

Vanity of Indians and the Success of the Cosmetic Advertisements

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Abstract

The quest for adornment is a global passion and Indians are no exception to it. Indian Cosmetic market is a multi Billion Market (Lifestyle, 2012) and reportedly growing at 15-20% annually. Though it was observed that demand for skin whitening products by both the genders is the main drive of the bullish trend in the cosmetic market, the same can't undermine the substantial contribution of the other beauty products. This growing vanity of Indians widens the scope for global cosmetic marketers and not much scholarly light has been thrown upon this area. Hence, this present study concentrates on the influence of Gender and Social status on Physical and Achievement variables and how a latent variable Vanity explains Physical and Achievement, finally the effect of Vanity on Cosmetic Product Advertisement Effectiveness. A sample of 350 was collected from Tamil Nadu Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by adopting non-probability convenience sampling method. A Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the complex relationship between variables and test the Hypotheses. Results indicate irrespective of Gender and Social status people are concerned about their appearance and success in life and vanity has a significant role to play towards the likelihood of remembering cosmetic advertisements. The findings of this research may have implications for marketers, Advertising professionals and researchers.

Keywords: Vanity, Cosmetic Advertisements, Gender, Social Status, SEM.

1. Introduction

Things have been changing in India in the past decade particularly with the economy opening up to the world and people have started to ape the western life style and western values. In this context, vanity has become an important pervasive factor in almost all walks of life. Few years ago, for an Indian home maker bringing up the children would be the only priority but today changing gender roles forced her to revise her prioritization and so caring for herself becomes equally important. A report by Nielsen Research Inc. (Business Outlook, 2007) revealed the pressure to look better than the previous generation is high among majority (almost 84%) of Indians and there is a significant spending being done by them on beauty products and treatments. All these confirm a growing vanity of Indians and its potential implication for global marketers. Marketers responded exorbitantly well to the rising phenomenon of vanity as one can clearly see a spurt in increase of fairness and beauty products and treatments in the market where celebrities are being roped in to promote them. In this context insight into the role of vanity in connection with the reachability of the advertisements will be of great help for the marketers to design their strategies to gain edge in the media clutter.

2. Vanity and Appearance

“Personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of reference” Aristotle. Vanity refers to a person's concern with and the perception of social achievements and physical appearances (Durvasula and Lysonski 2001). Netemeyer et al., (1995) defined physical vanity as ‘an excessive concern for, and/or a positive (and perhaps inflated) view of one's physical appearance’. Physical vanity consists of two components – concern for and positive view of one's physical appearance. Achievement vanity was defined as ‘an excessive concern for, and/or a positive (and perhaps inflated) view of, one's personal achievements’. Achievement vanity consists of two components – concern for and positive view of one's personal achievements. (Durvasula et al., 2001) point out that there are two schools of thought in regards to the forces generating vanity. On the one hand, vanity is a primary biogenic drive and that it is a personality trait influenced by genes and early socialization. On the other hand, vanity is a secondary psychogenic trait like conspicuous consumption, and hence is largely influenced by one's environment including social and economic conditions prevailing in that environment (Mason, 1981).

Empirical evidence lent support to the notion that Western Cultures like the United States value beauty and physical appearance more than Eastern Cultures like those of China and India (Schwartz & Bilskey, 1987). Western Culture especially U.S is known for their strong emphasis on outward appearance (Bar-Tel and Saxe 1976; Bloch 1993; Franzoi and Herzog 1987; Netemeyer, Burton, and Lichenstein 1995; Richins 1991). American women's struggle to achieve a slim physic is portrayed in mass media as liberation and empowerment. In contrast to the conquering attitude toward

nature in the United States, traditional Chinese, Japanese, and Indian societies value harmonious relationship with nature (Yau, 1988) as they regard themselves as a part of nature and believe that they should not try to master it but instead learn to adapt to it. But Global Consumer culture has been largely influenced by the untiring effort of marketers with their advertising messages that appeal to achievement status and physical beauty (Campbell, 1987, Levitt, 1983, Roth, 1995). Recent reports have discussed the surging popularity of cosmetic surgery for younger women in China resulting in a \$24 billion dollar industry (The Economist, 2004). Another report highlighted the changing gender roles in India especially how younger women are no longer in compliance to the conventional roles that were expected of them (Agrawal, 2006). (Srinivas Durvasula, Steven Lysonski, 2008) found that eastern cultures exhibit higher concern for both physical appearance and professional achievement as compared to western cultures. This phenomenon was predicted in advance by Time magazine (June 16, 1958) as it reported that In the next 50 years, American beauty Industry will grow by 14-fold, to about \$56 billion and India, by comparison, could cross the \$50 billion mark in less than half the time taken by the US. Consulting firm McKinsey believes that by 2025, Indian spending on personal care products, expressed as a percentage of their total income, will be on par with any consumer worldwide.

Media constantly feeds the public with a stream of beautiful women and handsome men to be adored. (Peirce, 1990) analyzed the ideology constructed by Seventeen Magazine and suggested that appearance is one of the primary concerns of a teenage girl. Petrie et al., (1996) found, in the past three decades, there is an increase in the number of messages aimed toward men concerning physical fitness and health in the popular press. Numerous products are advertised based on the claims of enhancing one's appearance and/or the benefits associated with being considered physically attractive (Solomon 1985, 1992). Physical Vanity has been found to be positively correlated with the amount of money spent on cosmetics and on clothing (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Even though marketers have tried to link vanity with numerous products within consumer culture, the role of vanity has received much less attention in the literature (Wang and Waller, 2006). Many researchers (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, Tsai., 2005 & Berthon et al., 2009) explored consumption implications of vanity but Kuang-peng Hung, et al., (2011) suggested that its role is even more prominent than previously indicated, signalling the scope of research in this area. Recent studies in consumer behavior and clinical psychology have assessed the potential impact of vanity projected in the media on the development of eating disorders leading to anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Bloch and Richins 1992; Brownell 1991; Crandall 1988; Striegel-Moore et al., 1986; Williamson et al., 1990).

Studies have confirmed the positive benefits of physical attractiveness such as increased self-esteem, social popularity and power (Adams 1977; Goldman and Lewis 1977; Jackson, Sullivan, and Hymes 1987; Krantz 1987). Feingold (1992) concluded that attractive people are perceived to be "more sociable, dominant, sexually warm, mentally healthy, intelligent, and socially skilled than unattractive people". Formation of such tendency has been detected in early stages of childhood (Clifford & Walster 1973) where preschool children viewed attractive peers as smarter and friendlier than less attractive peers (Vaughn and Langlois, 1983) and were more likely to develop negative notions such as lazy, sloppy, and stupid toward overweight children (Rodin et al., 1985). Given the substantial benefits of attractiveness, it is not surprising that many individuals become highly concerned with their appearance and pursue greater physical attractiveness (Bloch, 1993).

2.1 Gender differences in Physical Vanity

Although physical attractiveness is clearly desirable, its desirability is highly associated with women than men. Research (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986) has revealed that women, compared to men, are more concerned about their physical appearance (i.e. vanity physical concern) and pay more attention to how others perceive them (i.e. vanity physical view). Empirical evidences have emerged that further validates the notion that women are likely to be more concerned about appearance, whereas it is achievement that men are likely to be more concerned about (Aune & Aune, 1994; Jackson, 1992). Furthermore, women have scored significantly higher on public body consciousness than men (Miller, Murphy, and Buss, 1981) and they tend to spend more time on managing their appearance than did men regardless of ethnic background (Aune & Aune, 1994). (Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990) found that females across the age span of 10 to 79 years were much more concerned than males about physical appearance and body weight. Theorists (Jackson, 1992, Rodin et al., 1985) have reasoned into the phenomenon of why women are more concerned about physical attractiveness than men are. The first reason deals with the "value" of attractiveness. Attractiveness can be used to secure social influence or power, particularly in cultures where women are placed in a more submissive role. Hence, women select husbands as a means of attaining social position unlike men who select wives for their attractive appearance (Buss and Barnes, 1986). (Willis and Carlson, 1983) found this tendency in a study where men disproportionately offered financial security for an attractive female in contrast to women who offer their beauty for financial security. The idea of value also relates to how a women's status (much less so for a male) is derived in part by her beauty (Jackson, 1992). Vaughn and Langlois (1983) found that the connection between attractiveness and social status was more pronounced for females than males. In contrast, men's income and material wealth were more

associated with his status and desirability. Hence, attractiveness affords a certain value that gives a woman more social power and more status socially, to a far greater extent, than for males (Jackson, 1992). The second reason deals with tradition. Social roles have been ascribed historically such that males are given roles as worker and financial provider (Breadwinner) in contrast to females whose role is not centered in the workforce. According to Bar-Tal and Saxe (1975) women use physical attractiveness as their way of demonstrating being “successful” given their historical low levels of participation in “objective” roles in the workforce. Therefore, women’s greater concern for physical attractiveness is due to their role perceptions and the corresponding stereotypes of being male or female (Brownmiller, 1984). Although women’s roles in society have clearly changed in the last few decades, stereotypes continue to persist especially because women often tend to drop out of the workforce due to child rearing. Concern for appearance also has been reported as more pronounced among women who have achieved occupational success and discarded traditional stereotypes (Lakoff and Scherr, 1984). Recently (Srinivas Durvasula, Steven Lysonski, 2008) found both males and females are highly concerned about physical appearance and professional achievements. Whereas (Helene Cherrier, Kaleel Rahman, Tarek Mady and Dennis Lee, 2009) documented that males demonstrate more vanity orientation than females. (Workman & Lee, 2011), Women scored higher on vanity physical concern, vanity achievement concern, vanity achievement view and public self-consciousness than men.

2.2 Gender differences in Achievement Vanity

Research confirms the priority placed on achievement varies with gender. Socialization to gender roles is being done from the very budding stage of people. In boys’ social culture, popular boys are those who display multi-faceted achievements in academics and athletics where as popular girls are those who have an attractive physical appearance, and come from relatively affluent families (Adler et al., 1992). It’s a obvious style of media and books meant for children depicting girls as passive and dependent and altogether absent when comes to achievement activities (Chafetz, 1974; Spenner and Featherman, 1978). Studies have demonstrated that achievement drive and professional success with higher wages goes hand in hand (Kiker & Condon, 1981 and Daymont & Andrisani, 1984). Furthermore, It was identified that men consider themselves as significantly more achievement driven in terms of competition / dominance (Rotheiler et al., 1998) than women who have given more importance to relationship building (Richmonds et al., 2004). We can conclude from the available body of knowledge that men are more likely than women to be achievement driven and have a greater concern for their personal achievements. From the above it can be said that there is a lack of consensus in the literature when it comes to gender difference on Physical appearance and prioritization of achievement thus encouraged the researcher to develop and test the below Hypotheses.

3. Methodology

This paper attempts to see the influence of Gender and Social status, which is measured on the basis of education, annual income & assets held, on Physical and Achievement variables and how a latent variable Vanity explains Physical and Achievement, finally to see the effect of Vanity on Ad Effectiveness. For this study, a sample of 350 was collected from Tamil Nadu Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by convenience sampling method. The respondents were assembled, in small groups, at a common venue where they were shown the edited advertisement clippings of cosmetic products with their brands concealed and were asked to recognise and recall the advertisements in terms of product and the brand. The advertisements, 10 in number, were selected at random from a group of advertisements that were collected from a week of television observation of Sports, Movie, Entertainment and News channel. The cumulative scores of recognition and recall test were taken as Ad effectiveness. The reason for using Advertisement Recall and Brand Recognition tests to measure advertisement effectiveness is obvious as these measures were perceived as most reliable and widely used in advertisement effectiveness researches (Steadman, 1969, Chestnut et al., 1977, Richmond & Hartman., 1982, Severn et al., 1990 and Shanthi, P. & Thiyagarajan, S. 2012). Views and concern for physical appearance and achievement is termed as Vanity and it is a human trait which is influenced by social pressure (Durvasula et al., 2001). Past research studies have defined vanity in sociological, psychological, philosophical, and consumer behaviourist terms (Netemeyer et al., 1995; Bloch and Richins, 1992; Cash and Brown, 1987; Lasch, 1978; Solomon, 1985, 1992). Vanity is divided into four constructs/traits concern for physical appearance, a positive view of physical appearance, a concern for achievement and a positive view of achievement (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Concern for physical appearance means one is bothered about one’s own looks and appearances and takes care and sees to it that they look good to the outer world. View on physical appearance means one has positive views about their physical appearances, at times it can be exaggerated. Concern for achievement can be said as having a positive perception toward one’s achievement. Moreover, one believes that other people wish to have the same success as oneself. Achievement view means, therefore, that an individual has a “positive (perhaps inflated) view of one’s achievement” (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Physical appearance views and concern were grouped as one construct and was measure on a Five Point Likert scale, which had 10 statements/questions. Achievement concern and views were

grouped and measured as one construct and was measured on a Five point Likert scale with 11 statements/questions. These scales were modified slightly (Netemeyer et al., 1995) to increase the compression quotient and suit the Indian sample. A Pilot study was carried out on a sample of 30 respondents to check the reliability of the scales because they were modified and the reliability score for Physical is 0.831 and for Achievement is 0.830. SEM was applied to the data because of the complexity in the modeling and the presence of latent variables.

Figure 1
 Vanity Ad Effectiveness Model

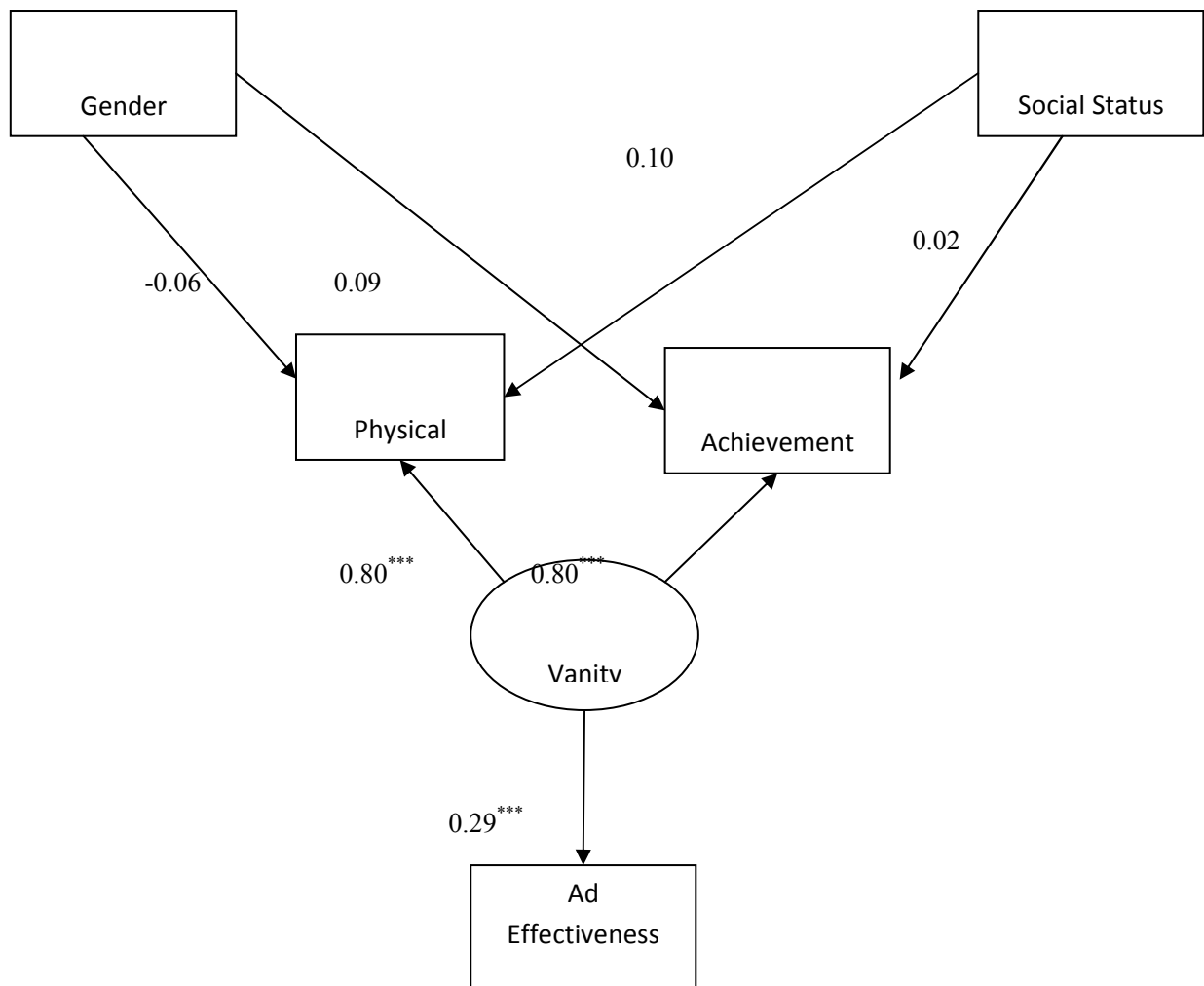


Table 1
 Model Fit

| Chi | Df | Sig | RMSEA | GFI | AGFI | CFI | NFI | AIG | CAIC |
|-------|----|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| 3.497 | 4 | 0.478 | 0.000 | 0.990 | 0.964 | 1.000 | 0.963 | 25.497* | 69.241* |

* Default model and Lowest of the three models

4. Results and Discussion

The fitness of the model to the data is explained by the above Goodness of Fit numbers and the important results are χ^2 value and its significance. The χ^2 value should be insignificant at 5% for absorbed variables of < 12 and sample size of > 250 (Barrett, 2007, Hair et al., 2009). The significance value for the model tested is 0.478 for a df of 4 which is insignificant indication the model fits the data very well. The next Goodness of fit indices is Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which should be less than .05 (MacCallum et al., 1996, Hu and Bentler, 1999, Steiger, 2007,

Hair et al., 2009) and the value for the model is 0.000 from this it can be concluded that the model perfectly fits the data. The other GFI result are Goodness-of-fit statistic (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit statistic (AGFI) Comparative fit index (CFI) values should be >0.90 (Bentler, 1990, Fan et al., 1999 Hooper et 2008, Hair et al., 2009) and the values for the model are 0.990, 0.964 and 1.000, all the values are above the required cutoff value of 0.90 from this it can be concluded that the model fits the data well. Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Consistent Version of AIC (CAIC) should be least for the model tested (Akaike, 1974, Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000) and it is least for the model tested. From these results it can be concluded that model fits the data well so one can move on to Hypotheses testing.

HA₁ Gender has an influence on Physical Vanity

There is a common notion that women are more concern about their physical appearance than men. But this notion has been disproved. Gender has no influence on Physical vanity which is on line with the findings of (Srinivas, Durvasula. & Steven, Lysonski., 2008)) who reported that both males and females are highly concerned about physical appearance. Irrespective of one's gender status both men and women are concern about their Physical appearance and have strong views about their Physical appearance. It is interesting to note that the findings of the study not only challenge the most studied and accepted fact of associating women and beauty closely but also confirm the existence of unnoticed potential men market for beauty products which recently has gained the attention of the global marketers in India.

HA₂ Gender has an influence on Achievement Vanity

Women tend to be less achievement oriented and are more concern about their family and social setup of their family is what is being believed and it more commonly accepted in India where gender difference is huge. Interestingly Gender has no influence on Achievement vanity as well, which is also on line with the findings of (Srinivas, Durvasula. & Steven, Lysonski., 2008)) who reported that both males and females are highly concerned about professional achievements. Both men and women are equally concern about their achievements in life and favourable views about their success. The findings go well with the reality in India as the current prevailing trend of changing gender roles and rise in the number of working women have influenced the way Indian women think, look and aspire.

HA₃ Social Status has an influence on Physical Vanity

Social status has an influence on Physical vanity that is people higher on the social setup, rich people, have the time and money to take care of the Physical appearance and boost about it while the lowers social setup people may not have the time or money is what is commonly believed. But it is found that Social status had no influence on Physical vanity, whether a person is rich or poor is immaterial all are concerned about their physical appearance. Surprisingly, the findings go hand in hand with the success mantra of the ongoing trend of sachet marketing and innovative micro-selling methods in mega economies like India.

HA₄ Social Status has an influence on Achievement Vanity

Social status has no role in Achievement vanity. Achievement and views about one's own achievement is not social centric. People from all classes are equally concerned about achievement and proud about their own achievements. This finding emerges as an important underlying reason for the spurt in the number of career and man power consultancies and Private Academic Institutions & programmes in India.

HA₅ Vanity has an influence on Ad Effectiveness

Coming to the important Hypothesis, Vanity has an influence on Advertisement Effectiveness and it has been proved right. Physical and Achievement Vanity have a role to play in the effectiveness of cosmetic product advertisements. More a person is concern about appearance and achievement more likely cosmetic products' advertisements will reach him/her. The finding vindicates the marketers, who believe that the degree of vanity trait possessed by an individual and the success of cosmetic advertisements are positively related.

From the above model, it can be concluded that Physical and Achievement constructs explain the latent vanity well with a factor loading of 0.80 and 0.80 which are more than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009) and each construct explaining around 64% of the variance which well over the required 50% (Hair et al., 2009). One can argue here that the latent construct model is under identified but the overall fit of the model is what is more important (Hair et al., 2009, Arbuckle, 2006, Mir and Zaheer, 2012) and the fit of overall model is good so the model has been retained. Gender and Social status has no role

to play in the Physical or Achievement vanity but Vanity has a whole is a significant predictor of Advertisement effectiveness. As Vanity increases by one SD unit Advertisement effectiveness will increase by 0.29 SD of Advertisement effectiveness. Interesting conclusion that can be drawn from the model is whether male or female or rich or poor people are concerned about their appearance and success in life and this has a significance role to play towards the way one looks at advertisements.

5. Conclusion

The current study attempted to investigate the influence of gender and social status on Physical and Achievement vanity, the lateral effect of vanity on effectiveness of cosmetic advertisements. This empirical study emerges as an important source of implications for marketers as well as academicians as its findings challenge the age-old notion of women were more concerned about their physical vanity and social status will be an important determinant in deciding which class would be the potential target for beauty products. Marketers can take this as a lead to standardize their message strategy to both genders and various social classes. Furthermore, the study highlights the predominant role of vanity in capturing the target minds implying vanity can clearly become rife as the mindset of the Indians become more concerned on Attractiveness and Success. Advertisers should take a note that promotional efforts featuring vanity appeals might work well and prove to be key weapon in the battle of staying connected with the audience.

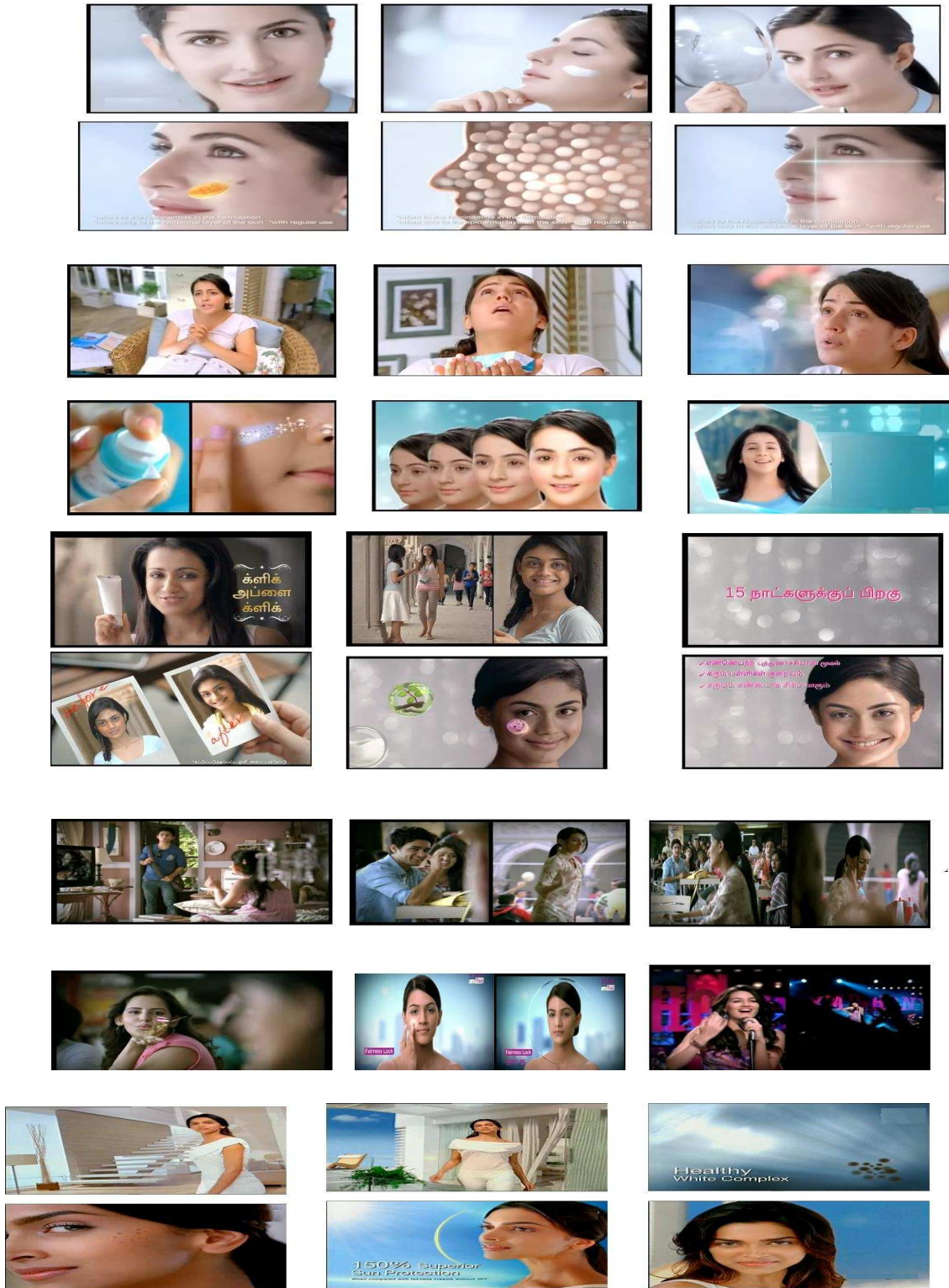
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Cosmetic Advertisements (10 in numbers) used in the study (Every six clippings interconnected constitute and represent one advertisement):





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