

FAIRNESS CREAMS: REALITY vs. MYTH

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ABSTRACT

We are living in a world of delusion. The impact of advertisements on our minds is up to such an extent that we believe almost anything and everything. Such is the case with fairness creams. We might not have bothered about our skin tone till these ads started bombarding us with claiming to make us look fairer. With the introduction of fairness creams in the market people have started buying these products only because of the advertising strategies where they have apparently come up with a solution to the problem of a dark skin tone. They depict being dark as a sin; these people are often rejected for marriage, not given preference at the job and are always positioned behind the fairer lot.

The study revolves around the reliability of the fairness creams that have become a fast selling product in the market. With all the controversies over claiming fairness creams intruded me to look into the matter and find out whether these creams actually make us fairer or it's just a myth. A questionnaire was administered to study the outlook of people towards fairness creams. The responses obtained were recorded and analysed. The results revealed that these fairness creams do make you look fairer up to some extent but they work more of as an anti-tan cream. Even if the fairness creams work the question is – whether it is a short term solution or the fairness will last forever. All the points are thoroughly premeditated and enclosed in the research. The idea is to analyse whether the assertions made by the advertisers are accurate or they are just encouraging false claims.

INTRODUCTION

People have developed a notion of “Being fair is the key to success”. Advertising has a major influence on people. In advertisements people with a darker complexion are depicted with low self- esteem, inferiority complex and rejections. Even at workplace

qualification is over looked for skin colour. These advertisement has delve into our lives up to such an extent that we believe anything and everything.

Indians are known for their dusky complexion which people abroad actually wish for. Then what has made us blindly running after a fair complexion? These magical advertisements where the girl is shown getting fairer within a few weeks after applying the fairness cream has influenced us to a large extent. A lot of people get influenced by celebrities' white shinny skin and try to imitate them. The white shinny skin is a result of lot of expensive cosmetic surgeries and not solely these fairness creams.

For the general audience being fair is a dream and the marketers in return do nothing but sell dreams and the public capitulates to these tactics which in turn motivates the dream merchants to continue their business. The public needs to understand how ingeniously the advertisers are playing with our minds; we all have accepted that a good life means to be fair only then you will be acknowledged and loved by the society.

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of the study to:

1. Find out the reliability of fairness creams.
2. Evaluate the results obtained and check whether it is a short term or long term solution.
3. Know the preference of fairness creams over other moisturising creams.

HYPOTHESIS

H0- Fairness creams has no effect on our skin colour.

H1- Fairness creams have substantial effect on our skin colour and make us look fairer up to some extent.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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1. Do skin fairness products actually work?

Dr. Kiran Lohia, Feb 01,2013

Dr. Kiran Lohia is a dermatologist and founder of Cosmetic Skin Solutions. Dr Lohia explains how our skin colour is determined by the distribution, number and size of melanosomes. Due to India's proximity to the equator people are more exposed to the sun's UV rays which make them a little darker. Darker skin has more black granules representing melanin; now for a fairness cream to work it has to affect melanin synthesis or it has to decrease the distribution of melanosomes throughout the skin. In an analysis of 3 most popular fairness creams in India revealed that only around 5-10 percent of the ingredients help in promoting fairness otherwise it only works as a UV protection cream which makes our skin look a bit fresh.

2. Do fairness creams really work?

Komal, Feb 28, 2011

This article highlights some facts and myths about fairness creams. According to most dermatologists these fairness creams work like an anti- tan cream where it blocks the sun rays and prevent secretion of melanin (which gives a dark colour to the skin). So in effect fairness creams reduce the skin from getting darker but nothing can change the structure of melanin.

A few myths about the fairness creams include:

- a) Fairness creams can make you look fair. – Reality is they can prevent tan and make your skin look fresh but nothing can change the structure of melanin or your real skin colour as mentioned above.
- b) Manufacturers list all their ingredients on the product label. - In reality there is no law for manufacturers to mention all the ingredients on the product label.

- c) Fair skin is better than dark skin. - Medically dark skin is less vulnerable to skin diseases than fair skin. More melanin acts as a shield and protects us from the UV rays.

3. Truth about fairness creams

Consumer Forum Facebook page - A report by Delhi University interns, Jan 3, 2015

The report is prepared by Priya Malhotra and a group of students from Hansraj College, Delhi University. The report talks about how the advent of these fairness creams has affected consumer's decision and preferences. The ads with celebrity endorsements have made us believe that these fairness creams are the reason behind their glowing skin and not make - up artists, plastic surgeons and genes. Media has also played a major role in identifying the women in the society with beauty and fairness. Their study also focuses on the rising use of fairness creams by men. The macho look is said to be replaced by metrosexual look which explains the rise in sale of men's fairness creams. They have further talked about the harmful chemicals that are present in these fairness creams. Hydroquinone is a common ingredient found in the fairness creams which if used more than 3-4 percent can cause skin problems like thinning of the skin and making the skin sun sensitive. According to the report fairness creams cannot change a person's natural skin colour. At best they can only bleach and prevent secretion of Melanin for which these chemicals and steroids are used.

Consumer Survey Response of Women- A survey was conducted for 100 women. It was seen that more than 50% of the women say that they did not find any difference on using fairness creams, while about 43% say that they have seen positive results on their skin. Around 3/5 of the women have faced the side effects on using the fairness creams.

Consumer Survey of Men- A survey was conducted for 100 men. The results say that nearly 42% of the men surveyed say that they have observed some

changes in their skin tone, while other 58% says no. 53% of men say that they have faced side effects by using fairness creams.

4. This Man Just Sued Fairness Cream Company and Won 15 Lakhs!

Kunal Anand, November 6, 2015

A man named Nikhil bought a fairness cream on Oct 8, 2012 getting influenced by Shahrukh Khan who is the brand ambassador of "Emami fair and handsome". The fairness cream claims to make men look fairer in just 3 weeks but Nikhil failed to get one and hence filed a complaint with the district consumer disputes redressal forum. He claimed the false promise caused him huge mental injury. Along with his brother he decided to challenge the unfair trade practices; the case went on for 2.5 years. As a result of their victory they have got a compensation of Rs 15, 00,000 and the company has been asked to withdraw ads that promise dramatic transformations in skin complexion.

METHODOLOGY

The research is designed to find out the reliability of fairness creams. An online survey was conducted for the research. 75 responses were recorded. For this purpose the tool used for is a questionnaire consisting 10 close ended questions. The research carried out is a Quantitative Research. Thorough review of literature is done and articles from various sources have been studied to draw conclusions and meet the objectives of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Fair and Lovely, India's first fairness cream launched by Hindustan Lever back in 1975 has managed to maintain a strong image in the market which in turn has led to committed buyers. Moreover with the introduction of a lot of Men's fairness creams the fairness concerns are no more limited to women but have raised awareness of skin tone problems among the masculine gender as well (Out of 75 respondents 45 are males).

The reason behind using an online survey was that, the maximum population right from school to office are using internet these days and are the most concerned ones about their skin tones. Hence an online survey was the best method to reach the target population. People using fairness creams mostly lie between 20-30 years that is when most of the people are looking for jobs or planning to get married. So the advertisers are able to tap the desired population. Also what trigger the audience to buy these creams are mostly recommendations and advertisements.

CONCLUSION

As per the results it can be stated that the youth are the key buyers of fairness creams. Over a period of time due to introduction of a lot of men's fairness creams

there are more male buyers in the market along with female buyers. Also, Fair and Lovely, India's first fairness cream launched by Hindustan Lever back in 1975 has managed to maintain a strong image in the market. Most of them believe that fairness creams work partially which can also be seen in the literature review. However, the partial working of these fairness creams is in the form of an anti-tan cream which protects the skin from harmful UV rays and makes the skin look fresh. What trigger the audience to buy fairness creams are commonly recommendations and advertisements. With all the celebrity endorsements people are blindly buying and relying on these products. A large no. of people claim to see no change in their skin colour tone while the rest are said to see a change in 2-6 months. The change is however short term as covered in the literature review that nothing can change the structure of our original skin colour. A fairness cream can make your skin look fresh but not fair. Hence fairness creams is not a reality but a myth.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research revolves around the dilemma between fairness creams- a reality or a myth. Further research can be conducted on how advertising can stop making magical or false claims and come up with more beneficial products. The fairness cream industry can maybe move towards more eco-friendly or health concerned which do not make false claims, just assure a fresh look. Research can also be conducted on how these advertising companies can compensate for hurting the sentiments of people with a darker complexion. Also, we can do a comparative study on anti-tan and fairness creams because both are actually doing the same work.

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