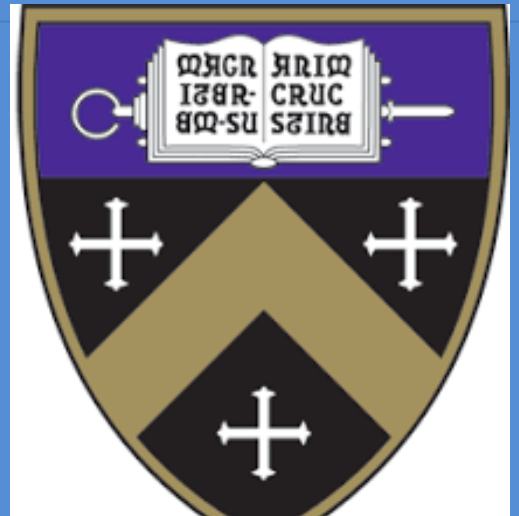




Objectification in Asian Skin Whitening Commercials: A Content Analysis

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Kenyon College Summer Science 2017



Introduction

- Pre-dating colonialism and the spread of Western beauty ideals, the preference for white skin has and continues to dominate in many Asian countries. Not only does this preference narrow perceptions of beauty, it also has been tied to a woman's social status, marriage and career prospects, and her earning potential (Li et. al. 2008). Capitalizing on the anxieties of women seeking a social and economic step-up, the multi-billion dollar skin whitening industry has spent decades tailoring advertising campaigns to create a want and need for their products.
- Sexual objectification of women is a marketing technique frequently used in both print and television by companies to sell all types of products, often with little consideration given to any possible negative social and psychological consequences. Constant exposure to sexual objectification (in both media depictions and inter-personal experiences), has been linked to various psychopathologies including increased self-objectification, self-monitoring, depression, shame and anxiety (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997; Miles-McLean et al., 2015)
- Media depictions of sexual objectification affect not only how women view themselves, but also how other people view and act towards women by creating behavioral scripts that encourage overt acts of interpersonal sexual objectification (Seabrook et al. 2016)
- The most common form of interpersonal sexual objectification women report experiencing is **unreciprocated male gaze**, which has demonstrated the ability to produce "feelings of body shame, social physique anxiety, and intent to diet compared to unreciprocated female gaze" (Holland et al. 2017; Calogero 2004).
- Recently however, researchers have brought forth a concept known as **Post-feminist gaze**, which addresses woman to woman gazing. In a culture that claims to be moving towards female empowerment, some women reported feeling that intra-woman gazing felt more judgmental, pervasive, significant and damaging than male gazing. (Riley et al. 2016)
- With a focus on unreciprocated gaze, this content analysis aimed to identify the extent and the manner in which Asian Skin Whitening Commercials model behaviors/events that explicitly display and implicitly encourage objectifying and self-objectifying behaviors

RQ1: Will what the model is depicted as get/gaining interact with the gender of gazers?

RQ2: Will the model's reaction (facial and behavioral) to being gazed interact with the gender of gazer

RQ3: Will gender of gazer present interact with their reactions (facial and behavioral) to the model

Methods

Sample

The final sample for this content analysis consisted of 75 commercials marketing skin-whitening products (sometimes referred to as "skin-brightening"). The commercials were selected from YouTube using the search phrase "<Insert Company Name> Skin Whitening". The brands selected represented the Top Ten Global Beauty Companies with subsidiaries that produced and marketed skin-whitening products. Per the specific cultural focus of the content analysis, only commercials marketed in Asia and produced after the year 2000.

Sample Inclusion Requirements:

- Must have a "primary model" - (PRIMARY MODEL IS THE MODEL WHO APPEARS ALONE AT SOME POINT DURING THE VIDEO)
- Must feature at least one other character aside from model
- Must feature at least one other character who is not the same sex/gender as the model
- Must feature at least one instance of unreciprocated gaze

Codebook

With no existing codebook that addressed unreciprocated gaze behavior, a 60 item codebook was created for the purposes of this particular content analysis. Guided by previous literature related to the topics of interest to this study, the codebook covered a range behaviors related to gazing, objectification and self-objectification. Questions related to both reciprocated and unreciprocated gazing referenced the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the verb. The codebook was piloted by two coders using commercials not included in the present study (.86). One coder completed the coding for the complete sample

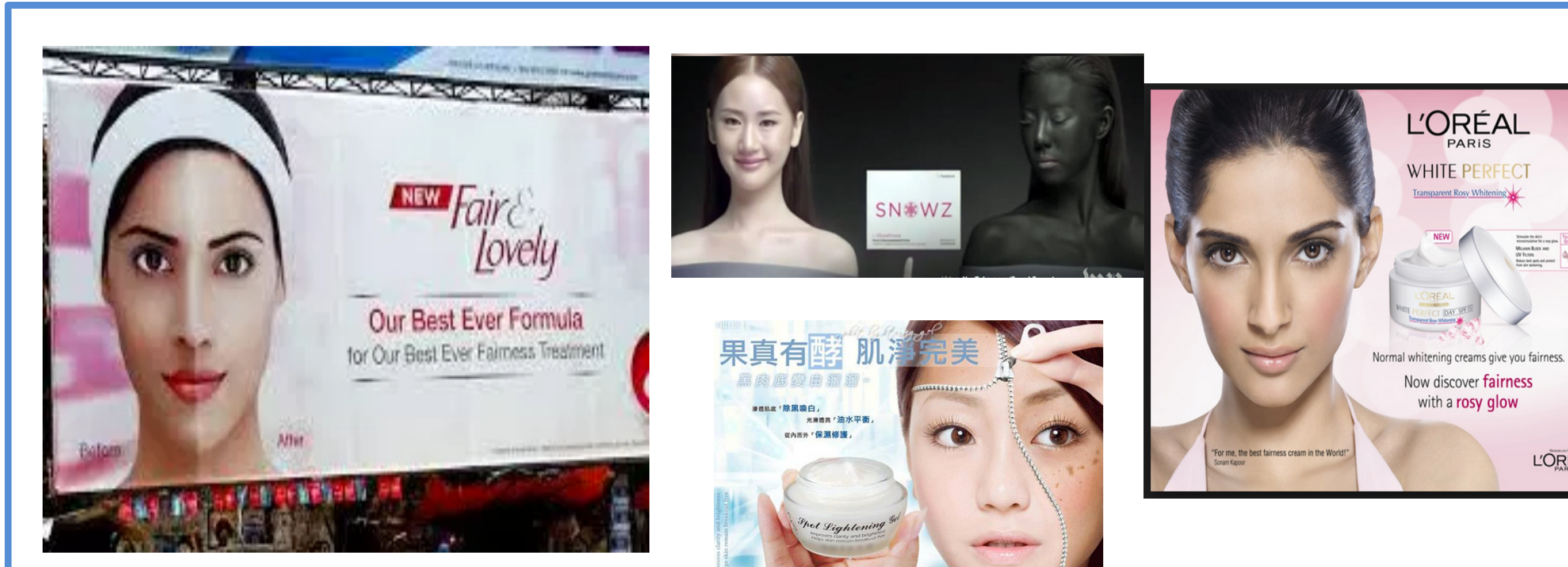
Chi-Squared Results (Sig. Only)

Gender of Gazer	Male Only		Male + Female		Total	X^2		p
	n	%	n	%		n	%	
	N=28		N=47		N=75			
Get/Gain								
Romance	11	.39	6	.13	17	.23	7.04	.01**
Increased Social Status	0	.00	9	.19	9	.12	6.09	.01**
Increased Career Success	2	.07	15	.32	17	.23	6.14	.01**
Model Behavior								
Lift Chin	1	.04	13	.28	14	.19	6.71	.01**
Gazer Emotion								
Desire	18	.64	17	.36	35	.48	5.57	.02*
Model/Gazer								
Model Speak	7	.15	32	.68	39	.52	13.05	.00**

Table 1. Number and percentage of commercials displaying behavior or event by Gender of Gazer

*p<.05

**p<.01



Total Frequency Counts (>50%)

	All Commercials	
	n	%
Get/Gain		
Anything	70	.93
Positive Female Attention	34	.73
Positive Male Attention	68	.91
Model Behavior		
Laugh	54	.72
Smile Forward	63	.84
Side/Over Shoulder Glance	47	.63
Model Emotion		
Joy	72	.96
Surprise	43	.57
Gazer Emotion		
Joy	69	.93
Surprise	63	.84
Model/Gazer		
Acknowledgment	39	.85

Table 2. Number and percentage of commercials displaying behavior or event for total sample

Note. Only behaviors/events that appear in ≥50% of the total sample are listed

Insignificant Behaviors/Events

Get/Gain

- Envy of Female

Model Behavior

- Look Down
- Look Up
- Flip/Play with Hair
- Readjust/Toy with Accessory

Model Emotion

- Concern
- Anger
- Embarrassment

- Disgust
- Fear

Gazer Emotion

- Anger
- Sad/Disappointment
- Envy
- Disgust
- Fear

Model/Gazer

- Interaction with Dialogue

Results

For the purposes of this content analysis, only codebook questions deemed directly relevant to the research questions at hand were analyzed for differences between Gender of Gazers (using Chi-Squared Analysis) and Total Frequency Counts

- Several significant differences were observed in the types of behaviors and external events depicted in the commercials. Overall, the results point to a greater focus on using the product with the intention of "gaining" a romantic interest ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 7.04, p = .00$), men openly gazing at the model with desire ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 5.57, p = .02$), and the primary model not speaking when only men were depicted as gazing ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 13.05, p = .00$).
- In commercials where women were also gazing, the model was significantly more likely to be depicted as "gaining" career success ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 6.14, p = .01$), social status ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 6.09, p = .01$), and lift her chin higher in response to being gazed at ($X^2(2, N = 75) = 6.71, p = .01$).
- Regardless of Gender of Gazer, the model was more than 50% likely to be depicted engaging in one or more behaviors considered to be "traditionally feminine/submissive" (Goffman 1979), respond positively to being gazed at, and receive positive reactions from other gazers.

Discussion

- Preliminary findings suggest that there are still distinct scripts for what social interactions should consist of when a woman is only interacting with men compared to when she is interacting with men and women.

Male Only

Model: Acquire the attention and desire of men through actions/appearance rather than words.

Men: Actively pursue a woman you find attractive, she is sure to respond positively to it

Men and Women

Model: When I look good, everyone smiles at me, likes me, and treats me like I'm special which will make me happy

Men and Women: You should observe and react to other peoples physical appearance, especially if it meets society's beauty standards

Overall

- When you are in public, you are on display
- Men and women will gaze with equal scrutiny, react emotively with equal intensity
 - As soon as you step into the public sphere everyone is judging you and you should be ok with that
- Easiest way to get approval/positive attention from others is not using words or actions, rather appearance and traditionally feminine behaviors that highlight your physical appeal
- Product is the simple and only solution
- Further Study:
 - Design a study with the intention of looking at how watching different beauty commercials (i.e. gazer/no gazer, male/male+female,) affects participants thoughts about social scripts

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Kenyon College Summer Science Program for the opportunity to conduct this research and my mentor professor Irene Lopez for her mentorship and support