasons, colorism is an integral concept to consider. Moreover, such a concept can help in explaining why the market share for skin lightening brands in India is so high.

Li et al. (2018), argue that classism and racism has built organically over many generations, however, titles and classification of terms has been added artificially by people of power. Ethnicity was seen a marker to differentiate between people. Mass media heightened the differences between different groups and western media such as Hollywood productions depicted people with darker skin as ‘dirty’ and ‘evil’, while they portrayed people with lighter skin as ‘morally pure’. Li et al. (2018), further argue that such depictions became internalized in non-white communities where people associated ‘light’ or ‘fair’ skin with ‘privilege’.

#### *Chapter 2.4.2: Why Study Media and Advertising?*

Advertising is a powerful media form and a key component of the economics in media (Gill, 2007). Advertising is pervasive, and the influence or impact of advertising on people is done on a sub-conscious level (Kilbourne, 2014). Images in advertising are fake, they are altered and create standards that are impossible to meet; however, people still compare themselves to these impossible standards which takes a toll on their self-esteem (Kilbourne, 2014; Liebelt et al, 2018). Therefore, critically engaging with advertisements and comprehending the underlying messages embedded in them is imperative.

To further highlight why it is important to study media content, consider the term mediascape, coined by Arjun Appadurai (1990) which refers to how the images individuals have of the world are created by the media content they consume. This entails that media content is critical as individuals build their understanding of the world through the media. When certain ideologies are repeated over and over again through the media, they become the norm (Gill, 2007, Ringrow, 2016). Cosmetic advertising constantly tells individuals that something is wrong with them which must be fixed (Gill, 2007). Similar messages which come from different sources all converge creating an image for the individual.

The work of Appadurai suggests that media shapes society, through creating media content such as advertisements which reinforce the idea that light skin is more desirable (Glenn, 2008; Hussein 2010). However, the problem of skin color bias is not new, rather there is a long history of bias in India. Thus, while media may shape society, it should be considered that society also shapes the media (Couldry, 2012). Glenn (2008) argues that advertisers promote pre-existing ideologies through advertisements. There is a deep intertwined relation between media and society (Couldry, 2012); this thesis will focus on media content and analyze what themes and patterns are being disseminated through the advertising of skin lightening products.

The final concept that is essential to this thesis is Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Glenn, 2008; Ringrow, 2016) when discussing mainstream mass media. The concept of hegemony refers to the dominant group within a given society (Ringrow, 2016). Their status is maintained through discourses passed through institutions such as mass media where their ideologies can be reinforced within a given socio-economic context. Within advertising, ideologies on gender norms, and ideal body types are constantly echoed through images and language. Ringrow continues arguing that ideologies set in media content cannot exist in isolation, rather there is a relationship between hegemonic and non-hegemonic ideas which are competing against each

other. In essence, while ideas exist outside of the discourse, the discourse itself is still critical in shaping norm and creating understanding.

### Chapter 2.5: To be ‘Fair & Lovely’ - Skin Lightening Products in India

“The notion of beauty is socially constructed and its meanings are changed and maintained by social forces” (Li et al, 2008, p. 448). In India, skin color plays a vital role in determining whether a person is considered ‘beautiful’ (Liebelt et al, 2018). Advertisements of skin lightening products is not a mere response to the pre-existing idea that light skin equates to beauty, rather it is reinforcing such ideals (Glenn, 2008). Glenn (2008) argues that advertising of skin lightening products depicts stories that encapsulate the notion if viewing dark skin as a handicap or burden, a burden that can be lifted through using skin lightening products. However, before delving into the discourse of skin lightening products in India, it is important to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

Hussein (2010) has argued the use of lighter skin models in contemporary mass media to promote products has become the norm. As indicated in various sections of this chapter, mass media is a contributing factor to how individuals view themselves and how they perceive beauty. Moreover, advertisers tend to lean towards Caucasian models when promoting beauty products in Africa and Asia, which is not very representative of the general population (Hussein, 2010).

Lighter skin has become a beauty standard in South Asia, as it has been linked to self-esteem, beauty and success (Glenn, 2008; Li et al, 2008). Hunter (2002), argues that people with lighter skin tones tend to have higher self-esteem. Additionally, beauty standards tend to privilege ‘whiteness’ and degrade ‘blackness’ (Hunter, 2007). Moreover, skin tone can also be linked to marriage as well. Dowry is illegal in India, yet it plays a significant role in the marriageability of women (Utley & Darity, 2016). It is believed that a dowry can compensate for any ‘shortcomings’ a woman might have. However, in the case of a darker skinned woman, the dowry would not be enough. The desire for a lighter skinned bride can further be seen in matrimonial postings, where skin color plays a vital role (Utley & Darity, 2016). Hussein (2010, p. 412) indicated that a dropdown menu for skin preference was included in four of the leading matrimonial websites. These included “very fair, fair, wheatish, dark and no preference”.

Skin lightening products are readily available in India, add to that the years of conditioning through media and society, this has created a society where the beauty norm has become light skin and where dark skin is seen as a ‘problem’ and ‘burden’ (Parameswaran and Cardoza, 2009). This belief that dark skin is a problem is worrying to say the least. The products contain substances that can be harmful for the skin (Jose & Ray, 2018). In most situations, consumers are unaware of the psychical risks involved with using skin lightening products (Parameswaran and Cardoza, 2009). Advertisers use scientific discourse to mislead consumers and build a trusting bond between the brand and consumer (Parameswaran and Cardoza, 2009). Advertisers further present the product as a means to transform from a ‘dull’ life to one where individuals would get their ‘dream job’, ‘attention’, ‘relationships’, ‘happiness’ and more (Glenn, 2008).

To conclude this chapter, the argument is not that advertising is the only reason for colorism to exist in India today. There is a long history of skin color bias in India (Nadeem, 2014). However, advertisements are a critical component of the media system and do sell messages both explicitly and implicitly, which individuals cannot fight all the time (Gill, 2007; Kaur, Arumugam, & Yunus, 2013; Kilbourne 2014). Advertisements of skin lightening products in India constantly reinforce the idea that light skin should be a goal; as a person who has dark skin will not enjoy the same benefits, they will not have the same social capital, they will not get a good partner, they will not be empowered, and they will not be happy (Parameswaran and Cardoza, 2009).

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

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Critical Discourse Analysts sought to develop methods and theory that could better capture [the] this interrelationship [between language, power and ideology] and especially to draw out and describe the practices and conventions in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investment.

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Machin & Mayr (p.4, 2012)

This chapter will explain the research design of this project. As the above quote suggests, this thesis will conduct a critical discourse analysis to examine the advertisements for skin lightening products in India. Chapter 3.1 will clarify why a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was chosen for this thesis. Additionally, an explanation of CDA will be provided, ending with an argument of why CDA is the most appropriate method in light of the research question. Section 3.2 concerns the data collection process. In this section, an explanation will be provided into the selection process for identifying skin lightening brands in India. In addition, the section will provide justification for the selected sample and will explain what platforms the advertisements were collected from such as *YouTube* and *Facebook*. Finally, in Section 3.3 a detailed plan is provided as to how the sample was studied.

### Chapter 3.1: Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a research tool through which one can study the manner in which social power is exercised through language (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffri, 2015). Language is viewed as a form of social practice, in the sense that language in any form is a communicative event. CDA can be split into three categories, otherwise called dimensions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Machin and Mayr elaborate on the three dimensions as follows: the first dimension is ‘text’, which can include written text, speech, images, or a combination of the three. Within the context of this thesis, ‘text’ refers to the advertisement for skin lightening products, where the focus was on written and spoken words as well as the moving images constituting the video. The second dimension is ‘discursive practice’, which refers to the production process involved in creating content, where the aim is to decipher what companies

or organizations are trying to convey. For this thesis, the purpose is to understand what these skin lightening brands are trying to achieve other than sales and profits through their advertising. The questions to ask are (1) what the intention may be behind a particular campaign, (2) why the campaign is set-up in a given manner, and (3) what the intention of the brand may be. The discursive practice dimension enables the researcher to go a level deeper into the analysis than the textual level and uncover implicit ideas that are present in the sample. In order to conduct the second level of analysis, the official platforms for the skin lightening products will be studied. These official platforms include the official website or other social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*, where these brands communicate their vision for the product.

The third and final dimension in what is ‘social practice’. At this level, one moves from a micro-level of analysis to a macro-level of analysis (McLoughlin, 2017). This dimension is the critical analytical component of a critical discourse analysis and distinguishes it from a discourse analysis. Within the context of this thesis, the literature analyzed in Chapter 2 provides a macro-level understanding of Indian beauty standards, the discourse of cosmetic advertising and the ideologies surrounding skin color in India. The social practice dimension demands the researcher to pose questions such as what ideologies are being communicated through the advertisements and question what it means to have a lighter skin tone in India (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Referring back to the quote presented at the beginning of Chapter 3, CDA attempts to comprehend the interrelationship between language, power and ideology (*ibid*, p. 4). Through the third dimension, one can understand how media content such as advertising can aid in reinforcing hegemonic ideas (Ringrow, 2016), as well as help create how individuals view the world (Appadurai, 1990).

The reason for selecting CDA as the method of analysis for this thesis lies in the research question. In an attempt to understand how skin lightening products have been marketed which enables one to understand ideals that are promoted through the advertising, CDA provides the necessary tools to unravel ideas embedded in media content (McLoughlin, 2017). On a micro-level, one can understand how the advertisements are constructed and what themes can be determined. However, through adding the critical aspect to the discourse analysis, one can take a step further by studying these advertisements through the social and political lens of India (McLoughlin, 2017). CDA allows one to study data at two levels making it the ideal tool for this thesis.

Referring to the quote by Machin and Mayr (2012) presented at the beginning of this chapter, the added value of using CDA as a tool of analysis lies in its ability to consider the

‘political and ideological investment’ of content. This is vital when considering the research question which is investigating how skin lightening products have been marketed in India over the past five years, where there is the opportunity to consider what it means to have a lighter skin tone in India. Furthermore, CDA allows a study of “the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015, p.466). This thesis aims to understand the social power abuse and inequality that is being reproduced through the advertisements of skin lightening products. Additionally, CDA focuses on the ways discursive structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power abuse (dominance) in society (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015). The advantages of using CDA are many in the quest to unravel ideologies embedded in media content, however, being aware of the disadvantages will provide the results more gravitas.

First, when referring to the second dimension of ‘discursive practice’ one must be aware that at times it may not be possible to contact the content creator or producer to question them about the intentions behind the ‘text’. In the circumstance that one is able to contact the producer, one cannot be sure if they are being truthful about their motives, businesses can also be vague about their goals behind their content. However, by providing a detailed account of how results are obtained, by being transparent, this disadvantage can be avoided to a certain extent (Widdowson, 2008).

CDA is an interpretive manner of analysis, with much of the burden falling on the knowledge and understanding the researcher has obtained from personal experiences and previous literature. As opposed to quantitative studies where it is more likely that concrete answers are provided, this qualitative approach is open and interested in the interpretation of the researcher based on social context and knowledge of previous literature. Moreover, when considering the third dimension, ‘social practice’, one must be informed on the background of the research topic (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this case, one must have knowledge about India, the history of beauty standards in India, and how advertising for skin lightening products could be perceived by the audience given the social landscape.

Despite the limitations of using CDA, this is still the most suited method of analysis for this paper. As a researcher of Indian origin, I understand both Hindi and English, this is an advantage as I can study the advertisements which use either language or a combination of them. Additionally, there may be nuances within the advertisements that an individual who is not familiar with India might miss.

Finally, throughout Chapter 2, discussions on the perception of skin color in India were presented, which clearly highlighted that a lighter skin tone is preferable within Indian culture and that people with a darker skin tone would face more bias (Glenn, 2008; Li et al, 2008). However, many of the arguments presented in Chapter 2 were published a few years ago. CDA in combination with analyzing advertisements released between 2013 and 2018 enable this thesis to investigate what explicit and implicit messages have been promoted in more recent times, further enabling one to compare and contrast the findings to those presented in Chapter 2.5.

To summarize, CDA as a tool of analysis enables one to go a step deeper into the analysis than a discourse analysis. CDA provides the opportunity to investigate hegemonic ideas disseminated in media under a social and political context. Furthermore, this thesis analyzes a sample that is more recent compared to Glenn (2008), Li et al (2008), Hussein (2010), and Nadeem (2014), therefore, it is possible to see if the same ideologies hold true now as they did a few years ago.

## Chapter 3.2: Data Collection

This section outlines the sampling process and explains why this thesis uses purposive sampling. Additionally, an inclusion criteria will be presented, these criteria will indicate the characteristics and requirements an advertisement must meet so that it can be included in the sample. This section will further elaborate on how the advertisements were located through explaining the research process.

To start this section, the first question that needs to be addressed is why this thesis uses purposive sampling. Bryman (2016) argues that within qualitative research, researchers commonly use purposive sampling when collecting their sample to analyze. This allows the researcher to collect a sample that would be most suited to answer the research question. The research question mentions that this thesis will study advertisements produced for the Indian audience, between 2013 and 2018. However, there are other factors to consider such as the language of the advertisement, or the target market. As the advertisements needed to fall within a certain parameter, purposive sampling was used. To build a sample that would answer the research question an inclusion criteria was built, this will be presented in Chapter 3.2.3, as the first step in collecting the sample was searching for the sample.

### *Chapter 3.2.1: Searching for the Sample*

The first step in identifying potential advertisements included investigating what products were available on the Indian market. This occurred on three levels, the first step was monitoring Indian television to see what advertisements were aired. The second step was searching on online retailers such as *Amazon India* and *Flipkart*. The terms ‘fairness cream’, ‘fairness’, ‘fairness cream for men’ and ‘fairness cream for women’, were entered to gain insights into what types of products were classified as having some form of skin lightening effects. In addition, online platforms also provided the option to sort through the website by providing a menu (see Chapter 2.2.1). Through using the pre-provided classification already present on the website, it could be seen how online retailers would categorize products. The fact that ‘skin lightening’ or ‘fairness’ is already an existing category is informative of how easy it is for individuals to purchase skin lightening product online. The last method of investigation was examining the websites of supermarkets such as *Big Bazaar* and *Hypercity* to see what products they sold within the fairness cream category. Moreover, upon visiting a *Big Bazaar* branch in Mumbai, the fairness cream section in the personal care aisle was studied (see chapter 2.2.1). The supermarket stocked, day creams, night creams, BB creams and facewashes within the fairness cream section and all the products were for women. The products stocked in the aisle belonged to many brands including *Fair & Lovely*, *Ponds*, *Garnier*, *Lotus*, *Himalaya*, *BoroPlus* and *Lakmé*. A full list of skin lightening products studied in this thesis can be found in Appendix A, furthermore, details about the sample will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.3. After having identified what skin lightening products were available in India, the next step was look for advertisements for the products.

### *Chapter 3.2.2: Collecting the Sample*

The television advertisements for skin lightening products (see Appendix A for full list) were collected from the official channels of the brands and/or products in question. There were certain instances where the specific product had its own official *YouTube* channel, such as *Ponds India* for women and *Ponds Men India* for men. Alternatively, there were also instances in which the specific product did not have its own official channel; rather all the products of the brand shared one official channel such as *Garnier India*. Here the term ‘official channel’ refers to the official website or social media platforms including *Facebook* and *YouTube*.

The presence of the verification badge on the social media platforms was used to confirm the authenticity of the platform. In the event that the verification badge was not present, the official website of the product/brand was investigated to see if it provided a link to their social media platforms. If this was the case, then the social media platform could be used to collect advertisements for the sample. The fact that the sample is collected from an official platform of the brand is critical which leads to building an inclusion criteria that provides further guidelines to what advertisements can and cannot be included in the sample.

Before discussing the inclusion criteria, it is important to consider the sub-research question which aims to compare the advertisements for female products against male products. To conduct a fruitful comparison between female and male products, enough advertisements had to be located to discern what the prominent themes in the advertisements are for female products and male products. The problem lies in the fact that there are more products on the market that cater to a female audience, thus there is more variety in terms of how many brands can be used. Nonetheless, there is data in terms of products and advertising dedicated to the male audience to provide insight into common advertising tactics used which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.3. Having located platforms from which the advertisements could be found, the final step in collecting the sample was to compare the advertisements to the inclusion criteria.

### *Chapter 3.2.3: Inclusion Criteria*

There were certain requirements that had to be met for an advertisement to be included in the sample. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2.2, the advertisements must be obtained from an official source to ensure that the sample represents the products/brands authentically. In addition to the authenticity criteria, there are a few other conditions that should be met.

First, the advertisement must be intended for the Indian audience. Therefore, official Indian channels of the products/brands were reviewed, for example *Garnier India* was studied as opposed to *Garnier*. While it did not matter if the parent company is not Indian, such as with *Fair & Lovely* being owned by *Unilever*, however it is important that the advertisements are meant for the Indian audience. Second, the advertisements must fall under the time parameter of the research question. Advertisements must be released between January 2013 and December 2018. The third condition is that the advertisements must either be in English or Hindi, this is because the researcher is most comfortable in these languages and may miss out

on certain nuances in other languages. More importantly Hindi and English among the most widely spoken languages in India (Khilnani, 2004). Fourth, the sample must include advertisements for products which have some skin lightening properties. As indicated in Chapter 2.2.1, there are fewer products aimed at men than at women. To increase the sample size, especially for male products, other options had to be considered. It was not enough just to focus on skin lightening creams, hence, the decision was made to include products such as facewash. However, for advertisements for products such as facewash to be considered, the product must have some form of skin lightening. When all the mentioned conditions are met, an advertisement can be included in the sample.

### Chapter 3.3: The Sample

To study how skin lightening products have been advertised in India between 2013 and 2018, a total of 102 video advertisements were analyzed which promoted products targeted at either men or women. While there was a higher number of advertisements targeting the female market, the sample for male products were examined until saturation was reached, revealing prominent patterns and themes. It should be noted that to increase the sample size, especially for products targeting the male market, advertising of different products was included, therefore the sample was not limited to advertisements of creams, rather products such as face wash were also included. However, when including them, there had to be some aspect of skin lightening to the product as discussed in Chapter 3.2.3. This was achieved through studying the specifications of the product and determining if the product passed the inclusion criterion. Figure 6 shows the gender distribution in the advertisements collected for the sample.

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Total number of advertisements</b>	77	25	102

*Figure 6: Sample distribution*

In Figure 7, the gender distribution in the advertisements collected for the sample over the years is presented. The shape of the graph provides some insight to answering the sub-research question by indicating that over the years there has been an increase in advertisements, this is supported by a CNN report which stated that in the following 5 years, the sales of skin

lightening products are predicted to increase. The advertisements released for female products increased every passing year till 2015 and saw a decline in both 2016 and 2018. The advertisements released for male products also rose till 2015 and stayed the same for 2016 before declining in 2017. However, for both male and female products, there is an increase in advertisements released in 2018 compared to 2013.

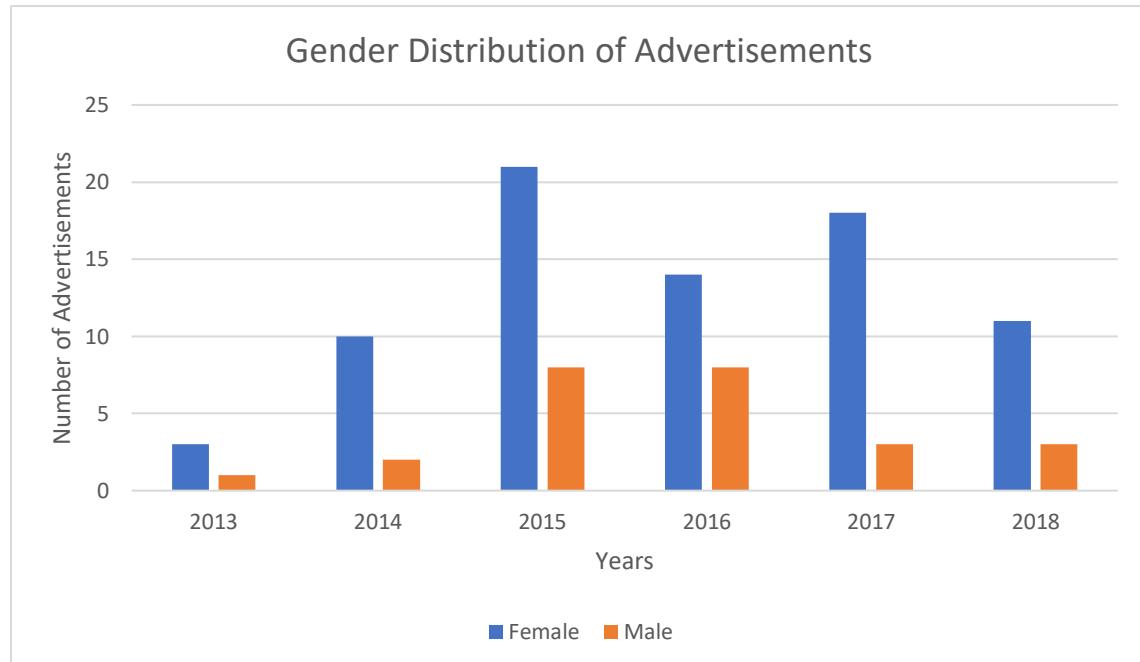


Figure 7: Gender Distribution of Advertisements between 2013 – 2018

The decline in published advertisements could be attributed to many reasons such as the fact that the sample only contains a portion of advertisements released, many more products were identified. However, as the advertisements did not meet the inclusion criterion they could not be included. Without any other information it would not be possible to determine the cause in the decline of advertisements. Another possible reason for the decline in advertisements could be due to the ‘Dark is Beautiful’ campaign. A campaign that began in 2009, with the mission to “draw attention to the unjust effects of skin colour bias, shaped by societal attitudes and reinforced by media messages that are corroding the self-worth of countless people, young and old” (Dark is Beautiful, 2019). Figure 8, taken from the campaign website indicates some of the steps the campaigners have taken over the years to combat skin color bias, this is perhaps a contributing factor in the decline of advertisements.



Figure 8: Celebrating 10 years of the Dark is Beautiful campaign. (2019)

In 2013, a petition was started against Shah Rukh Khan – an Indian actor who endorses in the *Fair and Handsome* – and *Fair and Handsome*. In 2014, this same petition was sent to *Emami* (Parent company of *Fair and Handsome*). In 2016, the Dark is Beautiful *Facebook* page reached 50,000 followers, and the campaign was able to spread to South Africa. While it is difficult to prove a relationship between an increase in awareness campaigns or activism and a decrease in advertising, the campaign has found space within the mediascape. The relationship between activism and advertising warrants further investigation (Edwards, 2000), however, this does not fit within the scope of this thesis, thus could be a topic to consider for future studies.

Going back to the sample, Figure 9 further elaborates on how the sample was distributed with regards to the parent companies. The sample included products from internationally recognized parent companies such as *Unilever* and *Procter & Gamble*, as well as Indian

companies such as *Emami* and *Dabur India Ltd*. The sample consists of advertisements for 47 products belonging to 11 brands and seven parent companies.

This sample shows that *Unilever* controls a large portion of the market share, taking up 53.2%. *Unilever* owns *Fair & Lovely* (both for men and women), *Ponds* (both for men and women) and *Lakmé*. While *Procter & Gamble* is a large corporation, the sample only includes one brand, namely *Olay*, which is a contributing factor for the lower percentage. Moreover, Figure 7 is not indicative of the whole market; there are many products such as *White Tone Face Cream*, which could not be included in the sample as they did not meet one or more of the criteria (see Chapter 3.2.3). Therefore, Figure 7 should be considered within the context of the sample of this thesis and not as indicative of the whole market.

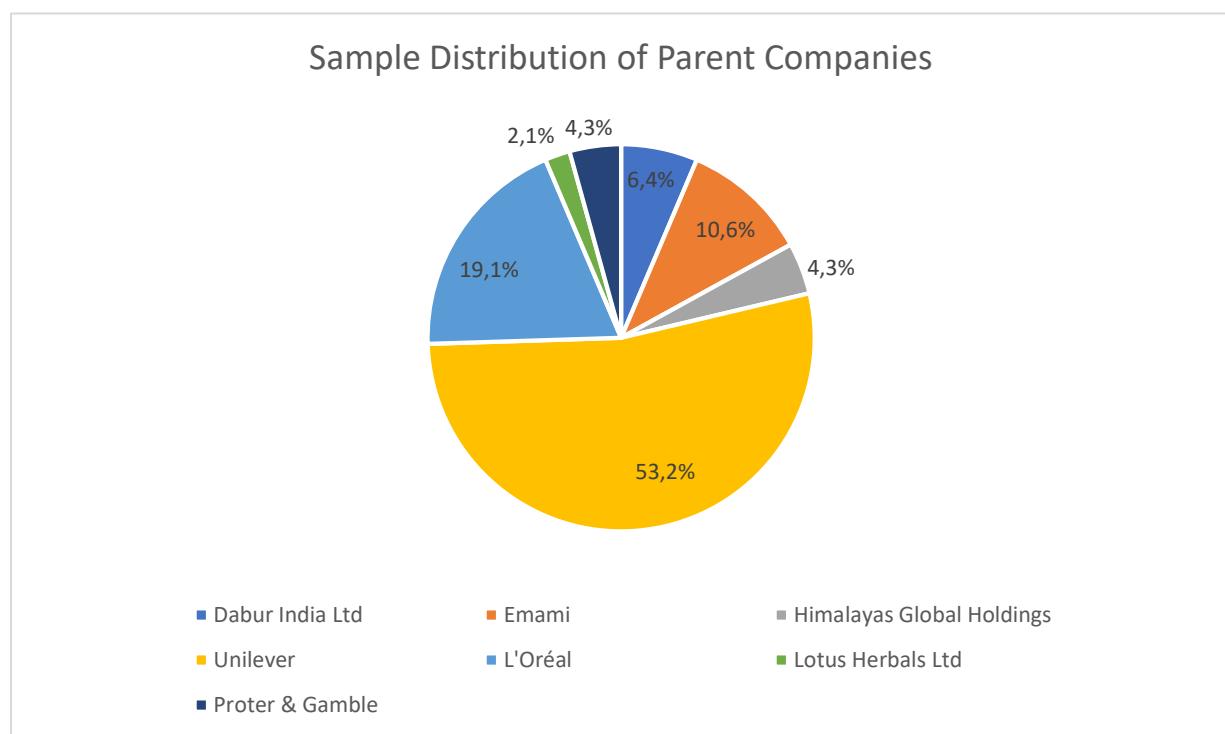


Figure 9: Distribution of parent companies in the sample

## Chapter 3.4: Data Analysis

Once the sample was collated, the analytical process began. This process was largely inspired by the work of Arthur Asa Berger (2016). His chapter on image advertising outlined a detailed plan on how to apply a multimodal critical discourse analysis in advertising. However, some modifications had to be made to his step by step plan to better suit this thesis. Berger's work provided a step by step questions list in how multimodal critical discourse

analysis could be applied to images such as posters and billboards. Nevertheless, as this thesis examined television advertisements using the three levels of analysis described by McLoughlin (2017), some changes were made to Berger's model.

Berger's model provided a question list that needed to be answered in a particular order, however, in this thesis the questions were rearranged to better suit the three levels of analysis for CDA. In addition, Berger's model focuses on still images, posing questions on axial balance and symmetry in the image, which is not relevant in this thesis, hence were omitted. Furthermore, Berger's model asks about 'camera angles', 'shadows', 'blank spaces', 'color' and 'scale of the product in comparison to other objects present in the image', these points did not contribute to answering the research question, therefore were removed in this thesis.

In addition to removing questions, some questions were rearranged. For example, asking what product being advertised was and who the target market was appear much later in Berger's model, however, these questions appear earlier in this thesis. Moreover, additional questions were added to analyze the sample for this thesis, such as if celebrities were present (Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang, 2009).

While the work of Berger (2016) provided a foundation to the analysis, modifications had to be made to ensure that the analysis would answer the research question. To make a more informed decision on the modifications, the work by Li, Min and Belk, (2008); Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang (2009); Machin and Mayr (2012); Tannen, Hamilton, and Schiffrian (2015); Ringrow, (2016) and Utley and Darity, (2016) was studied which provided additional information on how to analyze moving images and cosmetic advertising.

As outlined in Chapter 3.1, there are three levels of analysis in CDA. As part of the first level, or the textual level, advertisements were examined on a surface level. The aim at this stage was to comprehend what is being presented. To understand what was being presented, a few questions were formulated. First it was important to recognize what product was being marketed and to whom it was being advertised to (Berger, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). The next question to be posed was what 'action' was taking place in the advertisement, breaking down the narrative of the advertisement and questioning the context in which the product presented (Berger, 2016; Li, Min, Belk, 2008; Utley & Darity, 2016). In addition, the language of the advertisement should be questioned, what arguments are being presented to the audience, and how does that compare to what the producers are saying (Berger, 2016; McLoughlin, 2017)?

Additional to the language and product, advertisers add other characteristics which are important in building the advertisement, such as characters and celebrities. Hence, the question

asked was whether a celebrity was present in the advertisement. If it was the case that a celebrity was present, then additional research was conducted into the celebrity and the brand. Investigation into what the celebrity is known for had to be conducted to understand what presence of the celebrity may entail (Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang, 2009). Moreover, the ‘characters’ of the advertisement had to be considered, what was their body language, gender, professional relations and fashion choices. Did the characters interact with each other, did they look into the camera (Berger, 2016)? An additional important question to ask is whether or not a shade card was provided, or a before and after image to indicate the transformation from using the product. The shade card is a component of the problem-solution model indicating transformation (Li, Min, Belk, 2008; Ringrow, 2016). In the first phase of the analysis, it was important to breakdown the advertisement on a surface level, as it gave an indication of what was being presented to the audience.

To conduct the second level of analysis where the aim was to decode how ideologies were represented, the intention of the campaign had to be analyzed. What does the producer intend to communicate through the advertisement? To understand the intent there were two points for further analyses, first the description available under the *YouTube* video, and second, any information present about the brand/product on the official website. The task was to check what the ideologies of the brands were; what were they promoting (McLoughlin, 2017)?

At the third and final level of analysis, the aim was to understand what the results meant within the context of India, what does the discourse of the advertisements mean, what do the results mean in the social and political climate. This was the point to consider what ideologies were being reproduced through the advertising. To support this thesis the questions to consider are as follows: what values and beliefs are to be seen in advertising (Berger, 2016)? ‘Success’, ‘marriage’, ‘happiness’, ‘age’, ‘bad vs good skin’ are some of the examples of values and beliefs highlighted in the literature (Li, Min, Belk, 2008; Utley & Darity, 2016). Finally, once the before-mentioned questions were answered, the themes could be determined, and a coding scheme was built (Berger, 2016).

The three levels of analysis highlight that this thesis takes both a deductive and inductive manner of analysis. Through conducting CDA the advertisements are examined through theories and concepts that were previously researched. However, one is not limited to the concepts, in the case that there are characteristics which become prominent as a result of the analysis, they should be given importance in Chapter 4. Hence the results will be derived from the sample through the literature and from the sample without the literature.

The framework for analysis was initially applied to a sub-sample of 16 advertisements. This sub-sample contained a balance of all the brands from the entire sample. This would ensure that potentially different styles of advertisements could be analyzed within the sub-sample. Moreover, these 16 advertisements would form the base of the coding scheme, to which additions were made based on the analysis of the remaining 86 advertisements. Further analysis was carried out until saturation was reached, where no more categories could be added to the coding scheme. This coding scheme was then revised through creating major categories, sub-categories and when needed sub-sub-categories.

To conclude, the three levels of analysis was initially applied to 16 advertisements. Using the findings from the initial sample an initial coding scheme was created. The coding scheme was then modified based on analysis conducted on the remainder of the sample. More information about the sample can be found in Chapter 3.3 The findings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

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“20, 30, 40. At every age we deserve perfect skin.

Skin Perfect from L'Oréal Paris, the first range of three creams customized for three ages. Inspired by 10 years of research, whitening + powerful skin actives, goes beyond whitening to reduce imperfections in your twenties, fine lines in your thirties, wrinkles in your forties. Three ages, three creams.

For young radiant skin, perfect. Choose the one for you.

Skin Perfect from L'Oréal Paris, ₹ 99 onwards.

Because we are worth it.”

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Skin Perfect L'Oréal Paris (2015)

As presented in the above quote, *L'Oréal Paris* promises a product that will give consumers the ‘perfect white skin tone’ that they have always desired. The emphasis on the decade of research and ‘powerful skin actives’ which provides the perfect look is one of many examples in the sample that emphasize the use of science to promote the product (Ringrow, 2016) this will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4.1.2.3. Apart from the discourse on science, brands present what deem to be ‘good skin’, this is another tactic that advertisers use when promoting a product (Gill, 2007). As this chapter progresses more themes and tactics will be displayed.

In this chapter, the results of the analysis are presented. The results are outlined and discussed to understand the “interrelationship between language, power and ideology” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4). In essence this chapter answers three questions, namely what themes are being presented, how are these themes being presented, and what do these themes mean (McLoughlin, 2017).

### Chapter 4.1: Findings

To aid the critical discourse analysis of advertisements, a coding scheme was formed (see Appendix D). This coding scheme outlines categories that were extracted from the sample. The investigation of advertisements yielded three major categories that could be further broken down into more sub-categories and, in some cases, sub-sub-categories. More information on

the categories can be found in the sections to follow, and the full version of the coding scheme can be found in Appendix D.

The following sub-chapters of this thesis are dedicated to the three major categories that were discovered as a result of the research. The first major category to be identified from the sample was labeled as ‘problems/solutions.’ The problems/solutions category highlights the socially constructed problems that individuals could be facing as well as the solutions the products offer. The problem/solution theme has been explored by scholars such as Ringrow (2016) who argues that cosmetic brands often use this method in advertising to highlight how the product itself can be the solution to the problems the consumer is facing. The second category, titled ‘the product’, emphasizes the benefits of the product listed in the advertisements as opposed to listing the product as a solution. The third category, labelled ‘gender’, proved to be the biggest category. This is a different type of category as the category presents the differences and similarities of advertisements for female products and advertisements for male products, moreover, this category is informative in answering the sub-research question, where the aim is to see how advertisers promote skin lightening products to men and women. The gender category includes further sub-categories of themes that were most prominent, for example, advertisements for female products included a lot of tutorials which was not the case for male products. To further distinguish how prevalent some of the sub-categories are for female advertising against male advertising please refer to Appendix E. This table will be further discussed in the sub-chapters to follow.

#### *Chapter 4.1.1: Problem/Solution*

The problem-solution format was a recurring theme in the sample which could immediately be identified, given that this is a common tactic used by cosmetic brands (Ringrow, 2016). The category highlights the problems that individuals face according to the advertisers (Gill, 2007). Moreover, the advertisements also emphasize what is considered to be ‘good’ skin, through words such as “smooth, young, pore-less, line-free, bright, transparent, white, full, and fine” (Li, Min & Belk, 2008, p. 446). Problems, or ‘bad’ skin, are indicted by words such as “fine lines, wrinkles, aging marks, pores, or yellow spots, and skin that is dark, scratchy, dry, dull, loose, or rough” (Li, Min & Belk 2008, p. 446). Both the quotes by Li et al (2008) indicate how advertisers construct what they consider is ‘good and ‘bad’ skin, this is problematic as these words confine or restrict ideals of what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’.

Moreover, Li et al. (2008) mention that 'good' skin includes the word 'white' and 'bad' skin includes the word 'dark', which can create problematic ideologies.

Going back to the problem/solution format, Ringrow (2016), proposes that problems can be broken down into three sections, (1) 'fragmentation' in which the body becomes fragmented to point out each individual problem, such as dull skin and dark circles. (2) indicating problems with other options such as home remedies or rival products and (3) blaming external factors for the 'problem' such as dark skin due to sun exposure.

After conducting the analysis on the sample, three problems and one solution was identified. Ringrow's (2016), third problem, 'lifestyle and environment' were two of the prominent problems identified in the sample and labeled as 'pollution' and 'weather'. Ringrow's (2016), first problem, 'fragmented aspect of appearance', enabled the identification of the third problem within the sample and was labeled as 'skin problems'. There was one solution which was the product itself giving people the desired results, namely 'light skin'.

At the beginning of this chapter, when the main categories were presented, 'the product' was introduced as a separate main category. Ringrow (2016) would argue that this belongs to the second problem she identifies in her book 'rival products'. However, within the context of this thesis, 'the product' became its own major category, because 'the product' encapsulated much more than just 'rival products'. Under 'the product', many more themes were identified as a result of inductive analysis, advertisers did not merely point out that 'rival products' were worse, they also focused on the benefits of the product by introducing a variety of other arguments which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4.1.2. In the following sub-chapter, the 'problems' of the problems/solutions category will be discussed.

#### Chapter 4.1.1.1: The Problems

Through analyzing the sample, three 'problems' could be identified, namely 'pollution', 'weather', and 'skin problems.' Discourse about pollution occurred in 22.5% (N=23) of the advertisements which includes 14.3% (N=11) for female products and 48% (N=12) for male products). As will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4.1.3, advertisers use different methods when advertising cosmetic products to men and women (Gill, 2007). Discourse on pollution is common in advertising cosmetic products to men as it shifts the 'problems' to external factors such as pollution in this case, creating a safe space for men to purchase such products (Harrison, 2008). Pollution in the sample was denoted through words such as 'dust', 'dirt' and 'traffic' as well as the visual representation of pollution. The mention

of pollution was more prevalent in advertising for male products, which was often accompanied with visuals of motorbikes, jeeps, sand, and dry mountainous regions as depicted in Figure 10.



Figure 10: Fair & Lovely Men Fairness Cream 00:00:20 (2015)<sup>2</sup>

In the advertising for men, pollution would maintain a balance between city pollution and outdoor lifestyle pollution as depicted in Figure 8, however, in the advertising for women, the discourse on pollution mainly referred to the busy city life and how that can cause ‘problems’ for the skin. For the female products, there was only one advertisement that discussed pollution under the context of an outdoor lifestyle with similar characteristics of male products, and that was *BoroPlus Healthy White Fairness Cream*. This advertisement stood out as it was the only advertisement challenging traditional gender roles, which will be further addressed in Chapter 4.1.3. Advertisers for cosmetic brands targeting men need to tread a fine line between maintaining traditional ideals of masculinity and promoting a cosmetic product (Harrison, 2008), in the sample, advertisements for men feature characters that are more ‘outdoorsy’ or ‘sporty’ to keep in line with traditional ideals of masculinity.

The next problem identified in the advertisements was labelled weather, where advertisers use weather conditions such as summer and winter to promote the product. Arguments such as ‘cold winter drying out the skin’ or ‘harsh sun leaving dark spots’ were presented. Both pollution and weather promote the idea that there are external forces which

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8iAUNTYCfw>

contribute to the ‘skin problems’ that individuals face (Ringrow, 2016). Advertisers used the backdrop of weather conditions 23.5% (N=24) of the time. The backdrop of weather occurred in 18.2% (N=14) of the advertisements for female products and 40% (N=10) of the advertisements for male products. Examples of how advertisers use the weathers include blaming the weather as *Ponds* does by saying that “the tough and harsh sun can cause sweat and oil, introducing tans and dark spots”. Or when *Fair and Handsome* argue that people should not use other products such as cold creams in the winter, claiming that while the cold creams would moisturize the skin, individuals would end up with oily and dark skin.

Both the pollution and the weather categories promote the idea that the cause of the ‘skin problems’ are external; *Fair & Lovely Men* argue “Don’t let the sun spoil your skin. Fair & Lovely Men Fairness Cream works in the sun and is twice as effective” (2015). *Fair & Lovely* (for women), claim “oily winter creams can leave your skin looking dull and oily in winters. But not anymore! [...] Fair & Lovely Winter Fairness Cream helps you get both fair & moisturized skin without any compromise!” (2015). These descriptions provided under the videos on *YouTube* indicate that producers are promoting the idea that ‘problems’ are external to the individuals rather than ingrained within the individual. Liebelt et al (2018), would argue that seasonal products are indicative of idea that light skin or ‘fairness’ should be maintained all year round regardless of season.

While pollution and weather referred to Ringrow’s (2016) third problem, the next category refers to the first problem of ‘fragmentation’; advertisers select specific parts of the body and indicate what the ‘problems’ are. In this thesis, the sample presented specific socially constructed ‘skin problems’; advertisers clearly highlighted what they deem to be problematic. While terms like ‘oily skin’, ‘pimples’, ‘blocked pores’ ‘dark spots’ stood out, the noteworthy point is the inclusion of ‘dark skin’ as problematic. Dark skin was blatantly listed as a problem in the sample. Li et al. (2008) claim that in India, dark is synonymous with ‘dirty’ and ‘wrong’. Figure 11 is a screenshot from *Ponds Men Energy Charge Facewash*, and within this advertisement five problems are highlighted, “sweat and oil, uneven skin tone, dark skin, tired skin, and dull skin”. In the advertisement, the skin problems are a result of being in the sun. However, that does not take away from the fact that this advertisement, along with many others have pointed out that dark skin is a problem. Glenn (2008), argues that such advertising is reinforcing negative notions associated with dark skin. The advertisements in the sample made an obvious link between ‘dark skin’ and ‘problems’, which reinforces the ideal that dark skin is ‘bad’ and that it is a condition that individuals should actively change (Parameswaran and Cardoza, 2009).



Figure 11: Ponds Men Energy Charge 00:00:22 (2016)<sup>3</sup>

Referencing ‘skin problems’ occurred in 38.2 % (N=39) of the advertisements, for the female products this occurred 33.8% (N=26) of the time and for the male products this occurred 52% (N=13) of the time. The point to note here, is that in more than half of the advertising for males, references were made to skin problems, whereas this was around 33% for female products. Ringrow (2016) outlines that women are held to higher beauty standards than men which is why the problems are more pronounced in advertising for female cosmetic products, however, in this case a higher percentage of male advertising made references to problems than female advertising.

To conclude this section, a total of three problems were identified in the advertising, namely pollution, weather and skin problems. The problem-solution model posits that advertisers establish a problem within the advertisement which can then be solved using their product, which brings up the next part of the model, the solution.

#### Chapter 4.1.1.2: The Solutions

The solution to the problems outlined in the previous chapter is provided by the product advertised. This was depicted through postulating what the advertisers deemed to be ‘good skin’, hence the category was named ‘good skin’. Good skin in the advertisements was defined

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSoTESOFjaY>

as ‘radiant’, ‘bright’, ‘glowing’, ‘spotless’, ‘pearl-like’, ‘crystal’, ‘even skin tone’, ‘moisturized’, ‘smooth’, ‘fair’ and ‘diamond’ like. ‘Good skin’ was by far the biggest category within the problem-solution format. 66.7% (N=80) of the advertisements at some point mentioned how the given product would provide ‘good skin’. 83.1% (N=64) of the products for women used this method, by either explicitly stating the issues the product would tackle such as removing spots, or moisturizing, or by providing metaphors such as ‘flawless skin like a diamond’ or ‘pearly white skin’ equating diamonds and crystals to beauty. 64% (N= 16) of the product for men also used this method, claiming that the products would brighten the skin however, fewer alternatives were used.

Implicitly, through this category, advertisements did mention that the products would lighten the skin tone. Terms such as ‘brighten’, ‘glow’, ‘fair’, and ‘even skin tone’, were often used in the advertisements. Producers advertise the benefits of the products on their websites using similar terms; *Ponds* writes “Pond’s Men Energy Charge Face wash: Instantly brightens and energizes skin...” (2019); *Fair & Lovely* claim “Fair & Lovely creams are inspired by leading skin care treatments offered by experts. Based on the sound scientific understanding of the solutions provided by expert treatments these products target key fairness problems like expert treatments do with the targeted action on skin darkening, marks, sun-tan, darkness, dark circles and dullness” (2019). The producers very much highlight the fact that ‘darkness’ is bad which must be rectified.

Words such as ‘brighten’, ‘glow’, and ‘fairness’, do not explicitly say that the beauty products will whiten skin; however, they do have connotations which could be equally harmful in maintaining the ideal that light skin equates to beauty. “The notion of beauty is socially constructed and its meanings are changed and maintained by social forces” (Li, et al, 2008, p. 448). The words ‘brighten’, ‘glow’, ‘fairness’, along with many others have become a part of the skin lighting advertisements discourse. In Chapter 2.2.1 an image of a supermarket was shown. In Figure 1, the overhead sign had the word ‘fairness’ written. The notion of beauty is socially constructed through words such as ‘brighten’, ‘glow’, ‘fairness’, the meaning is maintained within society when these words are engraved into every aspect of someone’s life such as when shopping at a supermarket and seeing the word ‘fairness’ being prominently displayed. Another example is the story of Smrithi introduced in Chapter 1. She mentions how ‘being fair’ is not only an important beauty standard for her social group but also a standard that is constantly repeated in the media. The two examples demonstrate how the notion of beauty, in this case light skin, is maintained by social forces such as community and media.

Advertisers may argue that words such as ‘brighten’, ‘glow’, ‘fairness’, does not encourage skin bias, however, in India these terms are synonymous with ‘beauty’, but more importantly, the words are synonymous with ‘light’ or ‘white’ (Li, et al, 2008; Hussein, 2010; Nadeem, 2014). In addition, it should be noted that the term ‘fairness’ in particular connotes being ‘white’ and ‘beautiful’ (Liebelt et al. 2018). Arguably the largest and most popular skin lightening brand in India is called *Fair & Lovely* (Glenn, 2008). Thus, while advertisers may argue that they are not encouraging skin color bias, the term ‘fairness’ alone promotes colorism (Hunter, 2007) within the Indian context and adding words such as ‘brighten’, or ‘glow’ strengthens the connotations.

Up until this point in the advertisements discussed thus far, advertisers have used terms that implicitly carry the message that the products would lighten or whiten skin tones. However, the sample also contained advertisements which explicitly claimed that the product would whiten the user’s skin, creating a new sub-category. Figure 12 visualizes how the product lightens the skin tone; notice how the lower right half of the model’s face is lighter than the upper left half as well as the inclusion of the word ‘whitens’.

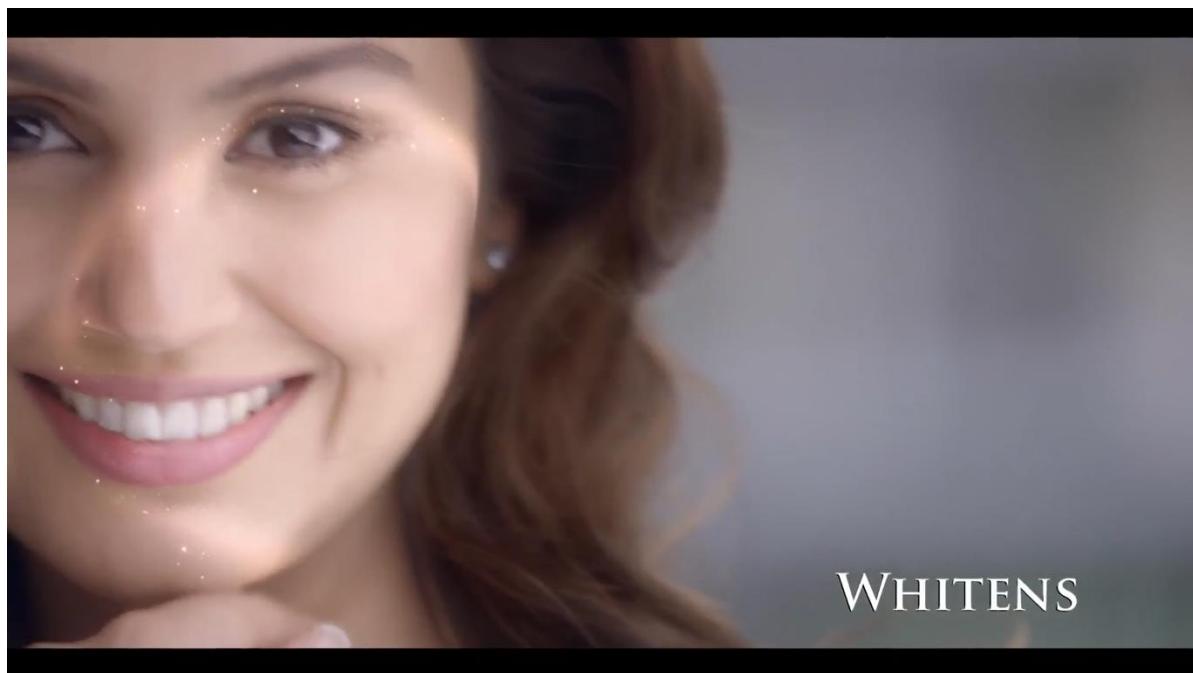


Figure 12: *Lotus White Glow 00:00:25 (2017)*<sup>4</sup>

The use of the terms ‘whiten’ or ‘lighten’, did not appear in the advertisements for male products, however, the terms did appear in 10.4% (N=8) of the advertisements for female products. Liebelt et al (2018), claim that women are held to higher beauty standards than men;

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZ-okRjAJkY>

they argue that within the Indian social landscape, women must have light skin whereas for men, the lack of a lighter skin tone can be excused through the presence of factors such as education, employment and income. However, for women the presence of these factors would not trump a darker skin tone. The patriarchal nature of Indian society reinforces male privilege and burdens women with meeting the set beauty standards (Utley & Darity, 2016).

Advertisers use both implicit and explicit means to communicate that skin lightening products will solve problems. Within the problem-solution model, advertisers establish that there is a problem with the skin. At times this is due to an external reason such as pollution or weather, or through a physical problem such as oily and dull skin. However, this category also establishes the fact that there is a solution, namely as product that will give the viewer the perfect skin, in other words, the products will lighten the skin tone. In the following sections, more information is provided into the some of the other tactic's advertisers use to convince the audiences that 'good skin' will be achieved through the use of their product.

#### *Chapter 4.1.2: The Product*

In 'the product' advertisers shift focus from the problem/solution format to presenting the specifications of the product. Brands clarify how their product is unique, better than competitors, and most suited to the consumer. When advertisers refer to the benefits of their product, Ringrow (2016) would argue that this is part of the solution from the problem-solution model. However, within the context of this thesis, the product could be discussed as its own category because 'the product' includes more than just discourse about 'rival products'. Through conducting inductive research, it was discovered that advertisers included discourse on 'benefits of the product', 'ingredients of the product' and 'science and technology'. These discourses do not completely fit into Ringrow's (2016) discourse on 'rival product' in which advertisers present arguments on why their product is better than other alternatives.

##### *Chapter 4.1.2.1: Benefits of the Products*

Advertisers outlined the benefits of the products in three manners; (1) highlighting how fast/easy the product was to use, (2) outlining the long-lasting effects of the products and (3) providing a list of the benefits as depicted in Figure 13.

Sub-category	Female Products	N	Male Products	N
<b>Fast/Easy</b>	41.6%	23	44%	11
<b>Long-lasting</b>	11.7%	9	8%	2
<b>List</b>	16.9%	13	24%	6

Figure 13: *Gender Distribution of Strategies used in 'Benefits of the Product'*

Both advertisements for female products and male products promoted ‘the benefits of the product (See Figure 13). The three benefits were depicted through words and phrases such as ‘instant’, ‘works from the first time’, ‘in just 10 seconds’, ‘15 minutes’, ‘lasting up to 8 hours’, ‘DIY’ as well as providing a visual representation of the benefits (see Figure 14). The narrative of the advertisements supporting the discourse on the ‘benefits of the product’ depicted characters who live in the city, who have a busy lifestyle, and/or who are modern, therefore, they need a product that will ensure the best results without hindering their lifestyle.

Li et al. (2008) and Liebelt et al. (2018) and many other scholars have mentioned the burden women feel as they must live up to the hegemonic beauty standards within society, however, their work fails to mention the burden that men could feel. Advertisements directed at men use similar words and phrases, they make the same arguments about the product being easy to use and providing consumers with the ideal skin type. Gill (2007) and Harrison (2008), argue that there is change in the definition of traditional masculinity, especially in urban cities. Men are increasingly spending more on grooming products which are not deodorants and shaving creams, rather other skin products (Tandon, 2017). The narrative of the advertisements in the sample supports the lifestyle that these ‘new age men’ live.

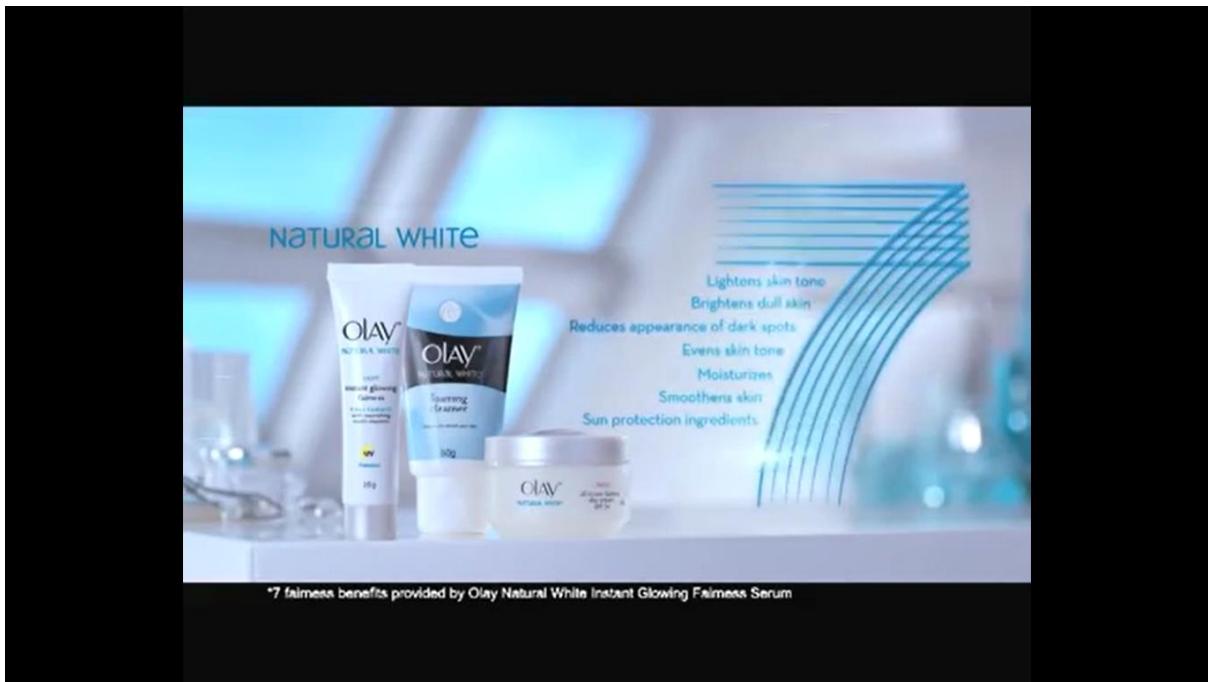


Figure 14: Olay Natural White 00:00:08 (2014)<sup>5</sup>

On a textual level, advertisers highlight benefits where the adjectives elicit positive emotions for the product and negative emotions for the condition (Kaur, Arumugam, & Yunus, 2013). Figure 14 displays an example from the sample. Notice the juxtaposition of ‘brightens dull skin’ or ‘reduces appearance of dark skin’. The advertisements are set up so that the consumer may feel that there are problems which can be ‘fixed’ through the product. The adjectives that are seen as positive further cement the hegemonic belief that ‘good skin’ or ‘beauty’ is equated to the ‘reduction of dark skin’ or the presence of ‘a light skin tone’.

#### Chapter 4.1.2.2: Natural Resources

Along with stressing on the benefits of the products, advertisers often indicate the use of ‘natural resources’ in their products. Dayan and Kromidas (2011), indicate that the use of natural ingredients in cosmetic products is an increasing demand of consumers. Ringrow (2016), adds that advertisers emphasize use of natural ingredients to move away from ‘artificial’ substances, which can bring more authenticity to the product. Li, et al. (2008), however highlight that by stressing the use of natural ingredients through extracts or essences, advertisements convey that the product will draw out the ‘natural beauty’ of a person.

In the sample, the 23.4% (N=18) of the female products and 28% (N=7) of male products elaborated on the use of natural ingredients present in the product. For the female

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKYfov5203M>

products, the ingredients generally consisted of fruits and flowers/plants, such as ‘orange peel’, ‘lemon extracts’, ‘saffron’ and more, as well as vitamins and minerals. Products for men included ingredients such as ‘clay’ and ‘coffee’. In addition to the fruits and flowers, advertisements for female products in the sample draw upon the ancient tradition of Ayurveda rooted in India (Glenn, 2008). A traditional science from the Indian subcontinent that is still practiced today for medicinal and beauty purposes (Dayan and Kromidas 2011). Advertisers draw upon the tradition to perhaps indicate to the consumer that the product is meant for the people of India, (see Figure 15).



Figure 15: Fair & Lovely Ayurvedic Care 00:00:28 (2016)<sup>6</sup>

The use of different types of ingredients for men and women could be based on hegemonic gender identities (Das, 2011). Harrison argues that the traditional concept of masculinity is ‘under construction’. Referring back to the concept of push and pull introduced in Chapter 2.3.2, men are becoming more aware of their physical appearance, however, maintain traditional hegemonic ideas of masculinity. As a result, advertisers of skin care products must sustain a balance between promoting ‘good skin’ and upholding the ‘masculine’ features of the products (see Figure 16). The terms that were present in both products for men and women included ‘carbon’ or ‘activated carbon’, which for both would draw out the

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m-Iy79cL-E>

pollutants from the face. However, as outlined in Chapter 4.1.1.1, the discourse on pollution was present in both advertising for male and female products.



Figure 16: Garnier Men Power White Double Action Facewash 00:00:19 (2015)<sup>7</sup>

#### Chapter 4.1.2.3: Science and Technology

The final component of ‘the product’, is the discourse surrounding science and technology. Ringrow (2016) stipulates that the use of scientific and technological discourse increases the assumption of authenticity in the product. Li et al. (2008) add that technological discourse builds trust and that scientific discourse minimizes the risk that consumers may think a product has. Figure 17 demonstrates how the advertisements use technology, which can also give the illusion that brands are up-to-date and innovative (Kaur, et al. 2013), and in this case even futuristic. On a textual level, to maintain trust between the brand and the consumer, advertisers present arguments such as ‘based on research’ or ‘expert supervision’; moreover, they present visual representation of cells or skin to show how the product works (see Figure 18).

The use of this scientific/technological discourse occurred in 40% (N=30) of female advertising and 48% (N=12) of the male advertising. Within the advertisements for the male

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUeyaxPJlog>

products the push-pull effect (Harrison, 2008) was used, a tactic used in advertising where ‘problems’ are pointed out, but traditional notions of masculinity are maintained. Under the pretext of ‘science and technology’ it can be noted that in order to create a ‘safe’ space for males and maintain their traditional masculine identity, products are surrounded by scientific discourse (Gill, 2007; Harrison, 2008; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).



Figure 17: Garnier Men Power White Double Action Facewash 00:00:20 (2015)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUeyaxPJlog>

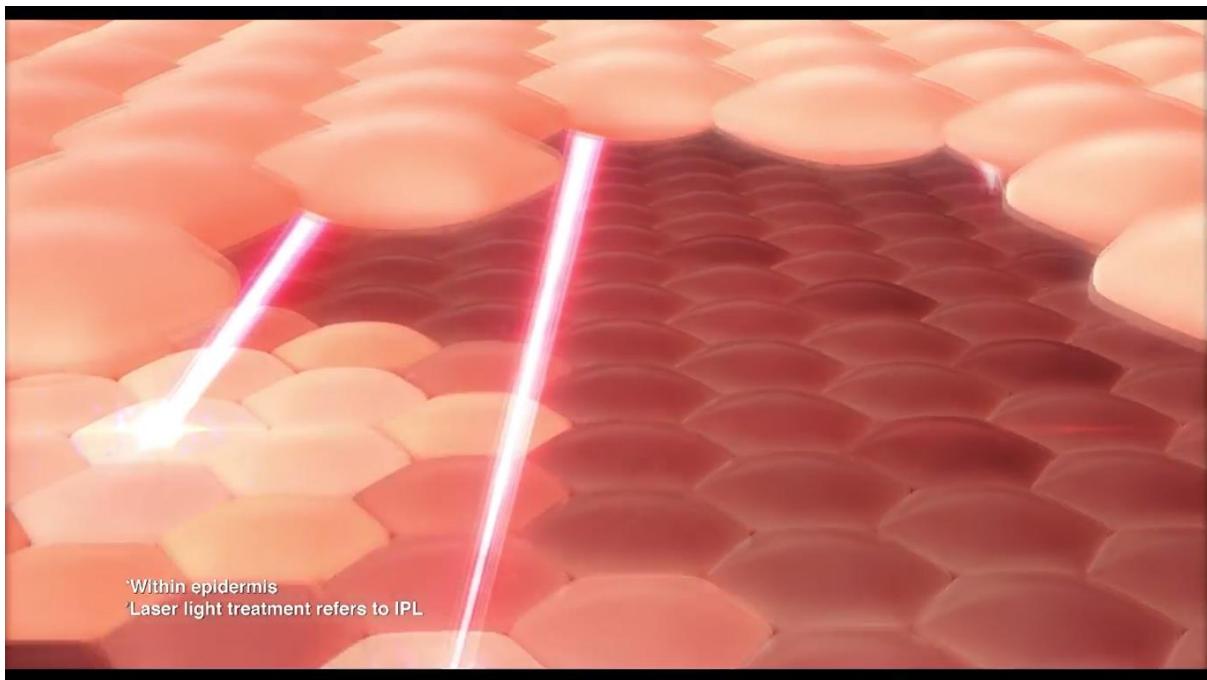


Figure 18: Fair & Lovely Advanced Multi Vitamin 00:00:10 (2017)<sup>9</sup>

The discourse on ‘science and technology’ could also be seen through reports and posts highlighted on official websites for the products/brands. *Fair & Lovely* for example, write “... science is where the heart of our business lies” (2019) and highlight the effort that has gone into creating a unique product through words such as ‘extensive research’, ‘clinical studies’ and ‘proven by dermatologists’, to add authenticity to the product (Li, et al. 2008)

Kaur et al. (2013), further add that brands customize products by using pronouns such as ‘you’ and ‘your’ conveying to the consumer that the product was especially designed for them. However, in the sample, *L'Oréal* argues that due to the research they have conducted, they were able to create three distinct products for three different ages.

To conclude, advertisements which are based on ‘scientific research’ or ‘technological innovation’, supposedly bring more authenticity to a brand, making the product more trustworthy to the consumer (Li, et al. 2008; Ringrow, 2016). However, presenting the product is not the only way in which products are sold, advertising sells more than products, it sells ideas (Kilbourne, 2014), the advertisements in the sample convey that a lot of research has gone into making a product that is safe for all users, however, in reality the products contain substances that are dangerous for the skin (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_w9tzlTM\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_w9tzlTM_c)

### *Chapter 4.1.3: Gender*

As already explored in some of the previous sections, advertisers use different techniques when advertising for female products and male products (Das, 2011; Sheehan, 2014). This sub-chapter explores the differences and similarities that was present in the sample. Both in Chapters, 4.1.1. and 4.1.2, different advertising techniques were explored, and discussions were presented into why those techniques were used, what ideologies they promoted and how predominant they were in terms of gender distribution. For example, in Chapter 4.1.1.2 it was highlighted that advertising for women did contain the words ‘white’ or ‘whiten’, however that was not the case with advertising for male products. This sub-chapter will explore the different tactics advertisers used when promoting products to men and women.

#### *Chapter 4.1.3.1: Female Products*

A total of 77 advertisements were analyzed for female products which yielded different themes. Often the basic narrative of these advertisements was to show a ‘dark-skinned’ female character discontent with her current circumstance and after using the product her life takes a turn for the better (Glenn, 2008; Li, et al. 2008; Hussein, 2010). The works of Glenn (2008), Li et al (2008) and Hussein (2010) date back to a decade ago, however, themes they mention are still relevant. The scholars mention that in their sample of advertisements, the products are a means for the characters to get their ‘dream jobs’, ‘find a suitable partner’, ‘get confidence/happiness’, in other words, improve the current circumstances. Upon conducting a superficial analysis on the sample for this thesis, these themes do stand out. Take the example of *Dabur Ltd Crème Bleach* in Figure 19, where the characters gain the confidence to “#BeBillboardReady” once they have used the product.



Figure 19: Dabur Ltd Creme Bleach 00:00:34 (2016)<sup>10</sup>

However, upon conducting further analysis, other themes embedded in the sample could be identified. Still following ‘dream jobs’ as outlined by the scholars, the sample did provide insight into the theme of ‘women empowerment’ (Gill, 2007). Rather than presenting products as a means to achieving a ‘dream job’ (Glenn, 2008), brands such as *Fair & Lovely*, *Garnier*, *BoroPlus* and *Lakmé* presented their products as suitable for working women. In the advertisement series ‘#BeautyonDuty’, *Fair & Lovely* claimed that “working women along with working have to focus on the way they look not only during the working hours but after the working hours as well in parties and events. But applying foundation to look perfect the whole day would close off pores, to achieve the perfect office look for the whole day they should use Fair & Lovely BB Cream”. The advertisements present women as having two jobs, first, to look good and second, to have a job.

Apart from ‘getting a job’, women aspire to ‘find a suitable partner’ at least according to the narrative of the advertisements (Glenn, 2008; Hussein, 2010). Keeping this context in mind, there are two advertisements in the sample that deserve closer examination because of the way they portray the narrative of ‘finding a suitable partner’. The narrative of two the advertisements highlighted that products would aid women in finding a ‘suitable partner for marriage’, however, both advertisements take different approaches. The theme of ‘finding a suitable partner’ was echoed in an advertisement for *Dabur India Ltd FEM bleach* (2016),

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R1rdCNVoPM>

where two characters are being introduced for a potential arranged marriage. The female character then uses the product which gives her a ‘glow’ and then the male character becomes ‘mesmerized’. *Fair & Lovely* (2016) take a different approach to the hegemonic idea of ‘finding a suitable partner by the use of beauty products.’ The premise of the *Fair & Lovely* advertisement is a father who discusses marriage with his daughter, informing her on the qualities of a potential match that the parents have found for her, but she argues that she first wants to get a job. The scene cuts to her sitting with a friend and telling her that she wanted to have a job first, the friend then hands her a tube of *Fair & Lovely*. After using the cream, the girl goes up to her father and tells him that she is ready to get married, but only after three years once she has established herself in her career and the boy and girl are seen as equals.

Both the *FEM bleach* and the *Fair & Lovely* advertisement follow a discourse on ‘marriage’ and how the products can help in finding a ‘suitable partner’, as highlighted by Glenn (2008) and Hussein (2010). However, *FEM bleach* follows the hegemonic idea that a woman should have a light skin tone when considering getting married (Utley & Darity, 2016; Liebelt et al. 2018). *Fair & Lovely* also present a skin lightening product and use discourse on marriage in India, however they add in another layer of ‘women empowerment’ (Gill, 2007), where the product gives the character the confidence to stand up for what she believes in (Glenn, 2008), however, ultimately, she too must conform to the idea of getting married.

There is one more advertisement that stood out against the others under the theme of ‘women empowerment’. The advertisement was for *BoroPlus Health White Fairness Cream* (2018) from *Emami*. Women in advertising are normally depicted in stereotypical gender roles such as homemakers, unemployed (or no mention of employment status), and in non-authoritative roles (Das, 2011; Matthes, Prilar & Adam, 2016). However, the advertisement for *BoroPlus* challenged the hegemonic portrayal in terms of traditional gender roles by including a female on a motorbike and an air force pilot (see Figure 20). The women featuring in the advertisements are not presented as homemakers and there is reference made to their employment status, in the case of the air force pilot it could also be argued that the woman is presented in an authoritative role (Das, 2011; Matthes, et al, 2016). With the depiction of empowered women, one should not forget that the advertisements are still promoting skin lightening products, replacing one ideology with another. A decade ago the discourse was ‘women finding jobs and being confident’ by using the products (Glenn, 2008), the sample indicates a newer discourse ‘looking beautiful at all times, including when working’. Advertisements are creating links between ‘light skin’ and ‘beauty’, ‘choice’, ‘success’, and ‘empowerment’ (Nadeem, 2014).



Figure 20: BoroPlus Healthy White Fairness Cream 00:00:41 (2018)

Other tropes used in the advertisements for female products included constructing the advertisement as a tutorial. The format was used in 16.9% (N=13) of the advertisements, and often linked to festivals such as Diwali or Karwa Chauth (see Figure 21). India is a predominately Hindu country (Das, 2011), which was reflected in the sample through the link with the festivals. Das (2010), argues that women in Indian culture are liberated, yet must be strongly bound to tradition. This was reflected in the advertisements which emphasize Indian culture for female products but not for male products.



Figure 21: Ponds White Beauty BB Cream 00:00.24 (2017)<sup>11</sup>

Through the tutorial format, advertisers would promote how easy the product was to use (Ringrow, 2016), by providing a demonstration. On a textual level, the advertisements promote that the products are ‘fast and easy to use’, ‘non-damaging to the skin’, and ‘suitable for daily use’, by going through a step by step make-up tutorial for the viewer to follow. In this manner, advertisers provide sound reasons to the consumer on why they should purchase the product (Kaur, et al. 2013).

To conclude, advertisements for female products present a dual image for the modern Indian woman. She must be working or studying, however, she must also remain traditional (in terms of Indian culture) and conform to the traditional norms of being ‘beautiful’ – in other words, she should have a light skin tone (Dewey, 2008; Li et al, 2008; Das, 2011). The advertisements also show that women can break boundaries and norms; however, this brings up new issues by creating a new link between new ideas (gender equality) and older ideologies (light skin equates to beauty), (Gill, 2007) which can be problematic as well. The advertisements promoted explicitly promoted ‘good skin’, however, the definition of ‘good skin’ was problematic (Nadeem, 2014) in the sense that advertisers actively used words such as ‘bright’, ‘light’, ‘glow’, ‘fairness’ and ‘white’ to promote the product. Moreover, advertisers presented the products under various contexts such as ‘women empowerment’, ‘toughness’, ‘problems’, ‘celebrity endorsement’ and more. Li, et al (2008) argue that for women, the

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31UUABbniSs>

juxtaposition of ‘beauty’ and ‘empowerment’ can be both empowering and depowering at the same time. The advertisements create unrealistic images, and when consumers are unable to meet the images created to can be devastating to the self-image (Kilbourne, 2014). Women feel empowered when they hear discourse about ‘empowerment’ however, feel depowered when they cannot meet the unrealistic beauty standards.

#### Chapter 4.1.3.2: Male Products

As with the female products, advertising for male products exhibited unique patterns as well. A total of 25 advertisements were analyzed, and while this number is not as extensive in comparison to the female products, it was enough to extract what marketing techniques were used mainly for male products.

As explained in Chapter 2.3.2, the concept of masculinity is undergoing change, and traditional notions of what it means to ‘be a man’ are being challenged. Advertisements for male products demonstrate a push-pull effect (Harrison, 2008). In the push-pull effect, advertisers strive to make men more critical and aware about their physical appearance (push) yet, retain traditional notions of masculinity (pull) (Harrison, 2008). To create the ‘push effect’, advertisers rely on introducing problems (Ringrow, 2016), such as the impact of ‘pollution’ or ‘weather’ as discussed in Chapter 4.1.1.1. The reliance on external factors causing ‘skin problems’ in male advertising such as ‘pollution’ and ‘weather’ were extremely popular, occurring in 48% (N=12) and 40% (N=10) of the adverts respectively.

To create the ‘pull effect’, advertisers used a number of strategies to maintain the hegemonic idea of traditional masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). ‘Toughness’ (Harrison, 2008) is clearly mentioned in a number of the advertisements, occurring 40% (N=10) of the time. Brands argue that ‘men need a special cream to work on their tough skin’ (*Fair and Handsome*, 2017), but also depict male characters that are athletic (see Figure 22). In this manner, brands are able to sell cosmetics products to men, as they retain notions of ‘what it means to be a man’.



Figure 22: *Fair and Handsome Instant Fairness Facewash 00:00:04 (2018)*<sup>12</sup>

Another example of ‘toughness’ found in the sample was in an advertisement for *Fair and Handsome* (2017). In the advertisement one character applies cream from a pink tube indicating the female product, and then the second character (actor Shah Rukh Khan, see Figure 23) enters saying that men should not use the cream intended for women, men need the special *Fair and Handsome* which would work on the ‘tough skin of men’. The advertisement highlights that *Fair and Handsome* is ‘tough’ and by distinguishing it from the female products takes away any ‘feminine’ associations. Cosmetic products for men must retain notions of ‘traditional masculinity’, thus advertisers reject any notions of the female skin lightening products (Hermans, 2018).

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf68DqBifMM>

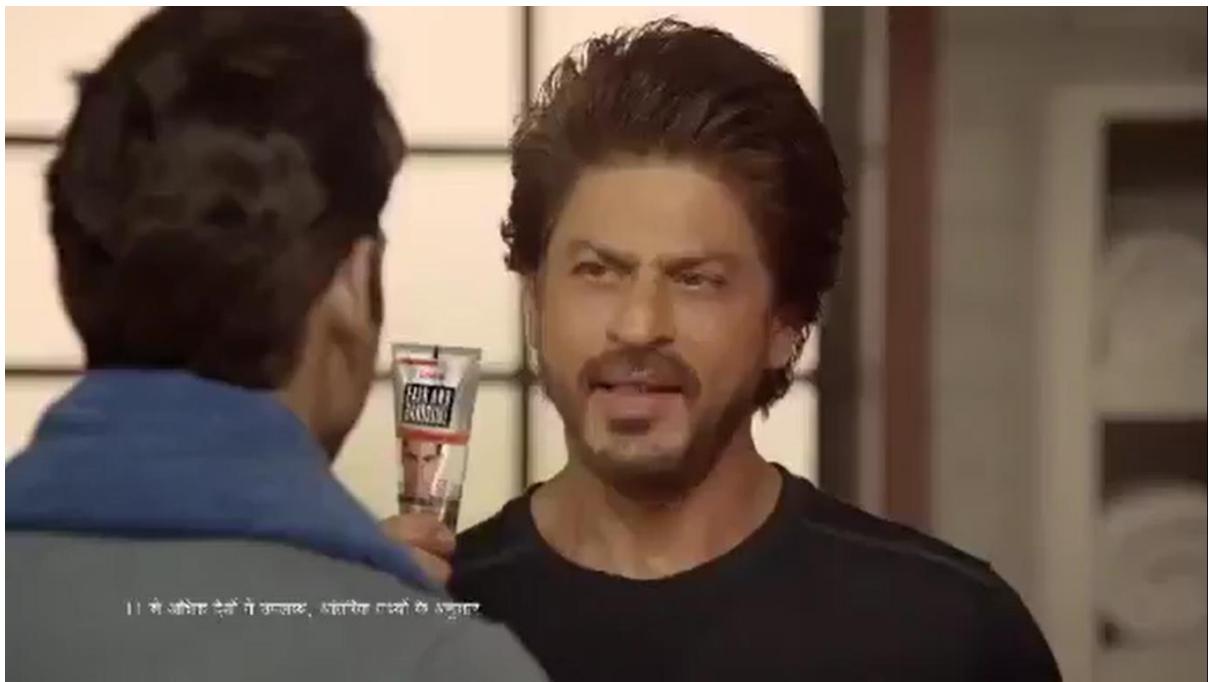


Figure 23: *Fair and Handsome* 00:00:26 (2017)

Das (2010), mentions that India scores high when it comes to portraying gender stereotypes, in other words, there is a lot of gender stereotyping in terms of traditional male and female characteristics in advertising. Male characters in advertisements are often shown as working professionals or there would be some mention to the professional lives, whereas this was not the case in the advertising for female products (Matthes, et al, 2016). In the sample, *Men's Fair & Lovely* used the male celebrities they hired and described how creams and facewashes were suitable to their profession. The advertisement would end with the male celebrity gaining female attention from their fans as depicted in Figure 24 returning to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The use of celebrities in advertising will be discussed further in Chapter 4.1.3.3.



Figure 24: Fair & Lovely Men Facewash 00:00:25 (2015)<sup>13</sup>

Apart from drawing on the notion of ‘toughness’ to create the ‘pull effect’, advertisers present the male characters as people who can easily charm a woman, especially after using the product when they achieve female attention. In the advertisements for the female products, female characters would also get attention after using the product as represented in 14.3% (N=11) of the advertisements. However, female characters would get attention from people of all walks of life, for example, in an advertisement for *Olay* (2016), the female character applies the cream and then walks into the room, where she gets noticed by everyone there. Female characters get attention from friends, families, and even bystanders. In the advertisements for male products, male characters would exclusively gain female attention, occurring in 40% (N=10) of the advertisements. Men gaining female attention is another critical component in retaining the notion of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Additionally, advertisers adopt ‘sports’ or ‘sporting motifs’ in advertising to make the cosmetic products more appealing to the male audience (Hermans, 2018). *Fair & Handsome* often argues in their advertisements that ‘men suffer from oily, sweaty skin due to the sports they play/participate in or other physical activities that they may do’ (e.g. see Figure 22). *Fair & Lovely Men*, for example, use cricketers who stay out in the sun all day for the game, consequently needing to use the products (see Figure 25). The reliance on ‘sports’ is common

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Uv\\_TwiCHc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Uv_TwiCHc)

in advertising for men, as it creates a ‘safe’ environment for men to use cosmetic products. (Harrison, 2008; Hermans, 2018).

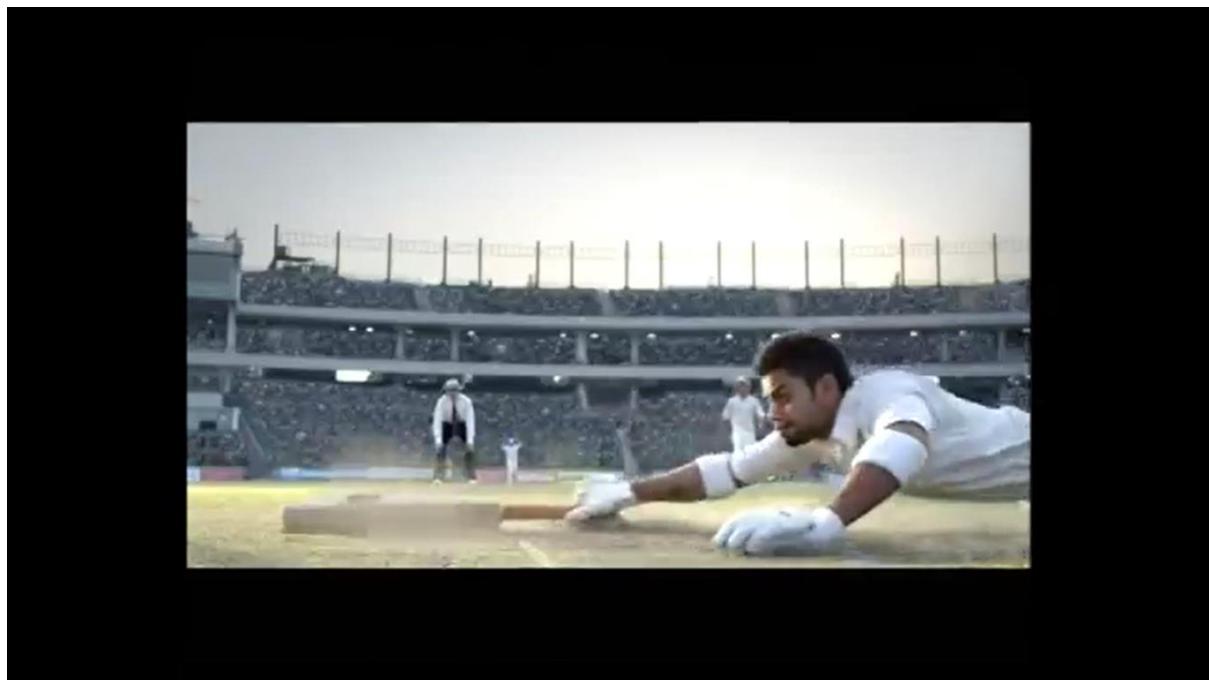


Figure 25: Fair & Lovely Men Multi Expert 00:00:06 (2014)<sup>14</sup>

Advertising for male products has primarily focused on maintaining the ideas traditionally associated with masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Men are presented in gender conforming roles, in other words men were presented as ‘tough’, ‘athletic’, ‘adventurous’, and ‘a lady’s man’. It was through the discourse of ‘masculinity’ that advertisers were able to promote skin lightening products to men.

Before ending the section on male products, there is one advertisement that should be discussed. The 2015 advertisement for the *Pond’s Men* product range (see Figure 26) stood out in the whole sample of 102 advertisements. It stood out as it was the only advertisement not to mention skin lightening in any manner, however, it was included in the sample as the products were skin lightening products. No terms were used in this advertisement which could associate the product with skin lightening, however other advertisements for the same product did mention skin lightening. Moreover, the advertisement included an image of the entire product range for *Pond’s Men* and upon closer inspection, the term ‘white boost’ could be seen on the product itself. However, the advertisement itself did not mention any skin lightening properties; rather, it discussed how the product would ‘recharge’ an individual. The ‘recharge’ element is

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGbbRZVx6Hw>

part of a bigger discourse that the *Pond's Men* range adopts as can be seen on all their advertisements. The use of term 'recharge' within the context of *Pond's* advertisements lies in the fact the men are active, and as a result get tired. By using *Pond's Men* will feel energized again to partake in 'manly' activities such as sports (Hermans, 2018).



Figure 26: *Pond's Men* 00:00:22 (2015)<sup>15</sup>

As has been explored in this section, advertisers for skin lightening products have used different tactics when promoting products to men and women. Advertisers have played on traditional gender roles, at times challenging them, while at other times conforming to them. However, in the sample there were some tactics that were used both in advertisements for males and advertisements for females, which will be explored further in Chapter 4.1.3.3.

#### Chapter 4.1.3.3: Overarching Themes

There have been themes that were predominantly used in advertising for either female or female products. However, there have also been themes that were overarching, in other words, predominantly present for both groups. Some of these themes have been discussed in previous sub-chapters, for example discourse on science and technology was found in advertising for both genders. However, there are additional themes that still need to be discussed.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDuEvdfohrA>

The presence of celebrities in the advertisements has been briefly mentioned in this Chapter. In this sub-chapter, celebrity endorsement of skin lightening products will be discussed in more depth. India is a very celebrity driven country, celebrities are loved, appreciated, respected, trusted and most importantly, followed in terms of style and lifestyle choices, more than other countries (Aggarwal-Gupta & Dang, 2009; Patel, 2009; Dubey & Agrawal 2011).

Brands such as *Fair & Lovely* or *Ponds* retained the same celebrities for a number of their advertisements such as actors Yami Gautam and Ileana D'Cruz. Other brands, such as *Fair and Handsome*, used different celebrities for different advertisements such as actors Hrithik Roshan and Shah Rukh Khan. Nonetheless, the use of celebrities to promote products was common for both female and male products, in fact, 62% (N=48) of the female advertisements used celebrities and 88% (N=22) of the male advertisements used celebrities. For the female products all the celebrities were actors, predominantly from movies and for the male products, the celebrities were either movie actors or sporting personalities (a full list of celebrities and their corresponding brands can be found in Appendix C).

There are many reasons for advertisers hire celebrities to endorse a product/brand, celebrities can increase popularity of a product/brand by using the star power celebrities bring or by using the image that the celebrity creates (Patel, 2009). In the sample, female products often used young actresses while male products were able to use both younger and older celebrities, signs of ageing is something a woman should hide, whereas ageing in men is a sign of maturity (Gill, 2007; Ringrow, 2016). Regardless, all the celebrities add unique value to the product. In the case of female products, the younger actresses such as Alia Bhatt for *Garnier* bring freshness to the brands as they are relatively new actors. According to *IMDB*, actor Alia Bhatt made her acting debut with the movie *Student of the Year* in 2012, she personifies the 'youth' (McLoughlin, 2017) which perhaps makes the brand more accessible to younger people. For the male products actors such as John Abraham for *Garnier* and Vidyut Jammwal for *Fair and Handsome* were used. According to the *IMDB* pages for both the actors, they usually star in action films, with a lot of fighting creating a very tough image for themselves. This is in line with keeping ideas of traditional masculinity in the advertisements (Harrison, 2008)

Li et al. (2008) mention that celebrities represent 'ideal' beauty standards. Celebrities such as actors Shraddha Kapoor for *Lakmé*, and Huma Qureshi for *Lotus* present the products as a regular beauty regime they use which provides them with the 'ideal look'. In a country that is driven by celebrity power (Aggarwal-Gupta and Dang, 2009), such words can have

considerable impact on consumers. Celebrities pose as aspirational figures, thus the products that they endorse could drive individuals to become consumers even when the product can have harmful effects, skin lightening products can have detrimental effects on the skin due to the substances present in the product (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009).

To conclude, Chapter 4.1.3, critical points of the advertisements have been discussed. The chapter has indicated what differing strategies were used when advertising to males and females, however the chapter has also pointed out what the similarities were. A final point to address in this sub-chapter is what it means for women to have light skin and what it means for men to have light skin. The sample did not create a balance between advertisements for men and for women. Moreover, female products represented in the sample outweigh the male products in the sample. There is a discrepancy between male and female products available in India. In fact, the first products available exclusively for men did not enter the market until 2005 with *Fair and Handsome* (Vats, 2010). Products for women have been on the market since 1978 (Glenn, 2008). Nonetheless, within the sample, the advertisements presented many themes. However, the ideal that remained prominent in the advertisements was the fact that ‘fair’ skin is ‘desirable’ and ‘beautiful’ in India.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusion

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“In this country, beauty is defined by fairness of skin”

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(Liebelt et al, 2018, p. 245)

The quote by Liebelt et al (2018) indicates an unfortunate truth about India: the lighter a person’s skin color, the more ‘beautiful’ they are considered. Racist or discriminatory remarks based on skin color can be blatantly found in India, for example when matrimonial advertisements are posted, in which people are looking for a ‘fair’ girl (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009; Utley & Darity, 2016). However, light skin is not just equated to ‘beauty’ in India; light skin is also what informs social capital, people with lighter skin tones enjoy more privilege in India, for example when two people apply for a job is it likely that the person with a lighter skin tone will get the job over a person with a darker skin tone (Hunter 2007, Hussein, 2010). The skin lightening industry is growing fast with no signs of it slowing down. During the course of this thesis, arguments have been presented on how advertisers promote skin lightening products in India; what strategies they use; and the presence of such media content can be problematic.

“People feel personally exempt from the influence of advertising [...] I don’t pay attention to advertising, I just tune them out, they have no effect on me [...]. The influence of advertising is quick, cumulative and for the most part sub-conscious. Ads sell more than products” (Kilbourne, 2014). In a lecture, Kilbourne highlights that advertisements leave impressions on individuals implicitly. People may go to great lengths to avoid advertising, however, cannot escape ideologies that have been disseminated for years through media forms such as advertising.

The whitening products in themselves are problematic as they promote skin bias and colorism on the psychological level (Hussein, 2010). Even in the case of people actively trying to avoid messages promoted through advertising, they cannot escape the very prevalent discourse that is constantly being reiterated in the media (Appadurai, 1990; Kilbourne, 2014). On a physiological level the products can be harmful to the skin, as many products contain heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and mercury which can be toxic (Jose & Ray, 2018).

In a nutshell, advertisers promote the idea of light skin being more acceptable than dark skin. Through centuries of conditioning, skin bias has become a serious problem in India which

is exacerbated through the presence of skin lightening products (Glenn, 2008; Li, et al, 2008, Liebelt, et al, 2018). Advertisers use a variety of strategies to promote skin lightening products, from traditional cosmetic products advertising such as the problem-solution model (Ringrow, 2016), to celebrity endorsement (Patra & Datta, 2010). However, what was common in the advertisements was the discourse of light skin being more ‘acceptable’, ‘desirable’ and ‘beautiful’ (Hussein, 2010).

The research question guiding his thesis was, *how brands have promoted skin lightening products in India between 2013 and 2018?* Through conducting the analysis, there were a few dominant themes that appeared. Advertisers strongly relied on the problem-solution model (Ringrow, 2016), advertisers defined what they deemed as ‘bad’ and ‘good’ skin. Bad skin was defined through terms such as ‘oily’, ‘sweaty’, ‘dry’, ‘dull’; however, perhaps the most alarming term used was ‘dark’ (Li et al, 2008). Advertisers would explicitly mention that ‘dark skin is bad’. This is a problem because in India the term dark has many negative connotations such as, ‘dirty’, ‘poor’, ‘lower status’, also reinforces the discriminating caste system that is prevalent in India till date (Li et al, 2008; Hussein, 2010; Hall, 2013). Advertisers would present the product as a solution, saying the product would give consumers a ‘light’, ‘white’, ‘bright’, ‘glowing’, ‘beautiful’, skin tone. This is also problematic, when light skin is equated with personal and professional success (Glenn, 2008; Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009). In addition to the personal and professional success, light skin denotes ‘power’, ‘purity’ and ‘status’ (Li et al, 2008; Hall, 2013). In India, there is a pronounced distinction between ‘light’ and ‘dark’, both terms represent two ends of a spectrum, oppressor vs oppressed (Shevde, 2008), ‘pure’ vs ‘dirty’ (Liebelt et al, 2018), ‘high status’ vs ‘low status’ (Li et al, 2008) and ‘upper caste’ vs ‘lower caste’ (Hall, 2013). In India the issue goes beyond superficial bias, people with darker skin tones face discrimination and advertisements for skin lightening products reinforce the pronounced distinction between ‘light’ and ‘dark’.

The advertising of the products supports a discourse which promotes colorism. Going from a micro-level of analysis to a macro-level and asking what the discourse of the advertisements mean is an important question. Colorism is when people with a lighter skin tone are favored over people with a darker skin tone (Hunter, 2007; 2013). The concept of colorism was prevalent in advertisements where characters achieve ‘success’, ‘attention’ and/or ‘fame’ after using the skin lightening product. This was especially prevalent in the advertising for male skin lightening products, where the celebrities would get ‘female attention’ after using the product. These examples indicate that a person with lighter skin in India will be more ‘appreciated’, ‘famous’ and/or ‘more liked’. The advertisements told a narrative that by using

the products, not only will the consumer get light skin, but can enjoy all the benefits that come with having light skin (Hussein, 2010; Nadeem, 2014; Utley & Darity, 2016).

The example of the male skin lightening products builds up to the sub-research question of this thesis, *what strategies are used when promoting skin lightening products for men and women, are there distinct differences depending on the intended gender of the target audience?* From studying the sample, it could be noted that there were both similarities and differences in promoting products to men and women. The similarities included celebrity endorsements which were highly visible in the sample. However, there were also differences with advertisers playing into stereotypical gender roles and themes, men were ‘tough’, and women were ‘beautiful’. To maintain ‘toughness’ and ‘beauty’, skin lightening products should be used. However, both for men and women, skin lightening remained an integral part of the discourse. Men and women need to have light skin to be ‘desirable’, ‘wanted’, ‘successful’ ‘appreciated’, ‘famous’ and/or ‘liked’.

Beauty standards for women are harsher and less forgiving than beauty standards for men (Gill, 2007, Utley & Darity, 2016). For women, it is essential that they meet the beauty standards that are set within the Indian society whereas for men this is not the case, if they have a good job and income, people will look past the fact the he does not have a light skin tone (Liebelt et al, 2018). Additionally, the woman must always be ‘lighter’ than the man, in India the average couple is comprises of a female partner who has a lighter skin tone than the male partner (Utley & Darity, 2016; Liebelt et al, 2018). Discrimination based on color in India is higher for women then for men.

Media content is an integral component of how people view the world as media content normalizes ideologies such as beauty ideals (Appadurai; Kilbourne, 2014). Advertisements promote more than just products, they promote hegemonic ideologies (Kilbourne, 2014). This is a problem when those ideologies are damaging to mental and psychical health such as with skin lightening products (Hussein, 2010; Jose & Ray, 2018). The sample continuously presented discourse on lighter skin being ‘better’. Characters in the advertisements would be ‘happier’ or would ‘achieved the set goal’ after using the product. However, the sample also included narratives where the products were part of ‘daily routines’, take the example of #BeautyOnDuty from *Fair & Lovely*, they promoted the product as a regular beauty regime that should be used daily. This promotes the ideology that ‘light skin should be normalized’.

Skin color plays an important role in India, this is not only a beauty ideal, but also a determining factor in how someone will be treated, a person with a light skin tone will not face the same challenges as oppose to a person with dark skin (Hussein, 2010; Hall, 2013; Liebelt

et al, 2018). Throughout this thesis, the ‘ideal’ beauty standards of India have been analyzed. In the process it has been revealed that advertisers for skin lightening products in India have promoted discriminatory discourse between 2013 and 2018. Advertisers both implicitly and explicitly promote the idea that light skin is ‘good’ and dark skin is ‘bad’. The products and the advertisements promote skin color bias, through portraying a ‘happier’ and ‘better’ life after using the product. This is a problematic discourse as it promotes negative attitudes towards people with darker skin tones.

### Chapter 5.1: Limitations

Through acknowledging the shortcomings of the thesis, transparency can be maintained. To begin, there was only one researcher, therefore the results only include one researcher’s perspective based on the academic literature and analysis. The aim was to remain as objective as possible and let the literature guide the findings; however, the method of analysis was not completely deductive. Being of Indian origin, an inductive method of analysis was also conducted in an attempt to recognize some nuances that may be missed by non-Indians. Moreover, having knowledge about India provided the opportunity to identify celebrities as well as understand what they may bring to a brand. In addition, having knowledge of Hindi and English allowed me to pick up on certain nuances that other people might miss. Alternatively, there are many languages and regions in India which I do not have knowledge about, this could be an hinderance as some points could have been omitted.

There are many skin lightening products in India and the advertisements included in the sample only represent a small selection of the advertisements. There are many more brands and products in India that cater to the skin lightening industry such as *Nivea* or *White Tone*, however, they could not be included in that sample as they did not meet with the inclusion criteria presented in Chapter 3.2.3. Additionally, there were fewer advertisements analyzed for male products, thus even having one or two products exhibit a trait would increase the percentage, perhaps a more balanced sample in terms of having more advertisements for men would yield alternative results. This could be considered in the future, however, within the timeframe of this thesis, the sample in this thesis did provide some noteworthy points and answers what themes are commonly used in advertising for male products.

## Chapter 5.2: Recommendations

To conclude this thesis, a few recommendations will be provided into how the findings of this thesis can be taken forward. There were many questions raised during the thesis process, some of which could not be analyzed within the scope of this thesis. In this sub-chapter, these questions will be raised to provide a direction for future researchers. When analyzing the sample, there was one aspect of the advertisements which stood out, namely music. The music of the advertisements could not be analyzed within the parameters of this thesis given the time limitations, however, future studies could examine the role of music in advertising for skin lightening products. *Fair and Handsome* used famous songs from India in their advertisement, and *Fair & Lovely* had their own jingle which featured in a number of their advertisements. The music was very noticeable and future research can be conducted into what the music means (Klein, 20096).

As discussed in Chapter 5.1 many advertisements were not included for analysis as they did not meet the selection criteria. Some of the smaller brands could perhaps not afford television advertising and had resort to other media such as magazines, billboards, posters, radio, digital platforms and so on. Regardless, the advertising of the omitted brands also contributes to the discourse of skin lightening in India. However, the skin lightening industry is not limited to India, there are many more countries in Asia, Africa and South America where people use skin lightening products (Dyer, 1997; Glenn, 2008), and the concept of colorism is also not limited to India (Hunter, 2007; 2013). People of color face discrimination in various countries where skin lightening products are actively used (Glenn, 2008). By conducting a cross-cultural analysis, researchers can investigate how prevalent colorism is on an international level.

Finally, in Chapter 3.4 an awareness campaign was introduced, 'Dark is beautiful'. This campaign actively works to educate people on skin color bias and condemns skin lightening products. In Chapter 3.4 a decline in advertising for skin lightening products was noted as well, however, that was only based on the sample. The question to ask here is whether such awareness campaigns are working, and if so, in what capacity are they working, while this is a difficult question to answer as there will always be other factors involved, scholars such as Edwards (2000) are researching the relationship between activism and advertising.

In 2003, *HUL* launched the *Fair & Lovely Foundation*. On their website, *Fair & Lovely* mention that the foundation is dedicated to helping women across Asia and Africa through

providing online courses, career guidance, and job opportunities. The brand indicates that “we believe all women can create an identity through knowledge, skills and career. Our role is to ensure that every woman, everywhere has an opportunity to create her own identity” (Fair & Lovely Foundation, 2019). Glenn (2008) points out that the formation of the foundation was partly a result of criticism by the All India Democratic Women’s Association (2008). The association called out *Fair & Lovely* creating and promoting content of a racist nature. The mission of the foundation is to “encourage economic empowerment of women across India”. This is achieved through training programs, scholarships and educational/guidance programs (Glenn, 2008). It could be argued that remnants of the ideals of the foundation can be seen in some of the advertising of *Fair & Lovely*. Some of the advertisements did include aspects of strong independent women, provided the fact that they had lighter skin tones. This inherently moves away from one problem, namely, that women are subservient to another, women must have ‘perfect skin’ to be fully empowered and independent. Researchers could further focus on how individuals receive and understand advertising for skin lightening products which will further enrich the understanding of how prevalent the problem of colorism is.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A – List of Products Examined

The table indicates all the brands and products that were analyzed in this paper. The first column signifies the parent company. The second column indicates the brand name while the third column provides the name of the product. Finally, the last column highlights the target market for the product by indicating either male or female. In total the advertisements for 47 products were examined, which covered 11 brands. The sample included both brands that originate internationally such as Garnier and Olay and nationally such as Himalaya Herbals and Fair and Handsome.

\*HUL stands for Hindustan Unilever Limited

	<b>Parent Company</b>	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Target Market</b>
<b>1</b>	Dabur India Ltd	FEM	FEM Diamond Crème Bleach	Female
<b>2</b>	Dabur India Ltd	FEM	FEM Bleach Get Set Glow	Female
<b>3</b>	Dabur India Ltd	Dabur Gulabari	Dabur Gulabari Facewash	Female
<b>4</b>	Emami	Fair and Handsome	Fair and Handsome Instant Fairness Facewash	Male
<b>5</b>	Emami	Fair and Handsome	Fair and Handsome Laser 12	Male
<b>6</b>	Emami	BoroPlus	BoroPlus Healthy White Fairness Cream	Female
<b>7</b>	Emami	Fair and Handsome	Fair and Handsome	Male
<b>8</b>	Emami	Fair and Handsome	Fair and Handsome Complete Winter Solution	Male
<b>9</b>	Himalaya Global Holdings	Himalaya Herbals	Himalaya Clear Complexion Whitening Day Cream	Female

<b>10</b>	Himalaya Global Holdings	Himalaya Herbals	Himalaya Natural Glow Fairness Cream	Female
<b>11</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Winter Fairness Cream	Female
<b>12</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely	Female
<b>13</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely BB Cream	Female
<b>14</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Powder Cream	Female
<b>15</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Advanced Multi Vitamin	Female
<b>16</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Anti Marks Treatment	Female
<b>17</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Ayurvedic Care	Female
<b>18</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Pollution Clean Up Facewash	Female
<b>19</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Men - Facewash	Male
<b>20</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Men - Charcoal Facewash	Male
<b>21</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Men - Fairness Cream	Male
<b>22</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Pimple Off Facewash	Female
<b>23</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely Advanced Multi Vitamin - SPF 15	Female
<b>24</b>	HUL	Fair & Lovely	Fair & Lovely MAX Fairness MultiExpert	Male
<b>25</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds White Beauty Facewash	Female
<b>26</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds Pure White Facewash	Female

<b>27</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds Light Moisturiser	Female
<b>28</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds White Beauty BB+	Female
<b>29</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds White Beauty Winter Anti-Spot Moisturiser	Female
<b>30</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds White Beauty Pearl Gel Facewash	Female
<b>31</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds Men Energy Charge Icy Gel Fashwash	Male
<b>32</b>	HUL	Ponds	Ponds Men Pollution Out Deep Clean Facewash	Male
<b>33</b>	HUL	Lakmé	Lakmé Absolute Perfect Radiance Skin Lightening Serum	Female
<b>34</b>	HUL	Lakmé	Lakmé Instalight	Female
<b>35</b>	HUL	Lakmé	Lakmé Clean Up	Female
<b>36</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier White Complete Serum Cream	Female
<b>37</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream	Female
<b>38</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier White Complete Fairness Facewash	Female
<b>39</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier White Complete Winter Care	Female
<b>40</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier Fair Miracle	Female
<b>41</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier White Complete Multi Action Fairness Cream	Female
<b>42</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier Men Power White Double Action Facewash	Male
<b>43</b>	L'Oréal	Garnier	Garnier Men AcnoFight Pimple Clearing Whitening Cream	Male

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<b>44</b>	L'Oréal	L'Oréal	L'Oréal Paris Skin Perfect	Female
<b>45</b>	Lotus Herbals Ltd	Lotus Herbals	Lotus WhiteGlow Gel Crème	Female
<b>46</b>	Procter & Gamble	Olay	Olay White Radiance	Female
<b>47</b>	Procter & Gamble	Olay	Olay Natural White	Female

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## Appendix B – Example of Initial Coding

### Advert 1 – Garnier Light Complete

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF-QNeMJ\\_bs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF-QNeMJ_bs)

Published on Jul 7, 2018

Discover the power of 3X Vitamin C Serum and Yuzu lemon with Garnier Light Complete Serum Cream. It will give you spotless, brighter skin in 1 week by lightening 3 types of spots - Dark Spots, Pimple Spots and Sun Spots. It is available in packs of – 23g for Rs. 69 and 45g for Rs. 129. Buy Now: <https://bit.ly/2O0h2w8>

1. The ad uses a mix of Hindi and English, the arguments surround spots and pimples, there is talk about being exposed to the sun due to shopping (hobbies). There is mention of vitamins that will fight dull skin, making it bright. “spotless and bright in a week” the product works quickly. Spots can come day or night without a warning. Vitamin and lemon (natural ingredients). Price highlighted.
2. Three friends, Alia Bhatt in yellow (celebrity), telling her friends that using this serum will take away skin problems. Everyday tasks such as shopping, and chilling hindered by sun, this product will protect.
3. The two friends are distressed from their skin problems, and then are happy because of the solution. Garnier will fight the problem. The girls seem to be young adults, under the age of 25, they seem to be friendly with each other. Alia is very much in the center of the ad with her bright yellow dress, while the other two remain in light pastel colors.
4. Yellow is very much the dominant color in the ad, it could signify the product as it comes in a yellow bottle. It could also signify the vitamin C and lemon that will fight the dullness of skin. It makes the ad look very bright as well, the brightness is very much highlighted through the ad. The camera movements are fast and quick paced, which gives the ad a more youthful feel.
5. The product will turn ‘bad skin’ to ‘good skin’, there are natural substances to help fight the sun. You will be spotless and bright.
6. The serum cream is marketed to a younger audience, the song and narrative might speak to a more urban India, perhaps late high school or university students. The use of Hinglish (Hindi and English)
7. Alia Bhatt is the celebrity present in the ad, according the IMDB, she made her acting debut in 2012 with the movie Student of the Year. She has more than 32 million followers on Instagram, and 19 million followers on Twitter. She also promotes her

brand endorsements through social media as can be seen in the extract. Going through her social media platforms, it can be seen that she actively uses them to promote projects that she has worked on. She has not been in the film industry for as long as some of the other celebrities, starting off in 2012 which could add to a more youthful personality.



8. A shade card did not appear, however, there is an animation which becomes lighter at point 00:00:14.
9. The main points from this ad are, spotless and bright skin, vitamins and lemon, fighting skin problems, results in a week, and of course the product itself.

## Appendix C – List of Celebrities in the Advertisements

Celebrity	Profession	Brand
Alia Bhatt	Actor	Garnier White
Bhaichung Bhutia	Footballer	Ponds Men
Hrithik Roshan	Actor	Fair and Handsome
Huma Qureshi	Actor	Lotus Herbal
Ileana D'Cruz	Actor	Ponds White Beauty
John Abraham	Actor	Garnier Men
Kareena Kapoor	Actor	Lakme
Kartik Aryan	Actor	Fair and Handsome
Katrina Kaif	Actor	Loreal Skin Perfect
Saif Ali Khan	Actor	Fair & Lovely for Men
Sidharth Malhotra	Actor	Men's Fair & Lovely
Shah Rukh Khan	Actor	Fair and Handsome
Shraddha Kapoor	Actor	Lakme Insta Glow
Sonakshi Sinha	Actor	FEM

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Sushant Singh Rajput	Actor	Garnier Men
Varun Dhawan	Actor	Ponds Men
Vidyut Jamwal	Actor	Fair and Handsome
Virat Kohli	Cricketer	Men's Fair & Lovely
Yami Gautam	Actor	Fair & Lovely
Yuvraj Singh	Cricketer	Fair & Lovely for Men

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Appendix D – Coding Scheme

Appendix E – Gender Distribution of Coding Scheme