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WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL?
Analysis of Japanese beauty ideals in cosmetics advertising

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze beauty standards constructed and represented through Japanese cosmetics advertisements. The chapter of literature review firstly explored the past researches on Japanese beauty norms in the scope of race and gender studies. In addition, different types of beauty concepts including those which are peculiar to Japanese beauty cultures, were also introduced before this study moved to the research of the present beauty ideals. This research was done by studying in total eight still advertising images published in 2017, selected from four different Japanese cosmetics brands, for which the methodological approaches of semiotics and encoding/decoding were applied. Based on the data analysis and interpretation of signs representing beauty ideals in these advertisements, this study has discovered certain distinguishing characteristics of each branding tactic to offer definitions of beauty. The findings indicated that the process of representing Japanese beauty ideals through the act of cosmetics advertising are consequently intertwined with race and gender discourses.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 COSMETICS ADVERTISING IN JAPAN

Advertisements are a dominant media which people are consciously and unconsciously exposed to enormously in their daily visual environments. The act of advertising has the economic power to persuade the viewers and influence their decisions on shopping. Based on the assumption that advertisers aim specific target consumers classified into class, race, gender, age and so on, they also have social and cultural powers to create cultures and trends, stimulate consumers' concerns and desires, and even produce/reproduce ideologies through representation and manipulations of public opinions (Yokouchi, 2003). Among various kinds of advertisements, cosmetics adverts are one of the most influential mass media in Japan, as the Japanese cosmetics industry is ranked second as one of the largest beauty industries in the world (Miller, 2006). The sales of cosmetics are the only section that has maintained increasing in the merchandise division in the past few years (Egami, 2017). As Inoue described, advertisements are always the core part of Japanese female fashion magazines and those of cosmetics account for the great majority of those advertisements (1989).

1.2   RESEARCH PROBLEM

As mentioned above, there is no room for doubt about the huge economic, social and cultural impacts attached to the act of cosmetics advertising in Japan, which have played the essential role of presenting/representing constantly changing beauty standards and commodifying "ephemeral qualities of attractiveness, femininity, and beauty" (Morris, 2014, p.242) towards the huge numbers of Japanese female consumers. However, the study of beauty-related phenomena seems to be one of the growing fields that needs regular updated researches and new discussion frequently, since it is an elusive study field that the concept of beauty has continually and rapidly changed. Moreover, the previous studies on analyzing beauty standards in advertising has heavily centered on the case studies in US and those of Asian

countries have been often neglected in deeper analyses (Morris, 2014). Hence, this will be a niche, where this paper will explore analyzing how Japanese beauty standards are represented in cosmetics advertising and its symbolic meanings decoded under the streams of race, gender and beauty studies.

1.3   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper explores beauty standards/ideals in Japan by analyzing cosmetics advertising images found in websites of the selected brands. My research consists of the following 5 sections; introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and conclusion.

Chapter 2 offers literature reviews from past studies regarding the relationship between beauty standards, gender, and race. In this chapter, I firstly explore gender-related beauty studies, including how beautification of appearance matters in women's socioeconomic hierarchies, how normalization of femininities and heterosexuality has been constructed in beauty adverts. Secondly, I argue from past researches that beauty concepts are always diverse so that there are plural ideals of beauty found in adverts. Additionally, a specificity of beauty qualities in Japan, or the concept of *kawaii* is also explained in this section. Thirdly, race-conscious beauty studies are discussed to answer a question; 'are beauty standards in Japan established by their admiration of Caucasian standards?'. Three major theories from past researches are discussed here, which are, beauty as Caucasianization, Japaneseness, or Cosmopolitanism. Chapter 3 is going to offer the major three research questions to answer so as to be able to conduct a profound critical analysis for this study. In order to approach those questions, I am going to explain the procedures on the data collection I have chosen, and also my methodological ideas of how to perceive those data. As for the methodologies, the concepts of vision and visuality, functions of photographic adverts in visual communication, semiotics, coding/decoding and discourse analysis will be discussed as main approaches. This section also points out the validity of analysis of the cosmetics adverts to discuss these research questions with. Chapter 4 offers the analysis on 8 advertising images selected from four different Japanese cosmetics brands based on the ranking of highly reviewed cosmetics released from *@cosme*, a Japanese web portal for beauty products in 2017. Each image is analyzed by providing basic information on the brand firstly and then listing up signifiers found from the image, thus categorizing into three types of signs: iconic, color and text. The last chapter 5 offers the summary regarding beauty standards observed from the data, and make recommendations for the further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will discuss the relevant past studies of others to provide context for the research of this dissertation : the analysis of beauty ideals encoded in Japanese cosmetics advertisements. The relevant works are related to several fields of study including discussions on socially-constructed concept of beauty from the viewpoint of gender studies, research on different definitions of beauty in the field of beauty studies and discussions on relationship between beauty standards and dynamics of racial complexity in race studies. The review of these past literatures will provide a starting point for this research and frame my interpretation of findings.

2.1 GENDER

It seems that cosmetics advertisements aim to fulfill two major purposes; needless to say, they are required to sell the actual products, but moreover, they offer consumers ideal images on how they can achieve the desired beauty standards by means of using the products. This is originated from the inevitable social norm that 'being beautiful matters for women' in many different levels. Rhode (2010) discussed appearance-related issues women are facing in societies, observing how beauty standards weigh heavily on socioeconomic standards of women in various layers of their livings such as marriage status, employment opportunities, expenses for beauty products, disadvantages of aging. These have resulted in taking care of one's appearance as a very essential routine to establish or maintain their social status, and this importance of women's appearance and their struggles to meet the beauty standard has been "perpetuating gender hierarchies" (2010, p. 48).

2.1.1 THE POWER OF APPEARANCE

Despite the data limitations that Rhode applied in most of the case studies from the situations in USA and other European countries, those case studies seem to be applicable to the context of Japanese media images of beauty as well, because "the appearance shift away from an

emphasis on women as social actors, as wives, mothers, and daughters, toward sexualized female bodies and beatified body surfaces" , which has been observed since mid-1990s (Miller, 2006, p. 20). Making efforts to beautify one's appearance as it should be portrayed, under the norms of 'how decent woman should look', has been requested towards females in various social occasions in Japan.

For instance, the act of wearing 'appropriate ways of makeup' has been considered as a sign that considered an adult woman knows how to take care of yourself and also ready to work, stepping up one's stage from youth to grown-up social communities. As women get older and have more opportunities to socialize with others, they are required to be conscious about how they are perceived by others by their looks. This is so called "aesthetic consciousness (*biishiki*)" (Ho, 2017, p. 61) and this term often appears in daily conversations among women to judge each other if they have higher/ lower *biishiki*.

Shiseido, which has the largest domestic market shares in the Japanese cosmetics industries, has launched a website called *job hunting-makeup* (就活メイク) for new female graduates who seek jobs in Japan (Shiseido, n.d.). This website offers columns on how to makeup each different facial part and also gives general advices on how to present yourself with socially-correct makeups, fashion styles and behaviors. Besides the fact that most of the articles in this website try to emphasize that their goal is to help readers to be 'true to yourself' or 'just the way you are', it seems, however, that instructs readers to adhere to collective styles of appearances, which is rather contradictory from the intentions to express oneself freely as an individual. This promotes readers to acknowledge the underlying basic assumptions that there are not any options of not wearing makeup for working women, as "...women's bodies must be altered in some way – that their natural state is unacceptable. When women do not conform (or attempt to conform) to these norms, they face the possibility of sanctions in both their personal and professional lives" (Nell & Kwan, 2010, p. 130). This case reveals the hidden norms that the construction of self-image should be represented by fixing up their outward appearance, and the 'intentionally decorated surface' brings about such a huge gendered and socioeconomic impacts on them. Therefore, beauty studies under the stream of gender study fields need to adopt analysis on beautification process and its represented meanings, as this paper is going to analyze those from cosmetics advertisements.

In her discussion on the codependent relationship between pursuing more beautiful appearance and acquiring higher socioeconomic status, Rhode argues that advertisements are

the most powerful approaches through which the importance of appearance has been privileged socially and economically (2010). Her observation is plausible in the case of cosmetics marketing strategies, in which advertisers are required to embed a social norm through the visual images that women need to pay attention to one's appearances so as to encourage them to buy the products. She pointed out the interesting aspect of advertising strategies in which "…marketers have reappropriated the very concepts of choice and empowerment that feminists claim are undermined by manipulating ads" (p. 66).

Advertisements are the very place where gender hierarchy are constructed and even feminist arguments against gender inequality can be exploited as a commercial tactic for advertisers. For instance, Rhode analyzed that the concept of natural-looking, or natural makeup is actually derived from a feminist idea that acknowledges natural beauty of women. This would be ironic in a way that natural state is no longer a quality that women inherently have in the context of cosmetics advertising, rather the natural looking even needs to be achieved with certain products and following proper makeup methods. It seems that this phenomenon is observed often as a trend in the contemporary Japanese cosmetics advertising pictures, which will be analyzed later in the chapter of analysis and discussion in more details. As such, advertisements and their socioeconomic impacts on one's ideal appearances are considered as the topics to be studied in gender studies, which thus should be one of the crucial analytical perspectives in analyzing beauty-related advertising images.

Moreover, cosmetics advertisements are not only the medium to reflect various gender issues of our societies into visual images but also a powerful vehicle to generate new social values and norms for women's practices of beautifying one's appearances. Since cosmetics can function as social tools to enhance more 'beautiful' appearance among women, advertisements often attempt to show clear ideals towards consumers on what kind of women are considered to be 'attractive' in a specific society and in a particular time they live and what kind of benefits the beautiful women can gain by using the products. Therefore, it can be said that advertisements are "not simply commerce; they create social meaning and shape individual desires and identity" (Rhode, 2010, p. 65). Her discussion that the importance of being beautiful for women has been reinforced in beauty advertisements, will hence support the validity of my research trying to explore the process of establishing Japanese beauty standards through advertising by interpreting the images.

2.1.2 GENDERED WOMEN AS TARGET CONSUMER

Japanese cosmetics advertisements have exclusively focused on attracting women's eyes and have neglected men's attentions, who have been considered as 'minorities' in the light of the social practice of makeup and the following beautification. This fact is easily found by imagining who are always expected as potential consumers in the advertisements published by cosmetics firms. It is an evident fact that "the main audience of the beauty products advertised are women" (Kaur, Arumgam, &Yunus, 2013, p.69).

Setsuko Suzuki (2015), a leading makeup artist of *Shiseido* reported the historical transition of Japanese makeup trends, in which she illustrated how Japanese 'women's beauty' has changed, implying that there must be the assumption that makeup and beauty trends are concerned with women in any period. In Japanese cosmetics advertising pictures, texts including the words 女性, 女 (*jyosei, onna*/ woman), 女の子 (*onnanoko*/ girl), レディー (*ledii*, lady) seem to be the most typical promotional phrases, as Zang concluded in her discourse analysis of Japanese cosmetics adverts (2014), which demonstrate how beauty standards and cosmetics are presented as women's matters of concern. As Miller (2006) argues, beauty products and services are not only commercial outcomes but "part of beauty system that is tightly connected to developments in the coding and definition of gender" (p. 20). Hence beauty advertisements have influenced consumers' viewpoints on gender and normalize the gendered beauty standards.

It is necessary here to clarify what is meant by 'women'. Judith Butler argues that sex categories as well as gender categories are not biologically given but culturally constructed (1993). The concepts of 'women' and 'men' are hence cultural inventions from "gender as a process, in which it creates itself" (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko, 2003, p. 15). The word 'women' has the inclusive concept which put together "different kinds of women, different levels of experience and different identities" (p. 10). Moreover, advertisements have functioned as the cultural institution, where advertisers can "shape ideas of what it means to be a woman in our society" (Kaur, Arumgam, &Yunus, 2013, p. 20). Therefore, in the discourse of Japanese cosmetics advertising, those Japanese gendered words listed earlier will require the careful analysis of who are exactly the 'women' as the specific consumers of each cosmetics brand. This can be done by means of looking at visual images and texts in the adverts carefully, since these words can hold both different and similar connotations coded by each advertiser.

Despite of the possible different ways to interpret gender categories in cosmetics adverts, it seems that sexuality of the inclusive word 'women' in the Japanese adverts is

strictly limited to heterosexuality. The sexual orientation of target consumers is not something advertisers can clearly claim with the use of images and words. Therefore, it is heavily dependent on one's understanding and 'norm'. The composition of advertisements is still, however, able to imply or encourage viewers to look at the images in a specific way. Rossi argues that contemporary advertisements are prone to provide the spectators with "knowledge on both sexuality and the gendered idea of beauty" and it "does not concern just any kind of sexuality, but more precisely heterosexuality" (Rossi, 2007, p.128).

This prevailing social order of heteronormativity seems to have dominated Japanese cosmetics advertising world, in which "femininity is imagined and fantasized within the constraints of gender hierarchy and heterosexual norms" (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko, 2003, p.12). Since my study aims to analyze beauty standards produced/reproduced in the heteronormative Japanese cosmetics advertising, I have to acknowledge that the data analysis will stick to interpretations of the selected images entirely from the perspective of heterosexual target consumers.

2.2 BEAUTY IDEALS

As the biggest quality of cosmetics advertising, they have "the means to promote ideal standards of beauty" (Kaur, Arumgam, &Yunus, 2013, p. 70). The advertised concept of 'beauty' is often projected in pictures of celebrities including well-known models and actresses, who are seen as "attractive people, all of whom are "beautiful" …" (Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992, p. 24). Viewers of those adverts are prone to judge if they are beautiful or not based on their social norms about beauty, which needs profound analyses to understand what kind of physical attributes are actually associated with their image of beauty and how they are represented in advertising images.

2.2.1 CONCEPTS OF OUTWARD BEAUTY

Solomon & et al, who offer 'beauty match-up hypothesis', argue that the concept of beauty is "not a simple and unitary cognitive continuum but rather a complex multidimensional construct" (p. 33), although the majority of previous studies on beauty have not shed light on the analysis of different types of beauty. Under the hypothesis that the concept of beauty suggested in advertising should be multidimensional, they proposed 7 types of interpretations of beauty by spectators; "classic beauty (as perfect, physical features and/or attire), sex-kitten

and sensual (both are sexual looks, but the former is more overt and youthful), and girl-next-door (denoting a natural, unmade-up appearance and simple attire)" and also "exotic (non-Caucasian), Feminine (a soft and/or romantic look), and trendy (an off-beat look, perhaps flawed or asymmetrical, in contrast to a classic beauty type)" (p. 25).

Despite of its data selection bias, in which the advertisements used as well as the participants categorizing them are all selected from New York, the findings of their study is accurate in the respect that they verified that viewers perceive different concepts of beauty in looking at adverts, rather than believing in a singular truth of beauty, and moreover, these concepts of beauty are not about specific physical attributes but more about distinct personalities and lifestyles that are imagined from the pictures of one's appearances. This hypothesis and its results can be employed to oppose to the past beauty studies in the discourse of advertising, which are prone to center on discussing outer appearance as Kaur, Arumgam, &Yunus claiming that "the old adage 'beauty is skin deep' may no longer be relevant as society today focuses on outer appearance" (2013, p. 70). Considering the intricate construct of beauty images in advertising, it seems to be more reasonable to argue that the contemporary concepts of outer beauty in advertising are rather suggested through presentations of inner beauty as in personalities and lifestyles captured in the pictures of women and texts in adverts. Various gendered images of female inner beauty attributes are applied to advertise outer beauty standards, as beauty is a multifaceted concept and "there is not only one form of femininity reproduction" (Miller, 2006, p. 20).

2.2.2 'KAWAII' AS QUALITY OF BEAUTY

Pamela K. Morris (2014) applied the beauty match-up hypothesis in her content analysis of approximately 40 Japanese advertising images with women's portrayals collected in 2012 to analyze the variation of their beauty types. She revealed that one-third of the women's pictures were classified into cute and girl-next-door groups (2014). This result indicates that the concept of cuteness was one of the dominant signified of ideal women represented in models' portrayals in Japanese adverts. One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the type girl-next-door in the hypothesis is too broad and inclusive differentiation covering all potential types of 'cuteness' in terms of Japanese advertising, in which cuteness seems to be a typical but have multidimensional features in Japanese beauty standards.

Furthermore, the hypothesis make no attempt to consider that the word 'cute' can actually account for the complex Japanese concept of かわいい (*kawaii*) . Hasegawa (Lloyd,

2002) explains that "the concept of *kawaii* includes elements such as 'cute', 'pretty' and 'lovely', but it is not restricted to these. It also implies something precious: something that we are drawn towards and which stimulate one's feeling of wanting to protect something that is pure and innocent" (p. 128). As she argues, the implications of kawaii is more than 'cute' that it concerns with, what she coins, *youjika* (infanticization), meaning "an immaturity in the sense of an incomplete identity" (p. 127). The concept kawaii, therefore, should not be simply translated into cute but it has rather more essential cultural connotations in it, of which fragility, "innocence and nonthreatening cuteness" as "qualities of the undeveloped girl" are highly promoted as Japanese major beauty standards (Miller, 2006, p. 25).

Since the idea of *kawaii* in Japanese beauty standards includes the implication of immature attribute of women, it hence brings negative perception of women's aging and sexual maturity at the same time. In Japanese media including comics, pornography and advertisements, "young girls, or women pretending to be young girls, are a focal point" (Miller, 2006, p. 25). It is apparently normalized in Japanese beauty standard that aging is a taboo, which should be prevented or hidden in achieving the state of *kawaii*, since "there are no beautiful older women. But the standard of beauty in a woman…is how far she retains or how she manages to simulate, an appearance of youth" (Sontag, 1972, p.29-30 as cited in Rhode, 2010, p. 31).

However, the concept of *kawaii* is not necessarily reduced to the beauty attribute of youthfulness. Aizawa & Ohno (2010) who studied kawaii culture, observed that the use of the adjective *kawaii* has been diversified into compound words with other adjectives. Compound words using *kawaii* are such: 大人可愛い (otona-kawaii/ adult and kawaii), エロ可愛い (elo-kawaii/ erotic and kawaii), ナチュかわ (nachu-kawaii/ natural and kawaii), かっこ可愛い (kakko-kawaii/ cool and kawaii) and so on. In this way, there are considerable potentials to create adjectives combined with kawaii and these words do not simply lead to the connotation of immaturity but rather it seems contributing to produce new meanings, which are more or less different from original meanings of both used words. These terms are often applied in catch phrases of Japanese cosmetics advertising as it is seen in the chapter of analysis, and the complexity of kawaii thus needs careful analysis about what it actually signifies.

2.3 RACE

As discussed in the previous section, beauty-related issues are often gendered. Furthermore, they are also racialized, since "through body decoration, people communicate about their gender and ethnicity" (Ashikari, 2005, p. 75). Representation of beauty standards in Japan have pictured the complexity of racial consciousness and ones' collective identities. Although the term 'race' has such dynamic scale and varieties of its definitions in numerous different research fields, this paper is going to adopt the term to refer to "visually distinct social groups (Rhodes et al., p. 320, 2005), since this paper will heavily focus on visual analysis of female models' images in advertisements. Here in this section, I am going to discuss how Japanese beauty ideals and bias have been established under the influence of the distinction of racially categorized appearance, along with the other critics and views on this topic from previous studies. Additionally, it should be also noted that the meanings of race and gender are deeply interacted with each other especially in this beauty studies, thus the discussion will be focused on the topics regarding racial beauty issues among women.

2.3.1 SKIN WHITENESS FROM ITS HISTORICAL ORIGINS

It is obvious that one of the major topics regarding complex relations of beauty and race has been about symbolic meanings of skin color. Social hierarchies constructed by shades of skin colors have been found worldwide since 19th century, and the women's desires for skin lightness in non-western countries has been studied as "a legacy of colonialism, a manifestation of 'false consciousness' and the internationalization of 'white is right' values by people of color…" (Glenn, 2009, p. 187). Apart from this negative implication of the skin lightness phenomena, seeing those people seeking lightness as victims of historical suppression, it can be said that the fact that fair complexion has been the most mainstream attributes of beauty, have been also observed in Japan over the centuries, although the analysis of this trend in Japan should not be only limited to such historical reasons as above.

The history of skin whitening originally dates back to *Heian* era (794-1185), when white makeup so-called '*oshiroi*', a makeup method of painting face with white powers/liquids was a social manner of how to dress one's self among aristocracies (Kowner & Demel, 2012). However, this act of white makeup is neither gendered nor racialized at this point because it was conducted by both men and women and also the Japan's first encounter with the West was still quite a while after this period. The symbols of painted pale skin as well as unpainted dark skin were actually associated with the representation of social classes, since the whitening tools were not affordable to all people in all classes and getting sun

tanned complexion was obviously unavoidable for those from the labor class. This associated dichotomy of upper/lower social class with white/non-whitened face has taken over to today's traditional occasions such as Japanese-styled wedding, theaters and *geisha* costumes (Miller, 2006). This explains that white makeup has now played a visual and symbolic role to let us relate it with ideas of 'Japaneseness' including its tradition, high culture, formal dress code, which are opposite from newness, sub-culture and casual appearance from abroad.

The coding of skin whiteness with gendering and racial meanings can be seen since Meiji era (1868-1912), when the interactions with the West has increased in terms of politics, economics and cultures. Wade emphasized the fact in his book that skin tone is not something women have been inherently conscious about without any external influences, but rather, our visual physical variations including skin color can be important elements of race only after we had experienced transnational encounters expanded by the west to non-west including Japan (Wade, 2002). Wearing makeup and achieving light skin came to be considered as desirability and attractiveness for women regardless of one's social class, and according to Miller's analysis, it was one of the ideal beauty attributes to "stem from postwar Americanization and… one of the primary 'imports' during this time was a hegemonic white American concept of beauty" (2006, p. 21). To sum it up, these are the two past researches about the origin of skin whitening in Japan from a historical point of view; 1. skin whitening derived from visual construction of social hierarchies and later as the symbol of Japaneseness, 2. Western (American)-influenced desirability for lighter skin, and admiration towards Caucasians' physical features.

2.3.2 THE BOOM OF 'BIHAKU': WHITE IS BEAUTIFUL

No matter which major theories we take to trace back the origin of skin whitening in Japan, it seems that this deep rooted, gendering and racial habit of skin whitening has been lasted until today's contemporary society. Since the late 1980s onward, the trend of *bihaku (美白)*, literally translated as 'beautiful white' has been spread explosively and consistently, and has established its position as one of the biggest beauty standards among Japanese women. According to a report on skin products sold in Japan, skin whitening lines account for 66% of the cosmetics market, which was the biggest with the sales of 5 billion dollars globally in 1999 (Glenn, 2009). Ashikari conducted an observation research on Japanese women's makeup during 1996-1997 and found out that approximately 97% of women in public apply

makeup which enable them to look like they have lighter complexion than their natural ones (2005).

Entering to the 21st century, the term *bihaku* has transformed its meanings as time goes by and branched to other similar words such as siro-hada (白肌, white skin), iro-zhiro (色白, light skin) and tomei-hada (透明肌, transparent skin), which "stress the skin's texture as much as color" (Ho, 2017, P. 63). However, it is clear that most of those marketing phrases adopted for skin care and cosmetics products have apparently encouraged the norm of 'light skin is beautiful' and emphasized effects of skin whitening as well as moisturization and smoothing and so on by the use of products.

Today's symbolic meanings of women having fair complexion have been always associated with positive impressions on one's appearances, since "whiteness is already defined almost exclusively in terms of positive attributes" (Russell, 2017, p. 24) through the whole Japanese history of skin whitening. Among all inherent physical features Japanese women speak of in terms of one's appearance, skin tone is one of their primary concerns and Ashikari observed that there is the dichotomy of white and black associated with other various dichotomies in Japan, and "the expression 'your colour is white' is widely taken as a praise, while 'your colour is black' is taken as an insult" (Ashikari, 2005, p. 77). According to her discourse analysis from the collection of nouns and adjectives and images of light skin and dark skin classified and associated each other by Japanese women, she found out the dichotomies of white/black as "weak/strong…cute/wild, beautiful/ugly, womanly/manly…and so on" (p.77). Her approach captured the connotation of light skin as an attribute of femininity as well as beauty. That is why cosmetics advertisements are reasonable to be designed based on the symbolic meaning of dark skin as a flaw. This is a marketing strategy for "commodification of femininity and whiteness" (Ho, 2017, p. 60).

2.3.3 CAUCASIANIZATION, JAPANESENESS & COSMOPOLITANISM

Regarding Japanese women's desirability of light skin tone in recent years, there have been discussions about the question "does bihaku skin reflect women's desire for Euro-American whiteness, or is it something else?" (Ho, 2017, p.60). This question can also function to answer a much broader question, 'Which factors are the beauty standards in Japan influenced by?'. Past studies have answered the question in several different observations, since "the meanings of white skin in contemporary Japan are not unified but multiple (Ashikari, 2005, p.

84). Previous theories on this topic are classified into three major theories; skin whiteness as 1. a beauty attribute derived from their adorations to physical features of Caucasian, 2. a symbol of Japaneseness and representation of nationalism, 3. a transnational and cosmopolitan beauty standard out of scheme of race.

2.3.4 BEUATY AS WESTERNESS

The first theory considering skin whitening among Japanese women as a result of their desire towards stereotypical appearances of Caucasian, has enforced its validity by past researches on Japanese makeup trends, popular models and actresses appeared in advertisements and the phenomena found in those studies, so called 'Caucasianization'. Setsuko Suzuki, a makeup artist of *Shiseido*, observed certain patterns through transitions of makeup trends in Japan from 1920s to the first half of 1970s. She pointed out that Japanese beauty standards for more than 60 years had been based on the great popularity of iconic Caucasian models and actresses (2015). Scholars have observed the flow of Westernization in Japanese advertising, or Western objects and languages used in adverts. They concluded that "the appearances of Western models/endorsers…are due to Japanese consumers' preference for Western images as status appeals" (Morimoto & Chang, 2009, p. 174). Their skin tone was one of the distinguishing and apparent features associated with those Caucasian celebrities, which influenced each other and encouraged themselves to become attractive for Japanese viewers. Needless to say, cosmetics advertising and marketing strategies have had powers to trigger the consumers' desire for lighter skin tone, which have been "accelerating in places where modernization and the influence of Western capitalism and culture are most prominent" (Glenn, 2009, p.183). The beauty standard derived from Anglo-Saxons' beauty has been constructed in Japan as the biggest universal ideal through the exposure of Caucasian females as an attractive persona in considerable numbers of cosmetics advertisements and shows. The idea of 'Caucasian females are beautiful' came to be already an unconscious norm and unintended desire so that "…the representation of the ideal image of Japanese women cannot be free from this standard, which is all-pervasive in contemporary Japanese story" (Ashikari, 2005, p. 87).

It is not only skin tone but also other typical facial features of Caucasian women that are the objects of longing for Japanese women. According to Haiken's research on plastic surgery for non-Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans are prone to integrate in the primary beauty standard of white American communities by means of plastic surgeries, making their

own facial features less noticeable (Samuel, 1999). This phenomenon can be found in cases in Japan as well, as Caucasian-looking makeup methods or surgeries are one of the most common and popular beauty procedures Japanese women want to follow. What is interesting here is, as Russell argues, "Japanese views of Caucasian whiteness as locate them…the status of *gaijin*, a geocultural outlier…Japanese deem largely desirable and worthy of envious emulation, particularly when compared to that of …non-caucasian physical characteristics" (2017, p. 26). As he illustrated, the term '*gaijin*' (外人) can refer to outsiders culturally and geographically in a categorization of 'us' and 'them', often involved in controversies of whether the term is a racist word or not. However, numbers of people in Japan recognize the term racially unmarked, rather it connotates their positive impressions of *gaijin*. This positive implication of *gaijin* is caused by the association they imagine when hearing the word, that is, "a plurality of diverse, albeit stereotyped, cultures and nationalities, all implicitly caucasian" (Russell, 2017, p.27). Although there are three racially distinct words common in a daily conversation level; '*hakujin* (白人, white people)' 'kokujin (黒人, black people), and *Ajiajin* (アジア人, Asian), the term *hakujin*, or Caucasian whiteness seems to be the only inclusive and collective unit to represent 'westerness' and foreigners, which is thus often replaced with the word *gaijin* with much broader and universal meaning of non-Japaneseness.

The use of *gaijin*, meaning exclusively white westerners, that is often observed in cosmetics-related adverts, because, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the value of 'beautiful whiteness' have been embedded in our coding of Anglo Saxons-looking people, hence the word implicates stereotypical facial characteristics of Caucasian as a major beauty standard. For example, one of derivative words of *gaijin* (it can be replaced with *gaikokujin* with the same meaning in this context) used in catch phrases in today's cosmetics is *gaijin-fu/gaikokujin-fu* (外人風/外国人風, foreign-ish). This word can be used as a prefix for various words referring to physical features as well as makeup methods such as foreign-ish hair color and foreign-ish eye makeup and so on. It is of importance to observe that the word means thoroughly western-ish, even more particularly, Caucasian-ish. Yet, it does not clearly point to *hakujin-fu* (white people-ish) in order to make this look irrelevant to any racial issues. Additionally, there is the other word derived from *gaijin*, which is gaijin-konpurekkusu (外人コンプレックス, foreigner complex), implicating "the feelings of inferiority Japanese have toward white westerners…" (p. 27).

As discussed above, the word *gaijin* tends to exclude non-white foreigners, but only white people are thought to be an object of admiration for Japanese. Despite of the word *gaijin* used free from racial consciousness, it consistently and unintentionally centers white westerners on the top of hierarchy of 'them', or non-Japanese in terms of their visual attractiveness. On the other hand, the other racially-classified groups tend to be excluded from the sphere of *gaijin*, but instead, they are divided into two clearly racial categories; either Asian or black. Even though they technically can be included in the meaning of *gaijin*, or foreigners, they are strictly judged by their physical characteristics, especially by their facial features and skin tone, and thus classified under those racial groups apart from the broad 'foreigners'. The biggest similarity between use of the word *gaijin,* or *hakujin* (white), and that of kokujin (black) and Ajiajin (Asian), is that each of categorizations are "sharing the same racial stereotypes regardless of nationality" (p. 27), and the stereotypes are constructed visually in general when Japanese people encounter them. In contradiction to the positive associations attached to white females, it seems that Asian females can be subjected to discriminative and cynical gaze from Japanese viewers, while black women are completely out of consideration when it comes to ideal images of beauty Japanese females generally have. Globally speaking, it is obvious that the racial group of 'Asian' includes Japanese. At the same, time Japanese recognize themselves portrayed as one of Asian nationalities in a broad national and politic level. However, this does not apply when Japanese refer to non-Japanese Asian people in terms of hierarchies of culture and one's appearance. Rather, the use of word 'Asian' connotates Japanese's sense of detachment from the inclusive identity of Asian, and also thier sense of superiority over other Asians. According to Glenn's interview of a Japanese couple who completed an egg donation process to expect pregnancy, the wife ended up refusing the donation from an Asian American donor who have family roots in Korean ancestry. This rejection was made even after she really liked the donor's appearance in her photos and mentioned that the donor's light complexion is her ideal. This explains that the norm of 'white is beautiful' is not always the case when the light skin tone originates from non-Japanese Asian people, and the whiteness "ceased to be attractive and desirable if it was not embedded in Japanese ancestry that gave the skin tone hierarchical meaning in the first place" (2009, p. 142).

In short, the beauty standards of skin whiteness as well as other facial features such as big eyes and shapely nose are all exclusively derived from the stereotypical associations of Caucasian. These are extremely, but at the same time, unconsciously racial, which does not consider their nationalities and individual differences, but represents the broad definition of

gaijin, or foreigners as the only racial group to be desired and preferred by Japanese, while other racial categorizations are often neglected from it, and even related to sense of hierarchical inferiorities, thus Japanese "distance themselves from Black, Blown and Yellow Others" (Russell, 2017, p.43).

2.3.5. BEAUTY AS JAPANESENESS

Besides the theory of beautiful whiteness as a symbolic meaning of the desirability of Caucasian appearance, there is also a seemingly opposite theory to observe the origin of this beauty standard, which is acknowledging fair complexion as an authentic Japanese visual attribute and as one of the ideal, nationalistic characteristics of 'beautiful Japaneseness'. Miller argued about the complexity and diversity of skin whitening in Japan that "…to claim that a desire for pale skin is merely a new form of postwar deracialization brought about by hegemonic Euroamerican beauty ideology is a failed analysis based on a belief that the West is always in an ascendant position. (2006, p.4)".

As described earlier in this chapter, the Japanese tradition of white face makeup as well as the symbol of light skin tone in social class hierarchy researched historically, are often brought up to the discussion of where the admiration of light skin color in Japan was invented. Ashikari argues that there is a complicated paradox between the popularity of adopting Caucasian models as an attractive persona in Japanese beauty adverts and the actual impressions of Caucasian's skin qualities Japanese women imagine. In fact, Japanese women apt to insist their own skin superior to Caucasian's, which got negative feedbacks from her informants such as; "it was 'rough'; it 'aged quickly'; and it had 'too many spots'" (2005, p.82). When they start to reason how Japanese women have had superior light skin tone, they come up with an legend of "Tohoku-bijin (東北美人) " and the following "Akita-bijin (秋田美人) ", referring to "white-skinned beauties from northeastern Japan…as the apotheosis of Japanese feminine beauty" (Russell, 2017, p. 42). Even though Japanese women are apt to believe in the concept as a traditional proof of whiteness of Japanese beauties, Russel argues that those "Japanese aesthetic ideals have never existed in a cultural vacuum; they are, like all traditions, invented and reinvented over time" (p.42). This idea of ideal "unique-to-Japanese white skin" has been exported as a marketing strategy in global skin whitening markets. For example, a study found out that in Philippines, where the practice of skin whitening is one of local teen's obsessions, "young Filipinas do not refer to Americans or Europeans as having

the most desirable skin color" (Glenn, 2009, p. 179), rather tend to prefer light skinned Japanese.

In this theory, skin tone and condition play a role to represent a more nationalistic beauty standard, so called 'Asian beauty', particularly 'Japanese beauty', in which the existing standard derived from Western beauty is no longer appreciated. Suzuki analyzed the enormous change in the history of Japanese makeup trends emerged in 1970s and contradicted the previous Western centered makeup methods, which were "breaking away from an inferiority complex: 'I want to be like a Westerner'" (2015). This period when Japanese started to overcome their foreigner-complex (*gaijin-complex*) was the time when some very East Asian-looking models were active in the world beauty business. Thus, it can be said that this trend of Asian beauty was affected by orientalism the Japanese recognizing how ethnically attractive their appearance can be seen by the Westerners. Skin color is one of the visual symbols of national and racial identity. As Ashikari pointed out, "through the practice of whitening their faces, are aiming at being beautiful *Japanese* women, rather than merely beautiful women" (2005, p.85).

No matter where the practice of skin whitening is derived from, it is obvious in both theories that those beauty standards have been based on racial consciousness, and this is similar with the case of "white racism and black cultural nationalism as equally race-conscious" in USA (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p.25).

2.3.6 BEAUTY AS COSMOPOLITANISM

On the other hand, it has been also pointed out in past researches that it is skeptical to regard racism as exactly same as 'colorism' when it comes to the practice of skin whitening in Japan (Malema, 2011). Although skin tone has played important role to expand their potentiality of being perceived as beautiful, this does not necessarily mean that Japanese women simply desire for fair skin tone just because they desire to achieve representations of Westerness/Japanseness they imagine. In this theory, beauty standard of whiteness is considered as out of those race-related viewpoints; "instead of wanting to be racially white, consumers desire… 'cosmopolitan whiteness', or an imagined notion of whiteness that is affectively tied to transnational mobility" (Ho, 2017, p. 60). In the context of cosmetics advertising, the so called 'cosmopolitan whiteness' has been portrayed in the reflections of Caucasian female endorsers, since they are normalized and standardized as the most powerful representation of us against others. The actual racial categorization of endorsers in adverts do

not restrict audiences to see them as someone belonging to the specific racial groups, in another word, "they are looking at a beautiful woman in the advertisement, but not particularly a beautiful *Caucasian* woman" (Ahikari, 2005, p. 82).

This normalization of visible differences enables whites not to represent themselves as whites "but as people who are variously gendered, classed, sexualized and abled" (Russell, 2017, p. 23). It is also of importance to mention that, as argued above, cosmopolitan whiteness in beauty studies are heavily gendered even though it is thought to be anti-racialized in this theory. As Nava points out, white women are "more exposed to the global flow of popular modernity; as shoppers, readers, and dance hall- and cinema-goers…" (2007, p. 98), hence viewers perceive white women as a symbolic persona of modernity, transnational mobility, world culture and universal beauty.

When the skin whitening boom became prominent in the 1990s, Japan was more exposed to the Western centered beauty culture, in which Caucasian models often appeared in adverts as a symbol of dominant world beauty standard. At the time, Japanese subculture was the space where young women were able to create several other different styles of fashion and makeups. One of them, which seemed to be opposite against the mainstream standard *bihaku*, was called *ganguro* (ガングロ, skin darkening) boom, in which young women tan their skin or wear brown makeup as an ideal style in that community. Ho observed this boom in youth culture as "women's resistance to the dominant culture", through which "*ganguro* actively made meanings for themselves through excess, self-parody, subversion of Japanese femininity" (2017, p. 61). Several different trends were born as youth beauty ideals including *ganguro*, but the common point they shared was its hybridity of ethnic attributes from cultures of non-Caucasian, or 'otherness', such as those of Native American, Southeast/ South Asian. Miller called them 'stateless' styles, for "women who do not represent traditional beauty ideals but who are able to transform themselves into icons solely through fashion and cosmetics" (2006, p.28). Ochiai observed of this transnational movement in youth beauty cultures that "they do not pretend to be white anymore. They seem to be slipping out of any nationality" (1997, p.164). By rather blending beauty styles from non-dominant 'them' cultures against cosmopolitan 'us' whiteness, they tried to achieve their own ideals, which did not belong to any racial or national beauty categories, thus they achieved being escaped from beauty judgement by women in dominant standards.

3 DATA & METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

My data research will try to answer the questions below and those questions will be examined in every procedure of my data analysis as check points to conduct deliberate research:

I.   What are the signs of beauty standards depicted in the selected Japanese cosmetics advertising images?

This question is examined in the first step of my data analysis, which is to "take images seriously" (Rose, 2001, p. 12). Objects and all visual effects in each image are carefully observed in the process of answering this question. Only after picking up all of what I can capture from the image, the analysis moves on to the next procedure of interpreting images.

II.   How are the signs interpreted by me, as one of the target consumers?

Findings from answering the first question above are then interpreted to find specific meanings of the images. This question will focus more on analyzing who are the spectator of the images and how the images are seen by the specific spectators. I will introduce my way of seeing as a Japanese female consumer of the cosmetics advertising but more objective analysis as a researcher will be adopted as well so as to allow me offer more creative and careful decoding of the data.

III.   How are gender and race constructed, represented and negotiated in the scheme of contemporary Japanese cosmetics advertising?

The advertisements and their potential meanings read by spectators are recaptured in the broad stream of race and gender studies in this question. The mechanics of how Japanese

advertisement-making is constructing gender and race and also how their way of seeing is influenced by the social relations, are observed.

3.2 PROCEDURES

3.2.1 DATA COLLECTION

The data selected to develop this study are the collection of eight cosmetics advertising nonmoving images (including two supplementary images), released from five different Japanese cosmetics brands. In this study, I will define cosmetics advertising images as visual still images which are published for commercial purposes of cosmetics companies, aiming to create preferable impressions of the brands as well as their products for target consumers. (This study does not consider advertising videos, since I have found out that both selected still images and videos adopt the similar concepts and models for advertising the same products, and also that video analysis should include more technical observations, not only social and cultural analysis.) Therefore, my selected data includes not only the adverts intending to sell specific products but also color sample photos of products and so called 'image advertising' pictures, which are not intended to sell specific products directly, but rather gradually accumulate good impressions of the brands in the consumers' minds. As methodological choices taken for the selection of my data, I excluded advertising images that do not include pictures of any human body parts. Advertisements of non-Japanese cosmetics companies are also not considered in this study, because they do not intend specifically to be seen only by Japanese spectators. Hence visuality and interpretations of their images might be off-point from my research focus, which is especially on Japanese consumer's ways of seeing.

The cosmetics brands were selected in line with the ranking of cosmetics products reported during 28th September - 4th October, 2017 released from *@cosme*, a Japanese largest web portal for beauty products ("@cosme," n.d.). Eight advertising images to be analyzed were collected from each brand homepage in October, 2017. This online beauty portal is operated by *ityle.inc*, a Japanese marketing design company, offering information regarding beauty products to consumers (the platform has blogs of makeup tutorials by makeup artists, bulletin boards where users can ask beauty-related questions to professionals as well as other consumers, a booking website for beauty salons, a makeup videos-sharing forum, and more)

(istyle Inc. n.d.). They also work for producers from the beauty industry by means of submitting statistics on consumer's satisfaction of their products investigated from reviews by the users, and also giving online platforms to advertise their products towards the users. The website functions as the online space to connect producers and the target consumers. Rankings of beauty products are judged by more than 13 million of reviews from consumers using the portal website as of November 2017. Reviews are posted by any users who were able to comment on a product and grade it from 0 to 7 stars reflecting their satisfaction as customers. The number of reviews and given stars are calculated to rank the products, and they are updated every week. This explains that the data collected in reference to the rankings are the adverts of cosmetics which are highly evaluated by consumers and most up-to-date, meaning that products and the adverts are easily accessible in Japan at this moment.

The rankings are divided by the type of products. The rankings I used as a reference for the data collection are the general ranking for all cosmetics (@cosme, 2017). In reference to the cosmetics brands ranked from 1st to 5th, I firstly collected all advertising images from the homepage of each cosmetics brand. They were gathered and classified by each brand in order to grasp the general trends on their advertising tactics. Finally, only a few images out of them were selected as the research data to analyze.

3.2.2 DATA APPROACH

The data analysis conducted for this study is the series of carefully done interpretations. Rose (2001) listed up certain key points on how to analyze visual images, which help understand how they function in our world: "…*own visual effects*…; ways of seeing…; the production and reproduction of visions of *social difference*; … the *social context of viewing* and… *the visualities spectators bring* to their viewing" (p. 12). These 5 major points were applied as a crucial checklist in each step of my analysis, so that the images will be explored in the coherent and inclusive way in which the images themselves and all the surrounding contexts are investigated simultaneously.

At the first stage of this study, the data chosen from the ranking of @cosme, are classified into each cosmetics brand, and basic background information regarding the brand, company and its products are studied. Secondly, each image goes through the same analysis process as listed; 1. Basic information on the brand and the company, 2. List of signs classified as iconic, color or text signifiers, 3. Highlights on distinctive features. After

examining each data separately in details, the general findings and discussion regarding the whole analysis result will be made in the next conclusion chapter.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE

3.3.1 VISION AND VISUALITY

The data analyzed in the next chapter, which is the collection of cosmetics advertising pictures from Japanese cosmetics companies is classified as visual data in a bigger frame of data categorization. According to Emmison (as cited in Silverman, 2011, p. 321), advertisements belong to the category of 'artefacts' in visual data including films, photographs and cartoons. He argued that it is necessary to distinguish artefacts from the other different kinds of visual data, which is going to be discussed more closely later in the next section. It is of importance here as well to point out that the difference of various kinds of visual data seems to be relevant to how Rose made a distinction between vision and visuality. Vision refers to "what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing….", on the other hand, the term visuality is "the way in which vision is constructed in various ways", which is also rephrased as "scopic regime" (Rose, 2001, p. 2). It should be noted that visuality always needs to be considered in the process of visual data analysis, otherwise focusing on an image itself results in neglecting the fact that "the seeing of an image… always takes place in a particular social context…" (p. 11). Although artefacts have been regarded as data of interests by a number of sociologists in the stream of visual research, what they have actually questioned is not what the artefacts are, but how they are interacted and negotiated with the audiences in a society.

As mentioned above, it is of importance to mention that my research is to be conducted in between the study of 'artefact/vision' and the study of how people actually perceive the visions, in other words, 'visuality', since the procedure of analyzing the cosmetics advertising images cannot be preceded independently without the whole process of interpreting meanings of the images, or how they are looked by expected consumers. I need to acknowledge that both advantage and difficulty will be offered, as I position myself as a target audience/consumer of the Japanese advertising images as well as a researcher of the data at the same time. Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko (2003) "believe that the researcher is always a part of his/her study…the 'objectivity' of a study evolves from the explicit

positioning of the background factors influencing the methodological choices, the perspectives taken…" (p. 23). It also implies that researchers' surrounding culture might more or less hinder themselves from being completely analytical. However, the research methods and the materials chosen for this study are valid to answer my research questions in the light of my background as a Japanese woman exposed to the visual environment with a sufficient amount of cosmetics advertising images, in which, as Sturken & Cartwright's argues, the profound analysis of "how it is seen by particular spectators who look in particular ways" are able to be completed as long as the cultural constraints from my personal background are always taken into consideration (as cited in Rose, 2001, p.7).

3.3.2 ROLES OF IMAGES IN ADVERTISING

We apt to take it for granted that advertising of cosmetics usually adopts photographs and videos, which are neither drawings or writings. However, there should be particular reasons of why these specific artifacts are often chosen to be utilized effectively in advertisements. As this research will be carried out with the collection of advertising photos, the roles of artefacts especially photographs in cosmetics advertising should be discussed in this section because it is fundamental to be aware of the mechanism of how advertising photos can function to achieve inducing viewers to buy the commercial products and more importantly, to trigger a visual persuasion that has a feasibility to create beauty standards as social and cultural norms among the spectators.

According to Messaris's discussion on strengths of using visual images in advertising, there seems to be three primary functions visual images can operate through the visual communication; "they can elicit emotions by simulating the appearance of a real person or object; they can serve as photographic proof that something really did happen; and they can establish an implicit link between the thing that is being sold and some other image(s)." (Messaris, 1997, p.7).

The first role of visual images, which is the ability of generating emotional feedbacks from the viewers, is derived from their iconic nature, or so called the 'iconicity' as one of the major properties of visual images. We perceive images as "direct copy of reality" (p.6), through which audiences are able to view the objects in the image as if they are interacting with the actual persons and places. It implies that the spectators might interact with the images very differently depending on the individuals' way of seeing one's world, since the visons "do not register in our brains as neutral, value-free data. Rather, each visual

feature…can come with a wealth of emotional associations." (p.8).   In terms of cosmetics advertisements particularly, the iconicity is obviously originated from the photographs of the endorsers, who are usually female models and actresses showing the ideal standards/trends of beauty, and also the background images can be iconic such as display of urban city, forest with a lot of flowers, street corners at somewhere in urban districts and such. Emotional associations are easily generated when, for instance, a viewer admires the appearance of the endorser in the image, or the scenic photograph makes a viewer to associate with some sorts of beauty styles (cool, feminine sexy etc…) the person wants to achieve. Due to its iconic quality of visual images acting "as surrogates for real-life visual encounters" (p.14), viewers are tempted to purchase the products that are advertised through the visualities. Needless to say, these visual communications through the artefacts are different from linguistic communication by means of language, yet the alternatives used in visual images are the formal or technical features of images, through which the same objects have possibilities to be portrayed and represented in various different ways. Although the forms and styles are the major methods to accomplish visual communication between an advertiser and audiences, the viewers are unlikely to notice the massive influence on how their visualities are actually restricted and guided in certain directions the advertisers want them to view. This ambiguous communication is based on the feature of visual images that forms, styles and techniques are "used as relatively more subtle or indirect way of suggesting certain meanings and evoking viewers' reactions to them" (p. 15). Thus, in my analysis, the formal features of images, in other words, visual effects adopted in images such as shooting distance, gaze direction, lightness, color symbolism should be taken into observation criteria carefully, as meanings of visualities are manifested and built by means of those visual techniques.

Secondly, the other role of visual images is called 'indexicality', meaning that "…a photographic image can serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advertisement's point" (p. 16). Photographs and videos can be more convincing and persuasive in advertisements than other kinds of images and texts, since they function as actual records of objects (mostly the objects are models and actresses as endorsers and the advertised products in cosmetics advertisements). Audiences are likely to imagine how they can achieve their ideal beauty standards with use of the advertised product when those ads can function as if they are non-fiction proof of how endorsers actually use the product, implying that is why they can look attractive. Technically speaking, photographic records are in fact 'documenting' an evidence of the association between popular endorsers and the endorsed products. Needless to say, those advertisements are not necessarily authentic documentaries, rather most of them are

manipulated, modified and exaggerated by editing such as photoshop (p. 17). It is also true, however, that most of the audiences who are exposed to enormous amounts of advertisements in daily level, are not conscious of fiction parts of those photos, rather influenced unconsciously.

Lastly, visual images play a role of providing a product user with one's desired social associations and impressions by showing others that the person uses the product, since "by publicly linking a product with a certain image, the ad makes it possible for users of the product to draw on that link as a means of making a public statement about how they themselves wish to be viewed" (p. 20). Moreover, unlike explicit linguistic statements, such visual statements can be implicit, which can help people to show the association without expressly speaking out. It points out that "the tacitness of the associations created by advertising may allow users of the products to benefit from these associations while avoiding the consequences of making them explicit" (p. 21), which means studying cosmetics advertisements makes it possible to analyze those tacit, implicit or even unconscious desires on how they want to be looked. This role of advertisements also proves the validity of researching beauty standards through the analysis of cosmetics advertisements, because being a user of an endorsed product means not only the purchase of the actual product itself but also purchasing the connotated impressions of the product and its branding image the user wants to belong. As explained in the earlier chapter about data collection, I collected advertising photos of most purchased products from rankings of cosmetics based on user reviews, thus this validates me to study ads on how women in Japan want to display themselves socially with the use of those products.

3.3.3 SEMIOTICS

The First and Second question concern with semiotics, since my analysis of data, or the interpretation of cosmetics advertisements will gain a method from symbolic analysis. Semiotics, in other words, systems of signs have been widely employed as one of the traditional theories used in working with visual data. Silverman (2011) explained how semiotics works as a method in ways of seeing, that "it shows how signs relate to one another in order to create and exclude particular meanings" (p.329). Using semiotics in visual data analysis is practical and feasible in the way that it enables researchers to explore hidden meanings and avoid surface and irrelevant observation. Regarding the different layers of meanings found in artefacts, Barthes introduced two different levels of meanings of images,

which are denotation referring to a surface meaning, and connotation referring to a deeper implication that needs to be considered in relation to broader contexts (as cited in Silverman, 2011). The method of semiotics begins with clarifying denotation of objects/texts in images and move on observing connotation of them carefully in the social dynamics the image is surrounded with. Therefore, it encourages me to analyze what kind of social relations, constructions and representations are captured in the visions of cosmetics advertising pictures.

Silverman summarized three characteristics of signs that Ferdinand de Saussure explained:

1.   Semiotics shows how the 'signifier' (objects/texts seen in cosmetics adverts in my study) are linked with the 'signified' as in certain concepts, or meanings. Without this process of interpreting images, my data analysis would be limited to only the surface descriptions of my visions, meaning that the possible visualities of how they are read by specific spectators would not be carefully examined, since "the signifier, such as the word 'women' or even an image of a woman, is just a meaningless object without the signified" (Morris, 2014, p. 243). These terms, signifier and signified are used in my data analysis to indicate objects I could pick up from the adverts and then to bring them together with the implied concepts/meanings in sequence.

2.   The signified (meanings) is not produced outside of the sign systems. It is produced only in comparisons with the other signs in the system. It is doubtful if this argument Saussure made from the perspective of linguistic sign systems are always applied in case of my data analysis. Barthes and later semioticians actually criticize that "…the work of signs is not reducible to the mechanics of a given sign-system". (Silverman, 2011, p.332). I believe that Japanese cosmetics advertising pictures are functioned as a platform where potential beauty standards, norms and ideals can be established one after another as well as the advertised products themselves. In the way that they constantly challenge new possibilities on the concept of beauty towards the expected consumers, it can be said that they always produce new ways of signs system, which might be unfamiliar in already existed sign systems. Therefore, I agree with what Barthes was critical about, thus this second explanation Saussure made will not be considered in my data analysis, but rather meanings of images will be also explored from outside of the given signs systems.

3. There is no universal association between the signifier and the signified. It highly depends on cultural backgrounds the reader of signs has. This is worth mentioning since the ways I read signs in Japanese cosmetics adverts are obviously not applicable to all spectators of the images, as Rose (2001) emphasized that "the particular 'audiences'…of an image will bring their own interpretations to bear on its meaning and effects" (p. 11). Taking an example from my data analysis, the word *かわいい* (kawaii) is one of the most common words that were found in my Japanese cosmetics adverts. Although the Japanese word kawaii can be translated into cute in English, the signified, or concepts of kawaii might be totally different from the ones associated with the English word cute (See literature review). This is also demonstrated with the fact that kawaii is now a loanword registered in Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online, 2017), implying that kawaii has established a different connotation from cute. Since "different languages simply use different terms for concepts" (Silverman, 2011, p.330), the data analysis for this study will offer detailed descriptions of how objects/words are interpreted for aimed Japanese female consumers in order to avoid direct translations of the Japanese words into English causing irrelevant connections between signifiers and signified outside of the context.

Those three major points on the use of semiotics in this study mentioned above, explained how I am going to apply it in the procedures of my data analysis. However, applying semiotics for the analysis of advertisements has also limitations. Simomura's studies (2008) on semiotics were used as a method in adverts analysis, and he summarized the past discussion among semioticians about certain difficulties that they might face in their procedures of interpreting signs, which lead them to inaccurate analysis in the end. Kitada argues that advertisements should have a disposition that they are always created based on the most essential intention, which is letting targeted consumers purchase the products (as cited in Simomura, 2008). Studying about how signs in adverts are decoded without paying enough attentions to what the images are actually published for, would just contribute to generate delusions. In those fanciful interpretations, intellectual excitements nor new knowledge on how to interpret images are discovered (p. 86).

This argumentation Kitada made on adverts analysis would be tricky in case of my study, since, as already explained earlier (see the section on procedures of data collection),

my data of the selected Japanese cosmetics advertisements are inclusive in a way that some of them are categorized into 'image advertising', whose main purpose is not necessarily selling their products, but accumulating good impressions aiming to attract consumers in a long term. Manabe (1999) explained that the concept of image advertising has appeared in our consumer society, where products as well as the adverts function as vehicles delivering signs for consumers to communicate. In other words, they function as communication tools by being treated as a popular topic of conversations among consumers. Hence adverts are not something that only satisfy their marketing effectiveness but also actively encourage communication for consumers. Adverts for branding have potentials to try creating unfamiliar signs and the following connotations so as to become topical among consumers, which might have nothing to do with selling their products directly.

However, his argument is also meaningful in my study as adverts are outcomes produced from their marketing tactics and strategies. For example, the phenomenon of adopting Caucasian female models in Japanese cosmetics advertising images, should be examined from the perspective of race and gender analysis but also from that of the marketing and business disciplines in beauty industries. It is able to be interpreted that Caucasian models are prone to be seen as those who have ideal appearance for Japanese female consumers but also the reason behind that might be that hiring the model costs less than hiring other Japanese models so that they reduce their costs for advertising. Due to its characteristic of advertisements that they are not innocent from all the intentions/reasons of marketing strategies, Kitada's criticism is still worth being considered in my data analysis.

3.3.4 DECODING SIGNS

Since my research will thus take place under the semiotic theory explained above, it is going to be mainly involved with the research approach of so called 'decoding' of visual representations, or signs programmed as meaningful discourse in adverts. Needless to say, this approach is based on a major argument that "visual representations…reveal what is socially significant to a society's members" (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 31). Therefore, the analysis of visual images, that is exploring the meanings of signs embedded in the images, is "a key to the understanding of social structure and social process" (p. 33), which enables me to observe much broader relations the signs imply jumping over the images themselves, reflecting its dynamics of social and cultural relations including gender and race. The object

of this research is not the signs themselves, but rather "meanings and messages in the form of signvehicles…through the operation of codes" (During, 1993, p.508).

According to Turner, there are said to be three different layers of meanings/messages read from signifiers; exegetical meaning, operational meaning and positional meaning (1970). Starting from reading exegetical meaning, the levels of meanings get deeper, or more comprehensive and complicated by reaching to understand positional meanings in the final stage. An example of women wearing makeup will illustrate how we could read hidden meanings of the practice carefully at different levels. The study of reading the message might start from looking at a surface meaning (exegetical), which is regarding the act of wearing makeup as a merely individual preference. Reading it more academically (operational), it might be found out that the act is performed by only specific social groups of people belonging to e.g. certain gender, age, occupation, thus this analysis somehow contradicts, or narrow down the first exegetical meaning. As a final observation, it can be contextualized (positional) in a bigger scope of dominant social and cultural relations in which the act should be performed; wearing makeup is a process of decoration and beautification of one's appearance, hence not wearing makeup refers to the opposite nakedness and carelessness. Societies and their culture can order women to go through the process to conceal the bareness and wear 'a public mask'. Although this is a simplified explanation regarding the depth decoding can reach, this possibility of reading meanings from signifiers validates the first assumption on visual images mentioned earlier, which the study of visual images contributes us to observe what social relations, powers and structures are hidden and represented in the background.

The other argumentation for my approach of decoding as a symbolist perspective, is that artefacts including advertising images possess symbolic significance, since "the social world is symbolically constituted and mediated" (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 32). If the society is all reflected and coded as signs in the artefacts, it is also pointed out that all signs should have meanings, as During explains Stuart Hall's theory of encoding and decoding that "if no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'. If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect" (1993, p. 508). Adverts can function as adverts only if it is a medium where even huge social matters and powers in a real world are encoded under certain rule of encoding as signifiers in two-dimensional world, and represented as seemingly just a simple picture, but actually with significant meanings and messages to convey to audiences. Due to this procedure of visual communication, which is transforming a social relation into a signifier/message in the scheme of visual discourse, it needs to be transmitted as "a 'story'

before it can become a *communicative event*" (p.508). This can be one of the interesting strengths of decoding advertisements, because the encoding process from societies into signs allows them to have a polysemic quality with "the interpretative latitude open to viewers…" (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 32). Even though the possibility of interpretation has a limit on how to read signs, meaning that "polysemy is not the same as pluralism: messages are not open to any interpretation or use whatsoever" (During, 1993, p.507), the polysemic nature of encoding-decoding circuit still offers us to understand a sign from various different perspectives. Moreover, it should be noted as well that "there is nothing…that would allow us to say that one of these interpretations is more correct than the other" (Messaris, 1997, p.13).

As a matter of fact, it is not rare in cosmetics advertisements that messages/meanings an encoder, or an advertiser was supposed to intend in the productions could be 'misunderstood' by the decoder, or the target audience. It is likely to happen especially when the artefacts represent social power relations explicitly and the receivers might be willing to stand against the dominant hierarchies. For example, a series of promotion videos of a cosmetics line "*Integrate*" by *SHISEIDO* was released in 2016, and it became controversial by Japanese social media and mass media criticizing that the contents would hinder Japanese society from achieving gender equality due to the representation of stereotypical femininity and construction of masculinity depicted in the video (livedoorNEWS, 2016). It ended up by *SHISEIDO* deleting the promotion videos from the official website and explaining that the original intention, which was to support women who wanted to look mature and beautiful, was not fully understood by consumers. This kind of misunderstanding is caused by gaps of so called 'relations of equivalence' between the circuit of visual communication consisting of the entry, that is encoding by the producers of artefacts and the exit, that is decoding by individual anonymous viewers. It is obvious that meanings embedded in signifiers of visual images can produce considerable ways of understanding arbitrary by audiences, since each producer and receiver has individual social background in terms of social identities, power relations, cultural environments and the like. As During points out, "there is no necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding, the former can attempt to 'pre-fer' but cannot prescribe or guarantee the latter…" (1993, p.515). This is also how the study of visual images from a symbolic approach can be established by figuring out all sorts of possible ways to understand an image. There is actually no such 'misunderstanding' except for the perception from the encoder's side, thus even so called 'miscommunication' between two

sides reflects how social relations are mediated by how they are interpreted variously by each of us.

This imperfect nature of visual communication through signs is based on the asymmetrical conditions of encoders and decoders, as explained above. Hence it can be argued that how to read meanings from images can mainly depend on the social conditions of the decoders. Since my research is carried out upon the collection of Japanese cosmetics advertising images, whose encoders should target Japanese women as viewers, it would be valid to claim that I am one of the target viewers of the adverts, who share relatively similar social contexts with other targets. This would enable my analysis to be one of the typical interpretations from the actual target audiences, that would contribute to comprehend the image more precisely and explore the hidden meanings and discourse in appropriate social contexts in which Japanese women are placed.

3.3.5 INSIGHT OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The third question (see research question) of my data analysis will be answered with the insight from discourse analysis. The research materials for this study, or the Japanese cosmetics advertising photography have a specific discourse, since discourse "refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking" (Rose, 2001, p. 142). The discourse of cosmetics advertising consisting of designed visual images and texts is regarded as a 'special language' to construct the world as it should be, and offers particular rules to perceive the world as it is preferred. A past research shows that readers of magazines spend only three seconds in average looking at each advertisement (Wedel & Pieters, 2000). Spectators who are planning to purchase advertised products are likely to spare more time seeing texts rather than pictures in ads, especially when texts appear with the combination of pictorial parts, although the pictorial impressions might be bigger than the textual ones at first sight (Rayner et al, 2001). Therefore, not only pictorial analysis but also textual analysis will be adopted in this study as a whole discourse representing beauty standards and cosmetics industries in Japan. According to Zang (2014), those patterns of the use of visual images and texts in cosmetics advertising, are called genre, especially 'functional' genre in a way it always has the practical purpose of convincing target consumers to buy the products and hence their scheme of marketing should be more or less patterned in a particular framework. My analysis will explore the patterned ways of using their special language in the strategies of advertising as a genre and also

examine what kind of discourse is constructed in the adverts or, in other words, how the world is produced as it is understood in the Japanese cosmetics advertising.

As I discussed the difference between vision and visuality earlier in this chapter, which are the major components of adverts, visuality of my data can be thus analyzed in this perspective of discourse analysis, since it can be rephrased interchangeably with the term visual discourse. Both of terms refer to how the image is seen and interpreted in a particular way by potential spectators and at the same time how the image 'excludes' specific ways of seeing by specific groups of people. Cosmetics advertising as a genre seems to have a most dominant discourse in which women should always be the subjects seeking to be more beautiful. Tanaka argues that there must be certain ongoing beauty standards that are widely accepted and preferred in a specific society on a specific period of time, and cosmetics advertising tactics should be always catching up with the updated beauty standards/ideals in order to fulfill their commercial purpose of selling their products to consumers (as cited in Zang, 2014). Moreover, he observed that the cosmetics advertising has also contributed to establishing a fixed persona representing for a beautiful woman in consumers' minds through advertising their products and brands, which have also promoted the consumers to believe that the persona in the image must be the 'official' beauty standard they need to follow up. The continually changing beauty standards influence and reinforce the strategies of cosmetics adverts and vice versa, which in either way, lead to construct the specific discourse of cosmetics advertising that limits the groups of spectators and the way to interpret the visual images.

Discourse analysis in my data analysis enables me to research what are believed to be true/correct, or dynamics of social powers and relations reflected in the discourse of Japanese cosmetics advertising, since "the most powerful discourses…depend on assumptions and claims that their knowledge is true" (Rose, 2001, p. 144). It is universal that the discourse of Japanese cosmetics advertising regard consumers aiming to be more beautiful with the advertised products as 'true' who can have more powers in their world, even though the beauty standards have different varieties depending on the cosmetics brands. The act of being beautiful are invariably to be welcomed and preferred, which are treated as a power in this discourse. It is then related to broader discourses of certain social relations, as Silverman (2014) explains that discourse analysis "addresses topics which are often quite close to the concerns of conventional social science…" (p. 318).

3.3.6 VALIDITY OF GENDER & RACE ANALYSIS

Approaching to my data with the scope of discourse analysis will thus achieve analyzing how the Japanese cosmetics visual images are actually producing and reproducing social power relations, which should be involved with socially constructed gender and race in my hypothesis. I presume that the discourse of Japanese cosmetics advertising utilizes the discourses of race and gender, as Rose argues that "power is everywhere, since discourse too is everywhere" (2001, p. 143). Gender and race are socially constructed and used to generate social powers to certain groups of people. The advertising images are the places where gendered and racialized beauty standards are negotiated and represented through the visual images and words. On the versatility of gender, it is found "from all social texts, not only from literature and from the products of mass media, but in social action and interactions, as well from the arts" (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko, 2003, p. 24). Gender is not something immutable but rather it has constantly been changed and constructed in social contexts, which also includes the case of marketing strategies of Japanese beauty industry and the following published advertising images. It seems that the topic of race cannot be separate from the gendered discourse of cosmetics advertising as long as they show the preferred appearance of 'beautiful women' in the visual images by using non-Asian models as well as mixed racial Japanese models effectively. Therefore, applying the discourse analysis for my data analysis from the perspective of gender and race are valid and help to research this study in a bigger scale.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 BRAND 1: OPERA, IMJU Co., Ltd

Here I have collected two advertising images from the website of *OPERA, imju Co., Ltd*, which ranked in the first place in the *@cosme* general ranking, Sep-Oct 2017 with their most sold lipsticks.

4.1.1 BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON THE COMPANY & BRAND

Imju Co., Ltd was established in 1990, based in Tokyo Japan. Although the company name is not yet well-known, some of their featuring brands and best sellers including their lipstick line '*OPERA*', have got widely known and come to attract attentions from target women in Japan. As the marketing strategy, they branch into 5 individual brands *OPERA, dejavu, naturie, EYE PUTTI & mylash*, each of which develop single specific line of cosmetics (such as *OPERA* featuring only various colors of lipsticks, *dejavu* focusing on the sales of eye makeup products). It can be said that consumers would hardly know that those brands are in fact offered under the same company due to their distinct advertising design as well as their strategy of launching individual, independent brands instead of putting all together under a single brand name. However, they state that all of the brands were "inspired by Asia Woman needs for high quality cosmetics and skincare" (imju, n.d.), implying their marketing as well as products themselves are developed based on possible Asian consumers particularly. As a matter of fact, one of their brands, *EYEPUTTI* especially sells series of cosmetics tools for those who have single eyelid to make double eyelid, which is one of huge interests among Asian women's makeup standard, and also, they have expanded their business to Indonesia since 2014.

As mentioned earlier, *OPERA* is a cosmetics line of lipsticks, offering two kinds of lipsticks, *LIP TINT* and *SHEER LIP COLOR* with 18 different colors in total. This brand has actually started since 1917 as a private store dealing cosmetics, later established as a cosmetic scompany in Asakusa, Tokyo. In order to decode the naming of 'OPERA', it is of importance

to consider what were the symbolic meanings of the place 'Asakusa' in Japan. According to a beauty magazine, Asakusa was seen as a center of entertainment & modernity in Tokyo along with the huge popular trend of opera theaters frequently performed there at that time. Asakusa was a stylish urbane place where new trends and cultures kept being created from. (*CYAN,* 2019). Since opera was one of the biggest trendy entertainments spread from Asakusa, it was a symbol of new, urban culture associated with elegance, sophisticated feelings, popularity and adoration to modernity and so-called high culture. It is still valid to decode opera with those associated meanings, since opera is still prone to be considered as a Western-exported luxury culture for certain sophisticated people, not really accepted as a common casual one in Japan.

Based on those background knowledges on the company and brand, it is worth indicating that 1. the advertisements studied here would be designed with their most attention to 'Asian women' consumers (especially Japanese and South Asian consumers prospected from their business expansion) 2. the use of the brand name *OPERA* should more or less related with those decoded meanings of 'opera theaters' derived from the then opera trends in Asakusa as a classy culture for those who are sophisticated in Japan.

4.1.2 IMAGE ANALYSIS: IMAGE A & B

A-1. *OPERA*, *imju* Co., Ltd.. (2017). *Lip Tint 05 Coral pink.*
Retrieved from https://www.opera-net.jp/

A-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE A-

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	a woman, two lipsticks, flower decoration (consisting of flowers, berries & feathers)
Color	pink, purple, white, brown, gold, black
Textual	・*オトナの透けじゅわティント* [clear, juicy lip tint for grown-ups] ・*Blooming Everyday スペシャルサイトはこちら* [Blooming everyday - visit our special website] ・*透けるキレイ色 落ちずに続く* [transparent, sophisticated color, long-lasting without coming off] ・*ティントオイルルージュ* [lip tint oil rouge] ・*LIP TINT リップティント	モデル使用色	05 コーラルピンク*

A-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXUAL SIGNIFIERS

As explained in the previous chapter, iconicity of visual images stands for photographs portraying actual persons, places, and objects, functioning as a proof record to encourage spectators to imagine that whatever appearing in the visual image actually does exist or happen in the reality. Regarding this image analyzed here, the iconic signifiers are; the portrait of a woman, the floral background image, and the picture of the advertised lipsticks.

・PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN AND LIPSTICKS

In denotative level, the portrait of a woman is obviously an icon of the signified female adult (presumably in her age of 20s-30s), which focus special attention on possible female consumers in those ages, meaning that the use of this portrait also contributes to exclude non-target gender groups, which would be entirely males and also groups of females in different age brackets. As its symbolic role, the visual image of a woman helps to create certain emotional interactions between the endorser and the viewers. Along with the picture of lipstick and her showy, wetly red-colored lip, the combination of those iconic signs establishes a correlation diagram among the endorser, the lipstick and the achievable beauty ideal, meaning that the image communicates as if it proves that the woman has actually used this lipstick. Thus, she has achieved this attractive looking of her lip, and even implies that all consumers can perform this desired ambience as shown in the floral, colorful background

image by means of applying this lipstick. Due to its iconicity, audiences decode that the image is like a mirror showing how the lipstick can make their lips look like hers. Therefore, in the connotative level, the icon of a woman is not just an endorser, but a reflection of audiences themselves on how they can achieve the desired looking and impression with the use of lipstick.

Observing the endorser closely in the image, it might be noticed that the female does not look like entirely Japanese for some spectators. She is in fact a model from Thailand (Space Craft, n.d.), assumedly because OPERA aims to expand their business markets to South Eastern Asian countries as well (imju, n.d.), but also partly because South Asian-looking facial features are likely to be preferred as one of beauty ideals in the Japanese recent beauty trends, since there are ハーフ(*hafu*/mixed racial) and non-Japanese models getting more popular for their looks as explained earlier in the second chapter. The fact that she is not ethnically a Japanese, however, will not obviously be recognized from the image. This image adopted a South-Asian model who looks somewhat different from typical Japanese facial features, but still has similar features categorized into the whole general 'Asian' ethnic group.

Speaking of her visual expression, her whole face and shoulder parts appear, and her gaze direction points towards us with her bust turning to left, where the texts and the product image are displayed. According to past findings on advertisement research, face presence in advertising images promotes audiences to pay more attentions on the detailed contents of the images such as texts, brand logos and pictures of advertised products (Adil, Lacoste-Badie & Droulers, 2018). Considering from a phycological perspective, viewers' attention is likely to be oriented toward the direction to which the gaze of a face pinpoints (2018). Based on those understandings, her gaze fixation pays the most attention to 'us', in other words, spectators themselves, enabling us to be conscious of our existence in this visual communication. Moreover, her shoulder direction still allows some of our attentions to focus on the texts and the product image. As eyes and face are considered as the most influential stimuli to capture our attentions (ibid.), it can be analyzed that this image is structured as the mediation of branding promotion giving preferable brand impressions and beauty ideals, rather than strategizing the actual sales of the product. Since her face is supposed to be adopted as a persona representing certain ideal beauty images achieved, her non-smiling, yet modest tilting face with her hair covering the right side of her face as well as the posing shot as if she has just looked back without any motivated intentions, illustrates that she is a symbol of

natural, innocent, modest and even fragile beauty, all created with combination of her posing, expressions, coloring and the background picture of flower decorations.

・A BACKGROUND OF FLOWER DECORATION

Coloring of this image mainly consists of shades of pink, white and purple, all of which are feminine with the softer, brighter and lighter texture. Due to the blurry background image of flower decorations where the major colors are concentrated, they are offering us soft impressions of pastel colors rather than aggressive vivid colors. In the theory of color symbolism, coloring in visual images conveys two types of symbolic messages, which are embodied, universal meanings or referential, contextual meanings (Won & Westland, 2018). It is of importance to point out here that coloring itself functions as "a mechanism for creating brand packaging or logos that can arouse positive expectations" (p.105, 2018). Specifically coloring in advertisements "can affect consumer expectations such as quality, flavor intensity, product texture and so forth" (p.101). Therefore, color symbolism in advertisements should be decoded as a representation of the brands, products and beauty ideals themselves, which the advertisers aim to communicate towards audiences.

According to two types of color symbolism charts offered here, one categorized contextually by cultural orientations and nations (in this chart, Japan should be referred to from groups of "Eastern" and "Japan" (Sckrotation, n.d.), yet another one describing rather embodied meanings of colors in the universal standard (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010), these major colors consisting this ad symbolizes; 1. Pink as "marriage, femininity, youth, well-liked by both males & females…"and "romantic, sweet tasting, femininity, innocence, softness, youthful…", 2. White as "purity, truthfulness, airy", 3.Purple as "nobility, wealth…", and "sophistication, mysterious, youth, dramatic...".

As decoded through iconic signifiers of a combination of the woman and the flower decoration behind her, it can be analyzed that images of femininity, purity and youth are one of the biggest representations coded through coloring as well. These impressions are even more amplified by connotative symbols of feathers and flowers used in the background, which also give feelings of softness, nature and fragility, thus representations of femininity. The choice of a white dress and pink background for the model shows that she is pure, young and feminine person who gives preferable impressions casually to both male and female audiences. Moreover, a small proportion of purple color from some berries used in the flower decoration avoids her image to be too juvenile or fragile, since the purple shows that she can

be also a seductive, sophisticated and mature woman. The use of berries can be decoded with her wet-looking lip that allow audiences imagine her lips has a texture of juicy berries with good scents. Needless to say, the image of her distinctive red lips functions as an iconic proof of how the advertised products work in actual makeups, and the gold colored-package symbolizes "rich, valuable, prestigious…" (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010) by the metallic gold, which means that the product itself is actually fancy and valuable in denotative level, yet connotatively means that people are able to represent a noble, rich and sophisticated atmosphere by just bringing this product with.

・TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The biggest phrase in this image is "*オトナの透けじゅわティント* [clear, juicy lip tint for grown-ups]", which seems to be a catch line, clearly pointing out what kind of branding this advert is trying to establish through the visual communication. Firstly, this phrase states that this product is for 'grown-ups' specifically written as '*オトナ* (otona/ adults)' in *katakana* style, whose font style is often applied in beauty-related media in order to refer to adult woman without any negative connotations of aging. The word '*オトナ*' can imply not only literally translated adults, but also women who are not teenagers anymore but not yet aging old, and can look attractive sexually as a mature, yet young woman. *透けじゅわ* (suke-jyuwa/ transparent & juicy) is an invented adjective, consinsting of *透ける* (clear, transparent) and じゅわ, an onomatopoeic sound of liquids spreading with some good flavors. Since the word *透け (suke)* is used twice in this line and also in another phrase "*透けるキレイ色 落ちずに続く* [transparent, sophisticated color, long-lasting without coming off]", the representation of clearness and transparency, in other words, truthfulness, innocence, and purity are to be emphasized on with all other signifiers of the icons and colors. *じゅわ* is considered as a comfortable sound to describe some liquids penetrating gradually, often applied to explain delicious, juicy flavors bursting into one's mouth. Since it is onomatopoeic, it makes audiences easier to depict visually in their heads on how this oil-based lipstick color can fit into lips smoothly with some comfortable feelings.

The phrase "*Blooming Everyday*" help viewers to associate the floral, pinkish background with an achievement of ideal beauty and lifestyle by means of using the products. The word 'blooming' denotes blooming flowers, and also connotates a woman freshly turning into a mature, sophisticated grown-up from a juvenile girl.

The color of this lipstick is named as "コーラルピンク [coral pink]", bringing an image of soft, mild light pink from corals as well as senses of cuteness and innocence from the pastel color shade. By clearly writing "モデル使用色 [the color the model applied]", it increases a credibility of the iconic signifier of a woman that it is exactly this product accomplishing her attractive lips.

B-1. *OPERA*, *imju* Co., Ltd.. (2017). *Sheer Lip Color*.
 Retrieved from https://www.opera-net.jp/

B-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE B-

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	a woman (wearing a black shirt with botanical design), two lipsticks, urban city view (consisting of white wall & tall buildings)
Color	light blue, light grey, white, black, pink
Textual	·キレイに発色 口紅より透明感 -スティック状グロス- [brighter and more beautiful color than usual lipsticks: -Stick type gloss-] ·*Gloss×Rouge* [lip gross and lipstick] ·*Sweet ✕ Glamorous* [sweet and glamorous] ·*限定色* [limited color]

B-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXUAL SIGNIFIERS

As argued in the first image, this advertisement image functions also as a mirror of spectators due to the model's gaze looking to us, or audiences, making us be conscious of ourselves in this ongoing visual communication. It is also of importance to point out that the iconic signifier of a woman is not only a reflection of unspecified viewers but also a creation of a specific type of persona coded together with the other signifiers in this image.

・PERSONA OF A CAREER WOMAN

The biggest ratio of this image consists of the background image of a certain urban city view from somewhere above. Since the city of tall buildings spreads behind the model as about the same height by the laws of perspective adopted, moreover, there are the green fence and white wall as parts of the building she is inside of, it can be interpreted that this shooting theme was set up presumably as if she herself is in one of the tall buildings of concrete jungle. Observed from her hair, makeup & fashion style along with the background city view, it is decoded that she is a specific persona standing for an image of 'working women in an office somewhere in urban city'. Spectators can imagine that the persona is not a student or a mother, but rather emphasized on women having a career, because she is in the middle of seemingly urban business districts, with her hair tied up, no bangs, dyed into dark brownish color and her modest, natural makeup as well as with a calm dark collar shirt with some classic botanical designs. These are exactly one of the typical criteria generally asked in Japanese societies on how women should represent oneself in Japanese working environments (discussed in p.6), hence it is obvious to allow spectators to decode her as a working woman with all these settings.

・FACIAL EXPRESSION AND POSING

The model adopted here is actually the same person as the one in the first image, who is from Thailand. As mentioned earlier, however, there are only subtle different features audiences can tell from her looking that she is non-Japanese. Regarding her facial expression and posing, her face is presented from the left side toward a camera, or spectators, with her body still looking left as if she just looked back naturally. According to a research on perceptions of faces conducted by Wake Forest University, left-sided portraits gave stronger aesthetic

preferences to participants from both sexes, since left cheek is looked more appealing by bringing intensity of emotions such as impressions of kindness, softness, and femininity (Blackburn & Schirillo, 2012). This psychological shooting technique used in the first image as well as in this image, would contribute to associate emotional feedbacks from viewers that this iconic signifier is not only a representation of beautiful appearance, but that of a woman who should have an attractive and preferable inside beauty by showing left-sided face with richer emotions. Her face looks natural without any strong expressions, yet her lips rising up towards right and the modest makeup with soft series of pink offers us positive, natural, pure and feminine interpretations. Moreover, the lighting on her face projecting her shadow behind performs as if this image was taken outside under the natural sunlight. That would help to increase desirable impressions of her natural status, purity and innocence. The positioning of her right arm covering her neck and her slender arm showing off from the rolled-up sleeve are the symbols of her fragility and purity. These feminine qualities are also encoded with the pink and white, seemingly small wild flowers designed on her shirt.

・COLOR ANALYSIS

Aside from the feminine interpretations made from those iconic signifiers above, the coloring in this image seems to create rather cool and intelligent impressions. The major coloring consists of light blue and light grey used in the urban view behind the model; 1. Light blue is a symbol of "calming, patient, cool, trusting…", 2. Light grey is a symbol of "neutral, logical, rich, trust…" (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010), which create distinctive atmospheres from the signifiers of the model's posing and expression standing for certain femininities such as purity, innocence, and vulnerability. However, it can be analyzed that this combination of apparently incompatible messages conveyed from emotive icons and non-emotive colorings, is balanced effectively to narrow down the ideal beauty image this ad wants to suggest. The cold colorings in the background image functions to prevent the persona from being just an 'ordinary woman'
, which means that the persona should not be just a general conception of women, but that of 'career' woman. In Japanese societies, women working in competitive business environments in urban cities are likely to be looked upon as a symbol of being cool, intelligent and respectable among women, on the other hand, they are also associated with images of being masculine, strict, logical, thus less appealing among men. Therefore, by mixing feminine signifiers with some rather masculine colorings into her background, this advertisement

achieves to produce both positive beauty ideals of being 'a feminine woman' and being 'a career woman'.

This coloring technique can be observed from the colors of her shirt, which consists of 3. Black: "wealth, masculinity, knowledge, mystery" (2010), and "elegant, powerful, sophisticated, expensive…" (Sckrotation, n.d.), with botanical design of pinkish, white small flowers adding feminine, delicate, and adorable feelings. The black textile is interpreted as a representation of the masculine aspects of the persona as a competitive working woman. At the same time, the floral design related with her pinkish makeup as well as some pink letters spread in the advert, shows off feminine aspects of the persona just as an attractive, gendered woman. This combination of black and pink matches the package of the lipsticks as well, which enable the spectators to imagine that the product is a sophisticated, high-end brand yet it also offers a sense of cuteness and consumer-friendliness.

・TEXT ANALYSIS

What is interesting to discuss here, is that this image applies English textual signifiers such as "*Gloss×Rouge* [lip gross and lipstick]" and "*Sweet×Glamorous* [sweet and glamorous]". As a matter of fact, it is one of the common advertising techniques to use English, or loan-words in Japanese advertising images. The use of English is obviously not intended for possible non-Japanese speakers, since the English used in these adverts is not always relevant or significant. It is merely a display of coolness, fashion and modernity coded effectively by the linguistic impressions English can bring for Japanese viewers (Murata, 2018). This advertising approach can be even valid for spectators who do not understand English, as the textual decorations do not necessarily need to make any linguistic sense for audiences as long as advertisers are able to present preferable branding images. It should be also noted that these two English texts in this image are written in cursive letters, which increase the designability of decorative English texts even more.

The biggest Japanese text "*キレイに発色 口紅より透明感* -スティック状グロス- [brighter and more beautiful color than usual lipsticks: -Stick type gloss-]" plays a role of description on how the gloss lipstick is distinctive from other normal lipsticks. The first part of the text "*キレイに発色* [brightly and beautifully colored]" looks catchy by writing *キレイ* (*kirei*/beautiful) in Katakana font style intentionally, as observed as well in the first data. According to Iwahara and Hatta, Katakana style can deliver readers certain emotional associations such as foreign, cool, classy, and modern (2004). The word 'beautiful' written in

katakana style can be, therefore considered as the representation of modernity and fashionability, which has in fact similar effects with the display of English texts. Additionally, it should be also pointed out that Katakana language is competent at expressing sensible and emotive aspects, which are unique to youngsters (Sorimatsu & Horio, 2006). The reason why advertisements for the young are prone to adopt Katakana style is that the style is able to attract more attentions as a newly invented words to create different meanings with. Thus, the use of katakana in this image is decoded as a tool to transform the original concept of *きれい* / beautiful into a more specific concept of *キレイ* / beautiful, which should be achieved from being young, modern and cool.

4.2 BRAND 2: ADDICTION & DECORTÉ, KOSÉ Corporation

There are two images to be analyzed here, collected from two different cosmetics brands *ADDICTION* and *DECORTÉ* produced by the same company *KOSÉ Corporation.* ADDICTON ranked 2nd, followed by *DECORTÉ* at 4th in the *@cosme* ranking released in Sep-Oct 2017. Since *KOSÉ* seems to have applied similar marketing strategies for both of their independent brands (as explained later in the next section), I have decided to discuss both, based on offering the same background knowledge on the company.

4.2.1 BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON THE COMPANY & BRAND

KOSÉ is a Japanese long-established company founded in 1946, with its domestic market share growing up to the 3rd in the current cosmetics business (KOSÉ, n.d.). They have reported the record high sales and profits in 2019, which was the highest growth rate among the other top share Japanese brands such as *Kao* and *Shiseido* (KOSÉ, 2019). They consider that one of the facts of its growing business is a successful foundation of their own independent cosmetics brands with different themes and consumer targets. *KOSÉ* has developed more than 30 individual brands, each ranked under three levels in terms of its distinctive target groups, prices and qualities; brands in the highest level are named as '*high-prestige brands',* followed by '*prestige brands'* and '*cosmetaries brands'* (KOSÉ, n.d.). Among these levels, the most luxury 'high-prestige brands' have contributed to the total *KOSÉ*'s sales increase the most, which includes *ADDICTION* and *DECORTÉ* to be analyzed here. As their marketing strategies, high-prestige brands are only available in high-grade department stores although other levels of their brands are only accessible in local daily

convenience stores and drug stores, which is because *KOSÉ* aims to make a clear distinction between different targets and branding images. As for *ADDICTION* and *DECORTÉ,* they detach their branding images from that of the original company *KOSÉ* on purpose, so that not many Japanese consumers in fact are aware of the fact that their brands are actually originated from *KOSÉ,* but rather they advertise themselves as if they are 'luxury brands from some cosmetics companies overseas' (Somehara, 2017). (Half of cosmetics brands exhibited in Japanese department stores are from foreign capital groups with prestigious branding images.) According to an analysist, this independent branding strategy is practiced since the company name *KOSÉ* might add negative values such as causal, cheap, elderly consumers-targeted on their individual high-prestige brands.

The formation of these high-ends branding images can be also observed from the name of the company *KOSÉ* and its brands *ADDICTION* and *DECORTÉ*. The company name used to be written as コーセー in Katakana style, a one of Japanese font styles, however modified later into the alphabet style *KOSÉ with É* associated with some Italian or French letters. This method can be seen as well in these names *ADDICTION* and *DECORTÉ,* both written with alphabets, bringing up certain linguistic impressions such as modernity, high-class feel and fashionability. Based on their marketing strategy, it should be noted that I can therefore analyze how they present themselves as 'high-prestigious' and 'seemingly Western brand' from the advertisement techniques.

4.2.2 IMAGE ANALYSIS: IMAGE C & D

C-1. *ADDICTION*, KOSÉ Corporation. (2017). Base makeup.
    Retrieved from https://www.addiction-beauty.com/en-jp/

C-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE C-

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	two women, 5 foundation primer products
Color	white, red, black
Textual	·*2017.09.08 Debut* ·*ADDICTION BY AYAKO* ·*THE BASE MAKE-UP INTRODUCING THE NEW BASE MAKE-UP COLLECTION* ·*17 SHADES* ·*FALL 2017*

C-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXUAL SIGNIFIERS

This advertisement image is simply designed, consisting of the left half part, which is a portrait of two women in the black frame, and the other right half part, which is texts all written in English and the photo of 5 primers to sell.

·REPRESENTATION OF 'ALL SHADES/ETHNICS-FRIENDLY'

The biggest iconic signifier that attracts our attentions seems to be the enlarged facial photos of white and black female models, who look apparently different when it comes to their skin shades. As the advertised products are the foundation primers with 17 color selections as mentioned in the advertising texts, it is analyzed that these ethnically different women with seemingly opposite skin shades are to convey a commercial message that this brand has a wide range of primers that would perfectly match with any of our skin colors. If skin tones are measured by the light – dark scale, the women on the left should be adopted as the representation of target consumers with relatively dark skin tones, on the other hand, the women on the right is that of consumers with light skin tones. According to their portfolios, the black model on the ad is actually from Jamaica and the white model is from Germany (models., 2017). Their ethnically different facial features as well as their innate skin shades are functioning as iconic signifiers to prove that *ADDICTION* is a 'all shades/ethnics-friendly' brand. It should be pointed out here that having different skin shades is associated with, or furthermore, equal to having different ethnic backgrounds, since it can be observed from the image that the difference of innate skin color is elicited by adopting two ethnically different

models. If they would want to emphasize solely on showing different skin shades without mentioning different ethnic groups, they could have instead adopted ethnically same models with slightly different skin colors. One reason for this would be that showing different ethnicities on the ad implies the flexible practicability of their cosmetics products, contributing to expand their business out of Japan as they are in fact planning to do (KOSÉ, n.d.). Another reason would be that, this was seemingly designed with bigger focus on its aesthetic competence rather than practical, commercial logics, which is going to be discussed later in the section of color analysis.

・FACES AND TEXTS WITHOUT PERSONALITY INFERENCES

Compared with the earlier two advertisement images issued from *Opera*, one of the biggest differences regarding their advertising techniques would be, whether they reflect certain 'persona' on the appearing endorsers or not. In this case here, it can be analyzed that they are trying not to code any specific persona inferences by the signifiers of these two models.

Firstly, both of the models' faces are only half-shown, which produces mysterious and ambiguous impressions. Despite of the fact that human face is considered as the most influential inducement of capturing our optical attentions (Adil, Lacoste-Badie & Droulers, 2018), it will not always mean that 'the more faces there are, the more attentions the ad gets'; rather their technique of showing only half of each whole faces can even intensify the effect of getting audience curiosities due to its ambiguity. Additionally, their indistinct facial expression also makes it difficult for viewers to grasp what kind of persona they present in the image. Secondly, there are no other iconic signifiers aside from the photos of faces and products. The background image, which can often function as a narrative to tell what type of beauty is being represented, however, is just mono-color (white), not even accounting for much ratios of this image. This image rather consists of the close-up photoshoot of the faces. Speaking of the faces, the only iconic signifier on the left part of the ad, they are not displaying any other parts of their identities such as hairstyles, hands and fashions, which generally let spectators relate them to certain types of impressions and personalities. Thirdly, observing more closely on the right part of the ad, it can be found out that the texts are about minimal descriptions on the newly released products, all written in English in spite of its domestic consumer-targeted advertisement. As discussed earlier in the analysis of the ads from *OPERA,* the use of English texts in Japanese cosmetics ads should not be always classified into the field of textual analysis, since English texts often appear not as linguistic

tools to convey a specific message, but rather as a part of the ad design to produce certain preferable brand images. (Murata, 2018) As for this image from *ADDICTION*, the use of only English texts helps them to establish the desirable impression as if the brand is from a high-ends foreign cosmetics company, which is in fact, exactly how they would want to brand themselves (Somehara, 2017). What is distinctive from the ads from *OPERA* when it comes to the display of English texts, is that this image is not using any adjective words (such as 'sweet' and 'blooming' found in the earlier cases) that are often applied to bring out certain emotional impressions and empathies associated with the readers. The merely short description of the new products in English without any emotional adjectives avoids audiences from feeling familiar to the brand or the models in the image, shutting down a sense of affinity strategically.

According to a consumer research by Brumbaugh, physical appearances of endorsers in advertising cause the viewers to have personality inferences from the photos, which leads to determine whether they like the advertisement or not (1993). In other words, viewers tend to assume the inner of endorsers from their looks, which might affect the advertising efficiency for both better or worse, as even positive traits of personality (kind, friendly and such) may not be always appropriate for the branding image. Based on these three observations stated above on how this ad is designed not to show any specific persona, it can be argued that it is intentionally trying to obstruct spectators to practice the unconscious personality inferences. Since *ADDICTION* aims to establish themselves as a luxury cosmetics brand, the impressions they want to connotate in the advertising images would be; high class feel, extraordinary and expertise. Adopting non-Japanese looking models and writing all in English as well as all other photoshoot techniques mentioned above, therefore, are to support showing the desirable brand images, which is accomplished by avoiding the creation of a familiar and common persona.

・COLOR ANALYSIS

As this image interrupts the process of personality inferences as indicated above, viewers are encouraged to perceive the models as just 'aesthetic objects' rather than females with certain characters. The major colors of this image, which are white, black and pinpoint red, are also emphasizing the modernistic and artistic beauty theme represented in the photo of endorsers as an aesthetic vision.

The background color is all white, yet the left part of the facial photo is framed and emphasized with a black line. Framing also functions as a technique to let viewers look at the image as a portrait photo of attractive models, rather than just a commercial and informative advertising picture. Both white and black are extremes in the degree of color intensity, generally used as a combination of opposite colors. It should be pointed out that the use of black and white as the main designing colors is presumably associated with the appearing black and white models. As only the word "17 shades" on the right is highlighted with black, they put emphasis on informing viewers that the primers have wide varieties of colors that would match with one's skin colors. The iconic signifier of two ethnically different female models is hence a representation of possible maximum differences on the range of inherent skin colors the primers can be suitable with. The lightest shade in the color variation of primers are proved in the white model's face, on the other hand, the darkest shade is shown by putting black model's face symmetrically next to the other, which implies that the concept of different ethnicities/races can be interpreted the same with having different physical features, especially skin colors when it comes to advertising about outward appearance.

Interestingly, medium ivory colors, which many of Japanese consumers would purchase, are not demonstrated in the ad, which is because the combination of only extreme, opposite colors (black and white in this case) would give stronger impacts towards viewers while enhancing the color intensity each other. Since the image is designed to be looked rather as artistic, intense and modern, sticking to bipolar colors seems to be more effective to present the image aesthetically appealing. Additionally, vivid red is applied on models' lips as the only intense pinpoint color in this monochrome-themed image. The symbolic meanings of red are "passionate, powerful and sexy" (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010). Lips as well as red color often symbolize the sexuality of females, intensifying femininities of the models as a sexually attractive woman. Red lips also help to lead viewers' attentions on their faces while making skin complexion look healthier at the same time.

D-1. *DECORTÉ*, KOSÉ Corporation. (2017). *Marcel Wanders Collection Face Powder* Ⅶ. Retrieved from https://www.cosmedecorte.com/

I.

II.

D-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE **D (I)**-

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	A woman wearing butterfly-shaped dress, darkness with sparks, two face powder products
Color	Blue, silver white, gold, green, purple, pink
Textual	・ *DECORTÉ* ・*Marcel Wanders Collection* ・*Romantic Butterfly*

D-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXUAL SIGNIFIERS

These series of images (image I & II) advertises a face powder released in 2017 from *Marcel Wanders Collection,* which has produced the limited amounts of face powders every year since 2011 with differently designed packages. As one of their advertising strategies for these annual specially designed cosmetics, *DECORTÉ* offers a specific narrative for each different theme. There is a special website created solely for the advertisement of this collection, in which the image I is located as the main ad, followed by image II telling a background fairytale.

One of the most distinctive features of this advertisement compared from the other sources analyzed earlier, is that this focuses more on 'beautifying' the product itself, rather than presenting the beauty ideal the cosmetics could offer. Cosmetics advertisements often adopt female models to establish persona demonstrating certain attractive atmosphere and appearance, which let viewers imagine how they can beautify themselves by the use of the advertised product. In case of advertisements of face powders, they are generally prone to emphasize exhibiting skin complexion of endorsers clearly (seen as in Image C), since it enables spectators to fantasize achieving the skin quality as beautiful as the model's. However, it can be argued that this image is different in a way that it is not either founding a beautified persona or displaying how users can be beautified.

・A FANTASY NARRATIVE OF 'MISS BUTTERFLY'

It can be analyzed that the iconic signifier of a woman wearing butterfly-shaped dress is in fact not a persona representing a beauty ideal. The photo of the woman is placed even smaller than the face powder case she is sitting down on, making it difficult to recognize the details of her appearance, and obviously her skin complexion. The vagueness therefore indicates that

the signifier of a woman is not serving the function as a persona effectively. The supplementary image II offers a narrative description about the woman with her watercolor painting;

A story of a lovely butterfly that gently makes you beautiful- Her name is Miss Butterfly. Miss Butterfly flies freely around colorful flowers. She meets a 'magical butterfly' in the middle of her journey and received a magical power to transform any types of women skin into smooth, silky skin.

According to this background story of the iconic women in the ad named as *Miss Butterfly,* she is described as a fairy that can beautify female's skin, implying that the character, *Miss Butterfly* itself represents the personification of the advertised face powder. The theme design of the package seems to be inspired by butterfly wings, since the fairy is sitting down in front of the standing container, as if her appearance is mirrored into the case. Moreover, the so-called 'magical power' described in image II signifies the actual effectiveness of the product, advertising how users can get smooth skin by applying the powder. The establishment of a specific character 'Miss Butterfly' performs as the embodiment of the product itself, contributing to produce additional values, or appealing points into the product by means of the narrative-like structure. The personified product with the fairytale enables the package design to look more meaningful, unique and special.

・FAIRY PERSONIFIED

The butterfly fairy is depicted with the watercolor technique in image II, which shows the fairy mysterious and imaginary as it only exists in a fantasy world. In image I, however, the fairy is played by a model wearing butterfly-shaped dress. She is Stella Maxwell, a white female model from Belgium. It is one of *DECORTÉ*'s marketing schemes to adopt only racially white endorsers so as to brand itself as if it is a high-ends, foreign cosmetics company (Somehara, 2017). It is also familiar to characterize fairies with some physical features of Caucasianess in fantasy stories, presumably due to imported, famous fairytales from Western countries. It is analyzed here that the racial difference seen in the white model's appearance (as well as her dress like a butterfly wing) helps to elicit the desirable atmosphere. A fairy looks different from 'us', or Japanese target spectators, hence her appearance can represent an unknown, mysterious and different creature. The sense of

unfamiliarity caused from her non-Asian-looking thus encourages to create mysterious fairytale-like airs in the advertisement.

It goes without saying that the role of fairy is clearly gendered as a female acted by a female model, and also named as 'Miss Butterfly'. The honorific title, 'Miss' refers only to female unmarried conditions at the level of denotative meaning. However, considering that the title is often used in beauty pageants as well, it should be connotatively related to the concept of beauty. It is analyzed that the word 'Miss' can symbolize not only bachelorette, but also youth, purity and beauty, while 'Mrs.' can be decoded as royalty and maturity in a positive interpretation, yet aging and undesirability if decoded negatively. Especially in Japanese beauty standards, in which it is regarded as a norm to consider aging as a taboo (see P.9), it is more reasonable to name the fairy as Miss to promote viewers to associate it with the idea of beauty.

・TEXT AND COLOR ANALYSIS

In the main image I, the texts are all typed in English, regardless of the target Japanese spectators, which should be motivated by the same reason with the earlier analyses that English texts achieve purposes as decoration, rather than linguistic messages in case of Japanese cosmetics ads. As found from the adjectives shown in the Japanese narrative texts (lovely, beautiful, Miss, magical, silky) in the image II, it seems that the image intends to give us feminine impressions. Femininity is also represented in the fairy woman in image I, whose dress looks like a soft textile trembling gently, signifying the vulnerability of the fairy.

The design of the container standing up like a mirror reflecting her appearance, consists of different shades of blue, purple, pink, white and green. The theme color of the whole image is blue, symbolizing dignity, classicism and trust (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010), which visually communicate that it is a trustworthy prestige product. The luminous fairy and product in the dark blue darkness illustrate its novelty and nobility. The combination of pink and white added slightly in the cold colored package are interpreted as effect colors to prevent the cold color palette to be expressionless. These colors are regarded as romantic, feminine, mild and innocent if used together. Spiritual and mysterious effects in this narrative-like advertisement can be also found in the purple color symbolizing mystery (Sckrotation, n.d.), furthermore, the crystal-like design along with the green color are coding its mystique and beauty of nature.

4.3 BRAND 3: *excel TOKYO RICH CASUAL, Noevir Holdings Co., Ltd.*

I am going to analyze an advertising image collected from the homepage website of *excel TOKYO RICH CASUAL, Noevir Holdings Co., Ltd.,* which ranked 3rd in the *@cosme* ranking, Sep-Oct 2017 with their biggest-selling eyeshadow.
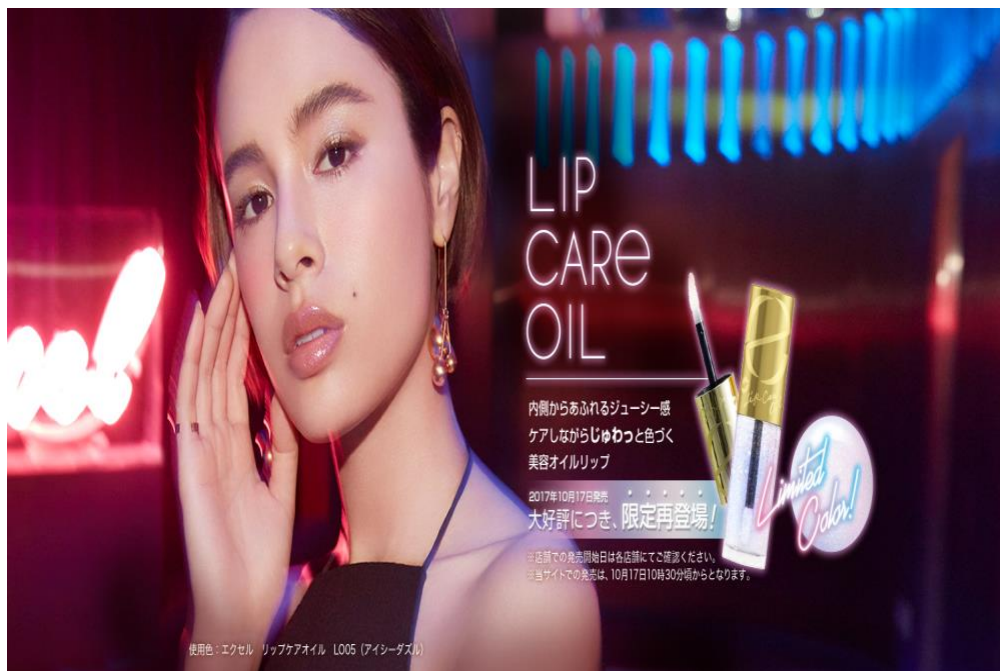
4.3.1 BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON THE COMPANY & BRAND

Excel TOKYO RICH CASUAL (referred to as *excel*) was founded in 1987 as one of the individual cosmetics brands under Noevir Holdings Co., Ltd. As the brand adopted the word 'TOKYO' for its name, the brand concept is to suggest newest makeup trends happening from Tokyo by offering what they call 'スマートコスメ [smart cosmetics]' that users can apply without any complicated makeup techniques (excel, n.d.). As *OPERA,* the first brand analyzed in this chapter, utilizes the connotated images Japanese people associate with the words 'opera theater' and 'Asakusa' district, this brand also exploits associated impressions when they hear the word 'Tokyo'. Although Tokyo just refers to the capital city of Japan denotatively, yet it would be connotatively imagined as a place where a lot of new trends keep happening and it is the center of Japanese culture where beauty and fashion ideals are established. Therefore, it can be indicated from its use of the city name, that *excel* aims to advertise itself as trendy and fashionable. The following words '*RICH CASUAL*' explains the rich varieties of makeup products and the affordability to purchase casually (n.d.). As a matter of fact, *excel* has marketized towards consumers who are more prone to purchase relatively cheap cosmetics, rather than high-ends brands such as ADDICTION and *DECORTÉ* analyzed earlier. Cosmetics with affordable price are called プチプラコスメ [literally interpreted as 'Petite Price Cosmetics', implying 'stylish but affordable cosmetics'], on the other hand, luxury cosmetics are called デパコス [department store-cosmetics]. *Excel* is categorized into the 'affordable but stylish cosmetics' group, meaning that its products are only available in drug stores or varieties stores and it generally attracts consumers from young generations.

4.3.2 IMAGE ANALYSIS: IMAGE E (I & II)

E-1. *excel TOKYO RICH CASUAL*, *Noevir Holdings Co., Ltd.* (2017). *Lip care oil LO05 ICY DAZZLE*. Retrieved from https://noevirgroup.jp/excel/default.aspx

I.

使用色：エクセル　リップケアオイル　LO05 (アイシーダズル)

II.

LO01 ルビーレッド	LO02 チェリーピンク	LO03 ハニーピーチ	LO04 トマトレッド
にじみ出るようなクリアレッド	赤ちゃんみたいな血色ピンク	肌になじむ大人ピーチピンク	色っぽくてオシャレな朱赤カラー

E-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE **E (I)**-

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	A woman, a neon sign, a neon-lit place, advertised products
Color	Blue, red, black, gold, white
Textual	・*LIP CARE OIL* ・*内側からあふれるジューシー感* *ケアしながらジュワッと色づく美容オイルリップ* [Juicy texture overflowing from the inside / Beauty oil lipstick that colors wetly while caring] ・*2017 年 10 月 17 日発売 大好評につき、限定再登場！* [Goes on sale 17th October /By popular demand, limited comeback!] ・*※店舗での発売開始日は各店舗にてご確認ください。* *※当サイトでの発売は、10 月 17 日10時 30 分頃からとなります。* [Please contact each store on their release date. /This online store will release around 10:30, 17th October.] ・*Limited Color!* ・*使用色：エクセル リップケアオイル LO05 (アイシーダズル)* [Color advertised: Excel Lip Care Oil LO05 (Icy Dazzle)]

E-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXTUAL SIGNIFIERS

Image I is the main advertising image of the limited-color (Icy dazzle) oil care lipsticks, and the following Image II is the color sample list of the four other regular colors; Ruby red, Cherry Pink, Honey peach, and Tomato red. In the same way as the ads from *OPERA* analyzed earlier, the fundamental structure of this advertising is to embed a specific appealing persona according to viewers' unconscious action called 'personality inference' as Brumbaugh argues (1993). This type of image encourages spectators to assume what kind of personality the endorser has by giving some visible inklings such as her facial expression, posing, fashions, jewelries, and her background picture, which have influences to determine if the viewers will prefer the ad or not.

・MIXED RACIAL WOMAN

As same as the all other data analyzed, the main iconic signifier of this image is a female model. She is actually so called ハーフモデル (Hafu model/ mixed racial model), of Brazilian and Japanese. (modelpress, 2015) Since the word ハーフ (half/mixed racial) as well as 外国人/外人風 (*gaijin-fu/ gaikokujin-fu/* foreign-ish) have become a trend in beauty and fashion markets (See P.14) in recent years, *excel* has adopted mixed racial models exclusively for 5 consecutive years. Considering her facial features, she does not look very distinctive from typical non-mixed Japanese, because the mixed Japanese appearance as well as Asian-looking appearances are likely to evoke more intimate and familiar impressions towards Japanese audiences, compared with, for instance, entirely Caucasian-looking models. It can be analyzed that her mixed racial background in this image functions to represent trendiness, preferable contrast, or uniqueness but still sense of familiarity that target Japanese viewers would sense from her.

・WOMAN IN URBAN NIGHT LIFE

The model's face is shot from the lower angle as if she is looking spectators down. Additionally, her non-smiling face as well as the black color of her costume are signifying that the persona is a powerful (aggressive), confident, and matured woman. The combination of black and gold from her dress and jewelries symbolize that her life is prestigious, glamorous and mysterious (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010). The sleeveless dress showing

her shoulders overtly and wet, half-opened lips as well as shiny eyes contribute to produce her adult and seducing aspect. Looking more closely, her right-half shadow is blurred slightly, which can be associated with her being mysterious, tipsy and fragile. As for the background image consisting of blue and red neon lights in the darkness, it can be inferred that the persona goes out somewhere like a bar or a club at night, which can be related to her liberal and sensational night life. Blue and red are complementary colors each other, giving us stronger impacts visually, and moreover, aggressiveness from red together with calmness from blue are both represented in her supposed personality that she can be aggressive and sexually attractive, yet sophisticated and prestigious. These colors are denotatively related to the advertised lip oils with pink and light blue glitters inside, while they connotate that she is dazzling/dazzled surrounded by neon lights and its glitters at night in an urban city, presumably referring to Tokyo as the brand name.

Not only her sexually attractive, luxury and confident persona represented with those signs above, but also her feminine quality is emphasized in this image. I use the word 'feminine' here in order to refer to stereotypical ideals often desired for Japanese women. Her hand touching her right cheek shows her delicacy, sensibility and even vulnerability by attracting viewer's attentions on her physical features. The same function is served with her uncovered neck and shoulders, which enable viewers to be conscious of her biological features as a female. Her left sided face is shown more as Image A and B from *OPERA* analyzed earlier, which is because left side of faces are likely to be preferred more from spectators, inducing feminine impressions such as 'kind' and 'soft' (Blackburn & Schirillo, 2012) (See P.41). The round shaped-earrings are also interpreted as the representation of her gentle and mild aspect, which mediates between the masculine impressions (mature, confident and aggressive) and feminine impressions (fragile, mild and delicate). These contrasts embedded in the persona are signified as well in the blue light on her left in contrast to the red colored-light on her right.

・TEXUAL ANALYSIS (IMAGE I, II)

As the advertised product was a limited color item that was expected to be sold out once it was released, there are some informative texts to announce customers about where/when to buy. Aside from these practical announcement texts, there are catch lines in the bigger font, saying *内側からあふれるジューシー感* [Juicy texture overflowing from the inside] and *ケアしながらジュワッと色づく美容オイルリップ* [Beauty oil lipstick that colors wetly while

caring]. The same onomatopoeic word 'じゅわ' found in Image A is used in this image as well. Both Image A and E advertise the lipstick products, indicating that the onomatopoeia can be applied effectively to make readers imagine the comfortable texture of lipstick applied on one's lips. (See P.39) That sound of the lip oil spreading smoothly is associated with the word ジューシー [juicy] , which advertise the product as if it is a fresh juice from aromatic fruits.

Image II is the color sample swatch of the same lip care oils with four other regular colors, naming each color with a catch line; ruby red: oozing out clear red, cherry pink: healthy pink like a baby, honey peach: adult peach pink fitting to your lip color and tomato red: sexy and fashionable vermilion color. Three of them present their colors with names of food such as cherry, peach, tomato and honey, which bring out its fragrant scents and fresh and smooth feelings visually. Regarding the catch lines, those of cherry pink and honey peach use seemingly contrasting words, 赤ちゃん [baby] and 大人 [adult]. Although these two words refer to very different age groups in the denotative meaning level, they can be used similarly when it comes to Japanese cosmetics ads, in which both words can connotate certain ideal qualities of beauty. In the Japanese beauty marketing, the word 'baby' can signify pure, innocent, charming and natural impressions, while the word 'adult' can be decoded as independent, seducing, mature, and it is analyzed that both of the qualities can be preferred as one of beauty standards among Japanese women.

4.4 BRAND 4: MAQuillAGE, SHISEIDO Co*., Ltd.*

I selected an advertising image from the first webpage of *MAQuillAGE,* which ranked 6th in the *@cosme* ranking, Sep-Oct 2017.

4.4.1 BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON THE COMPANY & BRAND

SHISEIDO has been established since 1872, best-known in the Japanese beauty business. They have reported the biggest annual sales, ranking 1st as the largest manufacturer in the Asian beauty section in 2018 (WWD, 2018). They have expanded their business in 120 countries, and developed 25 individual brands with different concepts and targets (SHISEIDO, 2018). *MAQuillAGE* is one of the recent independent brands found in 2005. As KOSÉ has classified and advertised their individual brands variously based on different quality and price standards, *SHISEIDO* as well have distinguished their brands into a high-ends group or a low-price group. *MAQuillAGE* is regarded as one of the low-price group of

brands, as the products are not displayed in cosmetics sections of luxury department stores, but available in affordable drug stores and variety stores only in Japan. However, among those low-price brands, their products are sold relatively pricey, as the brand sets up certain persona of target consumers, who are 25-35-year-old working females who have received high education, hence have a job with enough payments to spend for their beauty expenses (Okubo, 2013). *MAQuillAGE* is a French word 'maquillage', meaning makeup in English. As KOSÉ and its brand *DECORTÉ* adopts West European language for its brand name, the application of a French word enables Japanese viewers to associate the brand with stereotypical impressions of France, or Europe and their cultures which are, for instance, 'fashionable, luxury and aesthetic' (Ishimaru, 2009).

4.4.2 IMAGE ANALYSIS: IMAGE F

F-1. *MAQuillAGE, SHISEIDO Co., Ltd*. (2017). *Dramatic Powderly UV* (foundation powder) & *Dramatic Skin Sensor Base* (primer). Retrieved from

https://maquillage.shiseido.co.jp/

F-2. LIST OF SIGNIFIERS -IMAGE **F** -

TYPE	SIGNIFIERS
Iconic	A woman, 2 advertised products
Color	Beige (ochre), metallic pinkish gold, black, red, white
Textual	・*実は、つくってます。まるで「キレイな素肌」。* [Actutally, I am wearing (makeup). Just like a "beautiful bare skin"] ・*MAQuillAGE* ・*レディにしあがれ。* [Make yourself ready as a lady.] ・*マキアージュ ドラマティックパウダリー UV (foundation) 全 7 色* [MAQuillAGE Dramatic Powderly UV (foundation) 7 colors] ・*マキアージュ ドラマティックスキンセンサーベース UV (化粧下地)* [MAQuillAGE Dramatic Skin Sensor Base UV (primer cream)]

F-3. ANALYSIS OF ICONIC, COLOR AND TEXUAL SIGNIFIERS

Unlike the other data analyzed earlier, this advertising image is structured to induce more attentions from viewers onto the simple textual catch line '*実は、つくってます。まるで「キレイな素肌」。*[Actually, I am wearing (makeup). Just like a "beautiful bare skin"] written vertically next to the iconic signifier of the endorser. While the catch lines found on the other images analyzed, were usually to advertise the products 'directly' such as exhibiting the name of the products and its effects clearly, it seems that this type of image places a slogan as if it is a sort of dialogue from the endorser talking to spectators visually.

・TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The advertising statement of this image, *実は、つくってます。まるで「キレイな素肌」。*[Actually, I am wearing (makeup). Just like a "beautiful bare skin"] is written in a vertical line, which is a common writing style unique to Japanese texts. While the other data analyzed in this study were adopting some English words more or less for the decorative purpose (See P.43), it should be noted that this image does not use any non-Japanese words except for the brand name, moreover, the texts are written in a traditional font and style specially used for Japanese language. This type of Japanese texts applied in this image can connotatively produce decent, sophisticated, mature and educated impressions for the brand, which was

presumably the *MAQuillAGE*'s intention in order to attract their specific target consumers who prefers achieving these associations by purchasing the products. Contrary to the use of foreign words as superficial decorations in Japanese ads, Japanese texts are more likely to serve the linguistic function, which is to convey a message to audiences with its meaning. Since the Japanese catch line is the only text written simply as a major sales message (other than the brand logo and products' names at the bottom), it achieves to attract our attentions, hence enable us to read it at first glance.

Considering from the linguistic structure of the phrase, the text is written like a line from her speech as if the signifier of a woman is talking to us, or spectators. The phrase starts from the word 実は、 [Actually,], implying that this line tells a confession or a surprise that are about to be revealed from the model. This speech-like phrase starting from the adverb contributes to generate a personal and emotional connection between the endorser and viewers, thus promotes them to have more affinity with her and the advertised brand. The phrase continues with the following verb つくってます [I am wearing (makeup)], literally translated as 'making/creating' in English. At the denotative level, this phrase signifies that she is wearing a makeup, yet her skin looks like her natural bare skin. However, it is analyzed that this phrase can be decoded properly only when there is a connotative norm applied; female bare skin is to be concealed with makeup but still the makeup should look naturally beautiful. The quality of being 'natural' have been frequently observed as one of the prevailing beauty ideals encouraged in the Japanese cosmetics images, yet it should be indicated that it does not appreciate females being bare without makeups actually, rather it embeds an idea that female natural status is something to be created and pretended.

Apart from the line analyzed above, there is another Japanese phrase レディにしあがれ。 [Make yourself ready as a lady.], written at the bottom with the same font style. This refers to the brand concept of *MAQuillAGE* displayed with the brand logo. This phrase can be interpreted in two different ways, which is either a desire statement for the first person (make myself ready as a lady) , or for the second, or third person (make someone to be ready as a lady). In either case, the grammatical structure implies that this is a wish or even magic to disguise one's self. しあがれ is a verb meaning 'be completed/be ready' in English, but also specifically used as 'finishing makeup' in the beauty-related context. レディ, literally translated as 'lady', represents women's maturity, high status and dignity. As the target consumers should be 25-35 years old (Okubo, 2013), this phrase suggests them to turn into a 'lady', implying that the products are suitable for women in the age bracket between youth

and adult and those women in between are required to wear proper makeup as a mature woman.

・NATURAL BEAUTY CREATED WITH NUDE COLOR

The mono-colored background as well as her tank top costume and her makeup style have all a unified look with so-called the nude color, or ivory. The color ivory is applied to symbolize "classic, soft, comforting, natural and smooth" (Xtreme Brand Makeover, 2010). With the integrated ivory color shade, her skin complexion is emphasized as desirable with its natural and smooth quality. This harmonized and modest coloring also influences the foundation of a persona of beauty reflected in the iconic signifier of the model. The model wears a simple makeup without any loud colors with her hair style tied carelessly, which implies that she is comfortable with being natural. However, her natural look is combined with sophisticated and classy impressions connotated with the metallic gold color used in her earing, the brand logo and the packages of the advertised products, symbolizing "valuable and prestigious" (2010). Together with the catch line, her natural yet luxury impression connotates that natural beauty does not mean just being natural without cares, but rather it is an ideal that needs to be created. As of her personality inference, the signs of her gently waving hair, subtle smiling expression and the roundly curved earing are all signifying her femininity including calm, mild and kind features.

The bottom part of this image consisting of the color black and red, is distinguished from the ivory colored-part. The red line in the black actually refers to the theme color of *MAQuillAGE,* hence they are also applied in the other advertisements and packages as well. The establishment of theme colors unique to the brand contributes to notify viewers visually that they are from *MAQuillAGE* consciously. According to their website, the color black illustrates dignity as a woman, while the color red invokes female's instincts (*MAQuillAGE, n.d.).* It is thus observed that the brand prefers to be recognized as offering an elegant and seductive impressions to the users.

・A FAMOUS MODEL AS AN INFLUENCER

What is different from the other ads analyzed earlier, is that the endorser adopted for this ad is a well-known model as well as a TV personality, often appearing in Japanese media. That indicates that her name value brings more or less impacts on whether the viewer prefers the

advertisement or not. All the information about her identity such as her background, private life, personality exposed to spectators through media, are likely to be considered when the persona of ideal beauty is established through her icon in the ad. For instance, her familiar reputation that she is biracial with Japanese and American, more than 30 years old, a mother of two children, affects the likability of the brand, hence those of her features should be regarded as favorable impressions *MAQuillAGE* intends to produce. Considering target consumers (See P.59), her age matches with the target age group, moreover, her background of parenting kids while working as a model would promote viewers to follow the connotated norm that women should care about one's looks against aging, childbirth and work. Concerning her ethnic background, being a mixed racial model, so called *ハーフモデル* (Hafu model) functions as a preferable trait, as it seems to be one of beauty ideals as also mentioned in Image E.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research aimed to analyze beauty standards constructed and represented in Japanese cosmetics advertisements. The chapter of literature review firstly explored the past researches on Japanese beauty norms in the scope of race and gender studies. In addition, different types of beauty concepts, including those which are peculiar to Japanese beauty studies, were also introduced before this study moved to the research section. This research was practiced by studying in total eight still advertising images selected from four different Japanese cosmetics brands, for which the methodological approaches of semiotics and decoding were mainly applied. Based on the qualitative analysis of signs representing beauty ideals observed in these advertisements, this study discovered certain distinguishing characteristics on each branding tactic to define what is 'beauty' and to commercialize it by causing viewers to believe that it is the most desirable ideal to follow. The findings indicate that the process of creating/representing Japanese beauty ideals through the act of advertising cosmetics, are consequently intertwined with race and gender discourses.

This study has set up three stages of questions in order to research the beauty ideals included in Japanese cosmetics advertising; I. What are the signs of beauty standards coded in the research materials? II. How can the signs be decoded by me, one of their target consumers? III. How are the beauty ideals involved with dynamics of race and gender? The answers to those questions are concluded as described below;

The signs coded in the images were classified into three different categories, which are iconic signifiers, coloring signifiers and text signifiers, since these were the major components shared in all the advertising designs. The iconic signifiers, which usually function as a copy of reality, were including a portrait of female model(s) in every image analyzed. Although this indication might be an apparent and common pattern taken for granted in beauty-related advertising, it is of importance to note that it is actually a

mechanism of constructing a visual norm that 'beauty should matter exclusively for women'. What is common in all the subjects of this research is that their designing was highly devoted to appeal to the single gender group, who identify themselves as so-called 'women'. As observed in image A, B & E clearly, the iconicity of female endorsers gazing towards us enabled the portraits of them to perform like a distorted mirror, which is actually portraying a beautified and gendered version of us, or spectators. The use of portraits restricted to female beauty models could urge us to achieve a specific gendered image of woman with a particular type of beauty instructed through the iconicity of the portrait.

It was found out that each advertising image was designed based on an explicit motif as well as a particular beauty ideal. The types of beauty ideals were described most apparently through the visuality of female endorsers, and also all the designing components including colorings and catch lines contributed to project a detailed persona on the model's looks. The beauty ideals found in the research subjects could be classified into three types as such; **a.** natural, innocent, fragile, young and modest, **b.** appealing, independent, modern, assertive, confident, mature, **c.** expert, foreign, mysterious, luxury.

Type **a** seems to represent the typical qualities of defining what are 'femininity' and the concept of *kawaii*/cute in Japan (See P.8). These ideals were more or less represented in all of the researched images by means of color symbolism, physical expressions, and linguistic impressions. This type was not surprisingly found as a mainstream of beauty in the Japanese advertisements according to the past researches. It should be pointed out that these features were prone to be signified with certain typical 'tokens of femininity' indirectly such as symbols of flower (Image A and B), red lip (Image C), butterfly (Image D), round earing (Image E) and the moon-shaped earring (Image F). When it comes to the textual designs, their languages were highly gendered, hence conveyed their ideas of femininity directly to spectators.

Type **b** were represented obviously in Image B, E and F. It can be said that these features are the crosscurrents of type **a**, since they seem to be newly-invented standard of beauty in Japan with the recent uprising feminism trend. This indicates a potential for Japanese beauty advertisements, which could function as a platform open to suggest Feminist-influenced ideals of beauty opposed to the traditional norms of beauty, or type **a**. This type was often represented in images by intriguing us to guess personalities of endorsers, taking hints from coded signs. For instance, Image B and E offered detailed iconic background images, which encouraged spectators to assume inner information such as personality and lifestyle of the persona, more than their outward visual information. On the

other hand, image F made use of the popularity of a well-known model who could be decoded as an admired Feminist woman from Japanese audiences.

Type **c** was featured exclusively in image C and D, in which non-Asian endorsers (two white models & 1 black model in total) appeared. These ads seemed to have utilized spectators' associated images of 'foreign-looking' models. Their appearances were decoded as the symbols of high-end, extraordinary and expertness of the brands. This indicates that the display of visible physical differences between these foreign models and Japanese viewers caused us to have the feeling of distinction between 'us' and 'them' as the adverts desired to do so. According to the result, this visual racial distinction was used rather effectively since 'them', or foreign-looking models were subjects to be admired, not to be despised. What is interesting was that this type of beauty ideal was applied only in the images adopting non-Asian models, while mixed racial and non-Japanese Asian endorsers were featured more to imply the other types of beauty concepts.

Considering this beauty research in relation to race studies, the result showed some features different from the past researches about how the current beauty ideals in Japan are constructed racially. In the literature review, the bipolar beauty standards, 'Westernness' and 'Japaneseness', were introduced as the major beauty trends studied in the past. However, this research of Japanese cosmetics adverts issued in 2017 indicated neither of the concepts, but it actually presented new flows of beauty trends happening in these days. Interestingly, all of the analyzed adverts in this study adopted foreign models or mixed-racial models, but none of them were ethnic Japanese-looking, regardless of its Japan-based brands advertising mainly to Japanese consumers. Moreover, these foreign-looking models were not limited to Caucasian-looking ones entirely. They were, as a matter of fact, more diversified into multi/mixed ethnic backgrounds such as Thai, German, Jamaican, Brazilian, American and Japanese. It was often argued in the past researches that Japanese beauty ideals had been influenced by their feeling of admiration towards 'being white', no matter whether it is skin color-wise, race-wise, or cosmopolitan-wise, while 'being non-white and non-Japanese' had never been perceived as the mainstream of Japanese beauty standards. However, this analysis result did not necessarily follow the theory of 'white is beautiful'. Instead, the representation of 'non-Japanese-looking' was positively perceived and applied as a signifier of beauty. It seems that the beauty ideals in Japan do not always depend on the racially exclusive ideas of Caucasianess/Japaneseness anymore, but rather they try to transcend the racial constraints on its making process of beauty ideals, hence it allows to explore more potentials to expand the definitions of beauty in Japan. It can be observed from the result that the Japanese cosmetics

advertising are approaching more towards offering a cosmopolitan beauty ideal, which imply modernity, internationalization and universal beauty as its attractive qualities.

When it comes to linguistic signs applied in the research adverts, the use of foreign words such as mainly English words, some alphabets from European languages and some Japanese loanwords from English were often observed in the data. As the ethnic hybridity was represented through the transnational varieties of endorsers' appearances, the mixture of non-Japanese languages as well promoted to produce international, luxury and modern impressions onto the advertised brands. Besides, it should be pointed out that these non-Japanese texts in the adverts functioned just like the other iconic pictures such as flowers and neon lights, which can be perceived visually and associated with certain impressions by audiences. Therefore, these textual signs were not to be read and understood linguistically, but they seem to be just visual decorations, which themselves do not necessarily have a linguistic importance to be analyzed. What is different of signifiers of non-Japanese texts, compared to the signifiers of endorsers, (although both of the signs generated similar impressions), all of these foreign languages were limited to Western languages, yet the use of other Asian or African languages were not observed in the data at all. This result implies that there is still a social structure of generalizing 'the West' and imagining it as a symbol to admire, which should be derived from our deep-rooted impressions of 'Western countries and its people'. Unlike the ethnic diversity were displayed in the signs of models, however, the textual signs were still indicating that the general concept of the West and its following, often associated concept of Caucasian were regarded as something preferable in Japanese beauty advertising.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

The main intention of this study was to figure out what features are considered as 'beautiful' in beauty standards, ideals, norms, and trends in present-day Japan, and also to analyze how their construction and representation are intertwined with the other relevant dynamics of race and gender matters. This paper has done so by the careful observation of recently published adverts of best sold cosmetics from Japanese brands, from my perspective as one of their target audiences, with the special attention to the visuality of each advertisement consisting of coded signs in which specific types of beauty were displayed and consumed.

Accordingly, the first major contribution of this research is that the result of this study would be utilized to update the academic field of Japanese beauty studies, hence catch up

with the fluidity of beauty ideals appearing and disappearing with the flow of the times. Beauty studies should be considered as a subject that needs continuous up-to-date information on what is actually happening on the groups of people who are socially pressured to achieve themselves to be beautiful. Cosmetics advertising is one of the dominant influences occupying their visual environment, which has a power to suggest changing definitions of beauty towards the spectators potentially. As mentioned in the literature review, the major beauty studies in the past have been highly devoted to the case studies of western countries, but less researches were found in the case of Japanese beauty studies. Moreover, most of the profound studies were done to examine beauty standards in 1990s – 2000s, which might be out-of-date when it comes to the instable nature of beauty trends. In this sense, the analysis of Japanese cosmetics adverts issued in 2017 conducted in this research, will contribute to be added as a recent observation in the archive of Japanese beauty studies, in which beauty standards have been frequently transformed on a large scale.

The other important implication of this study is that this research would encourage people concerned to be aware that beauty standards as well as the concepts of race and gender are socially constructed. As beauty-related industries have such a huge economic influence in Japan, so does its social and cultural power to incite audiences to believe that there is an absolute quality of beauty they need to equip with the help of using beauty care products. It is difficult to notice the power of visual instigation by means of advertising, when it is in fact inevitable from one's visual surroundings. In this sense, this study attempted to explore the beauty standards objectively as a third person who is conscious of the social construction of beauty ideals and being targeted by the force of beauty advertising. Therefore, the result of this research clearly indicates that the idea of beauty is not something existing all by itself, but it is built up with various kinds of social coding as if it is a common understanding. This argumentation would suggest the target people to bring up broader perspectives on how to deal with the fluid concept of beauty.

5.3 LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the qualitative research methods and the limited selection of advertisements, this result could not be applied to general beauty standards in Japan. In this research, beauty standards were discussed exclusively by observing the visualities of advertisements, or the only visible signs in images, which did not consider other points of view for the advertising analysis. Future work can fulfill deeper analysis by examining the other possible components

of cosmetics advertising such as market trend of each brand/company and features of model agencies of each endorser, trends of cosmetics products themselves. Since this research has been done by breaking down the images especially from my point of view, that might have limited the potential suggestions on the other different ways of seeing the images. In order to expand the possibilities of various interpretations, the study could adopt an experiment of the other target consumers as well as non-target consumers from different gender and age for instance on how they decode the data. Regarding the limited selection of research data collected from Japan-based cosmetics brands, future research can employ the method of comparison between Japanese adverts and non-Japanese adverts, which would contribute to reveal unique features of Japanese beauty advertising more apparently. According to those works left in this study, future research could employ more quantitative analysis to offer more multidimensional results.

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