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Palette Of Prejudice - How Marketing Shapes Colourism And Its Ripple Effects On Women In Indian Society

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to understand how marketing propagates colourism and how it impacts the women in Indian society. To conduct this study 10 participants were randomly selected and asked pre-selected questions based on cultural norms, prevalence of colourism, its impact on society and their mental health. Our findings highlight how colourism-based marketing negatively impact the mental health, social integration and cultural identity.

Keywords - Colourism, Women, Mental Health

I.INTRODUCTION

Simply put, Colourism refers to a form of discrimination between people on the basis of their skin tone. This means favouring a particular group of people more because they have a certain skin colour and treating others less than them. Colonization has played a significant role in manifesting and perpetuating colourism. Lighter shades started to become associated with upper class, whereas, darker shades were associated with lower class. Post-Independence, this thought process continued to seep deeply into the minds of people. Marketing played a huge role in this. Discrimination based on skin tone was overtly shown in the advertisements of various products. Face Cream, Perfumes & Deodorants, Shaving creams, Home & Office security products. The most popular example is of "Fair and Lovely cream". For many years, the advertisements of this product suggested that only people of fair skin tone are socially desirable. They portrayed people with darker skin tones as less confident and less successful. Another example is an advertisement of a home & office security product, in which, the thief was represented by a person with a darker skin tone and the victims with a lighter skin tone. These are just a few of many, many marketing examples that pushed colourism even more into Indian society's fabric. For many years, Fair and Lovely was most-sold face cream in Indian Market. However, in the last few years, there has been a shift in the mindset of people. Such products like "Fair and Lovely" have changed their name to "Glow and Lovely" after public backlash. Therefore, it is important to understand how colourism and marketing impact the mental health and cultural identity of Indian women.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to uncover the psychological and societal impacts of colourist marketing.

II.METHODOLOGY

Participants

To conduct this study 10 participants were randomly selected. Each participant voluntarily took part in the study upon being informed about the research's purpose. The study involved women of all age groups in India.

Material

Pre-selected questions were asked to gain insight into 7 aspects- perception of beauty standard, influence of marketing, colourism and self-perception, impact on mental health, societal and cultural impact, combating colourism, and personal reflection and change.

Data Collection

This a focused-group study. The data was collected through online mode. The participants joined a group Zoom call to participate in the study. All the participants were informed about the aim of the study and given required instructions. The personal information given by the participants, along with their identities, was kept confidential.

Process of Analysis

The study is based on qualitative method, and to analyse the data, thematic analysis method was used.

III.RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

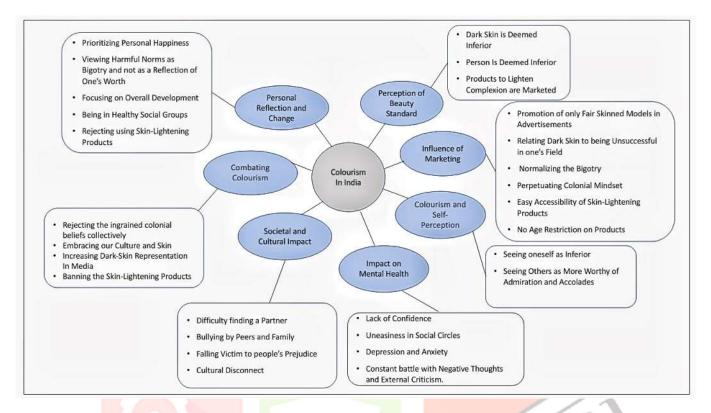
Pre-selected questions were asked to gain insight into 7 aspects-

- 1. Perception of beauty standard,
- 2. Influence of marketing
- 3. Colourism and self-perception

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- 4. Impact on mental health
- 5. Societal and cultural impact
- 6. Combating colourism
- 7. Personal reflection and change

To analyse the data, thematic analysis method was used, which yielded common themes which are depicted in Graph 1.



Graph 1. Summarises the salient themes found during the analysis of colourism in India.

Discussion

This study's findings reveal how marketing strategies based on colourism create negative implications for Indian society. The focused group discussion with ten participants reveals that marketing strategies do not only shape the perception of beauty but also affect one's self-concept, mental health, and integration into society negatively in females. The thematic analysis unveiled several salient themes that capture the complexities of the issue studied, including prioritizing personal happiness, rejecting harmful norms, and embracing cultural diversity. Such findings relate to previous literature but add value to the broader discourse surrounding colourism and marketing.

Adbi et al. (2021) supports findings by further explaining the concept that lighter skin marketing creates a negative self-esteem phenomenon among women. Constant stereotyping that indicates fair-skinned women are more beauty and attractive, which appears on various advertisements, shows the premise that this kind of marketing exaggerates the issue of inadequacy among darker-skinned people. It is apparent in the study that something akin to self-perception due to colourist marketing that somewhat aligns with feminist scholarship, whereby the presence of idealized images leads to internalization of body dissatisfaction and entrenched colourism (Daiya et al., n.d.). In other words, societal beauty standards weigh hugely on an individual's perception of worth and acceptance.

It is also necessary to evaluate how such marketing appeals to traditional cultural values. Colourism was culturally deep-rooted in Indian society and lighter skins had historically represented a better social position, wealth, and desirability. Therefore, such a cultural context is benefiting marketing practices based on fairness as ideal. This societal bias, as research has shown, is not merely a reflection of individual preferences but a systemic problem in which media and advertisements play a core role (Daiya et al., n.d.). Thus, marketing

narratives that favour lighter skin became the environmental context under which women feel the pressure to conform to those unrealistic beauty standards, which results in a sense of collective inadequacy.

Moreover, the psychological empowerment perspectives are a reiteration of the view by Daiya et al. (n.d.) where they observe that the skin whitening preference by women is based on a social narrative where lighter skins translate to success and beauty. This hence implies a cultural conditioning that makes women to engage in harmful consumer practice in which they engage in unhealthy beauty practices as a way of attaining societal demands. The emphasis on long-term effects while presented by Daiya et al. mirrors the findings on harmful health effects associated with the use of skin-lightening products. Both works shed light on the importance of understanding the consequences of consumer choices based on widespread marketing discourses.

In addition, findings concerning colourism are very close to previous research, which shows that women of colour perceive beauty and success far more differently than do women of other racial backgrounds. The deepening interest among darker women for risky beauty products shows broader socio-economic factors that add complexity to the discourse related to self-esteem and societal acceptance. This knowledge is well supplemented by previous works that touch upon race, gender, and economic standing through the choices and experiences women will have in the beauty market (Daiya et al., n.d.). It creates a complex field where women deal with societal expectations and personal aspirations alongside marketing messages that can lead to internal conflicts toward the self.

Although previous studies have identified the economic compulsions behind colourism, the current study also acknowledges the fact that increasing consumer awareness is becoming less tolerant toward destructive advertisement practices. While participants demonstrate an awareness of destructive beauty ideals, this could mark a latent resistance and activism, as provided by "Dark Is Beautiful," which campaigns against colourist discourses through its actions (Daiya et al., n.d.). This dynamic reveals a far more consumer-conscious shift that earlier literature did not fully represent, thereby showing an evolving landscape where women have been empowered sufficiently to reject harmful marketing messages.

Further adding to the complications in this narrative is the emergence of social media as a platform for dialogue and activism. Through the social media platforms, women can share their experiences and challenge dominant beauty standards, which provide a counter-narrative to the traditional marketing messages. This dimension of consumer behaviour underlines how a deep understanding of the impact of digital spaces on perceptions of beauty and self-esteem is important. It also shows in what manner community functioning correlates with resilience to colourist narratives, how women coalesce towards projecting body positivity and appreciating diversity.

The most salient finding of this research is the pressing need for inclusive marketing practices that do not only worship diversity but also take up colourism trends as well. The research topic focuses on how cultural disconnection among darker-skinned women relates to the overall literature on contemporary beauty standards and their connection with colonial legacies (Daiya et al., n.d.). It connects marketing policies with psychological and societal impacts to stress the importance of creating a societal ethos that welcomes every skin tone. Through the dissemination of colourism in marketing, it hurts the individual self-esteem but it also perpetuates more societal inequalities affecting women's general well-being.

More importantly, the debates on ending colourism are all calls for policy change in the marketing practices. The call to abolish skin-lightening products joins the wider debates in the literature concerning ethical marketing and corporate social responsibility. Since this study joins the chorus of calls for change in the system, it participates in the expanded literature of ensuring inclusiveness and diversity in the marketing domain (Adbi et al., 2021).

In addition to influencing change in the marketing practices, there must be education and awareness regarding colourism implications. Projects aimed at enlightening these women as to the damages caused by colourist standards of beauty would thus make them knowledgeable enough to choose which beauty products are to be used and challenge societal orders. The collaborative efforts of these different stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and media representatives, can then make for a more holistic approach toward dealing with colourism in society.

IV.CONCLUSION

The study found that women often internalized the messages of colourism from advertisements and media. Many participants said that they feel not good enough. This phenomenon reiterates how marketing practices are not only business tools but also strong conduits through which cultural messages are given out and

perceptions of worth and desirability are constructed. This study was then able to shed light upon how exactly these marketing ploys can adversely affect the psychological well-being and, by extension, self-esteem of women by focusing on the psychological effects that colourist marketing gives off.

The paper postulated that understanding colourism should actually come as a way of appreciating its cultural origins and what exists out of the historical contexts. Traditional belief systems and marketing strategies brought together to date pose a complex tapestry from which women must navigate conflicting societal expectations and personal aspirations. This brings out an ongoing need for change in marketing practices for the sake of streamlining darker-skinned women toward stereotypes and away from integration.

Limitations and Critique

One of the major limitation lies in the fact that it did not solely depend on qualitative methods or use bigger samples for the generalization of the findings. Future studies should focus on mixed methods in order to combine qualitative insights with quantitative data for enhanced derivation of conclusions. It will allow for a stronger investigation of the relation between different marketing strategies and colourism across different demographics.

Another limitation is the inherent self-reported biases of the data. Social desirability factors may have influenced the views of participants, as they may have given an answer that is most acceptable and aligned with society rather than speaking the honest truth of how people feel and what they really experienced. Such a factor affects the authenticity of such insights on personal experiences with colourism and marketing strategies. Future research will consider methodologies for minimizing biasing factors such as anonymous surveys or third-party interviews to make the results more valid.

At the same time, though the study stated the influence of marketing upon the self-perceptions of women, it could not specifically go into the role that other factors can play, including family background, peers, and socio-economic status. No doubt, these factors often interlink with colourism and go further in shaping experiences or responses of women to marketing messages. Further research could be made that goes deeper into the interlinking factors to understand how numerous influences can contribute towards the persistence of colourism in society.

Area of Future Research

This study also opens avenues for future research studies that would go deeper and truly explore the intricacies of colourism and usages in marketing. Some of these would be campaigns toward body positivity and perhaps other diverse standards in beauty-for example, it could dive into consumer response to such initiatives and their self-perceptions, which is a good avenue for understanding how marketing can be an agent of social change rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Another promising avenue for future research lies in understanding the role of digital media and social platforms in the perpetuation and transformation of colourist narratives. Research could focus on the success of online movements advocating for the democratization of beauty, for instance, examining their impact on consumer attitudes and behaviours. This would open up so much larger scope for further research, which could even incorporate men's thoughts on colourism and marketing. It would therefore give a far more overall analysis of how beauty standards impact individuals across gender lines. How men react to colourist marketing and their role in challenging or perpetuating it would, therefore, give worthwhile insight into the dynamics of gender and colourism.

V.ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

Funding

The authors have no funding to disclose.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

- Informed Consent: Ensure all participants provide informed consent before participating in interviews.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality: Guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of participants' identities and responses to protect their privacy.
- Respect and Sensitivity: Approach the topic with sensitivity, acknowledging the diversity of beliefs and ethical perspectives among participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

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