



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

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Abstract

This study illuminates the intricate interplay between marketing, colourism, and the lives of women in Indian society. We delve into the profound impact of marketing strategies on the perpetuation of colourist norms and their far-reaching consequences. Through comprehensive analysis conducted in a focused-group comprising of 10 participants, we reveal how marketing perpetuates perceptions of dark skin and the detrimental impact on self-perception, mental health, societal integration, and cultural identity. As we navigate this issue, our findings underscore the urgency of challenging these biases collectively and individually, fostering a society that celebrates diversity and inclusivity.

Keywords– Colourism, Women, Mental Health

I. INTRODUCTION

A complex web of discrimination rooted in the shades of one's skin, colourism casts a long shadow over the lives of countless individuals, particularly women, across the subcontinent. This paper embarks on a journey through this intricate labyrinth, shedding light on the profound influence of marketing in shaping and perpetuating colourism, and the far-reaching consequences it bears upon the lives of Indian women.

India, a land of myriad traditions, languages, and cultures, has long grappled with the issue of colourism. Its historical roots are entwined with colonialism, where the British colonial rulers imposed notions of white supremacy that left an indelible mark on the psyche of the subcontinent. In contemporary India, however, colourism persists not merely as a vestige of the colonial past but as a thriving social construct. Deeply entrenched within societal norms and attitudes, this prejudice continues to thrive, perpetuated by one powerful force: marketing.

Marketing, the art and science of influencing consumer behaviour, extends its omnipotent reach into the realms of beauty, fashion, and lifestyle products. It is here, within the glossy pages of magazines, on billboards, television screens, and now in the digital spaces of social media, that marketing subtly but effectively etches its message into the collective consciousness of Indian society. It extols the virtues of fair skin, perpetuates the myth that it is synonymous with success, allure, and worth, and subtly hints that deviation from this ideal is less desirable.

In this context, the title of our exploration, "Palette of Prejudice," aptly captures the layers of discrimination that manifest through marketing's portrayal of beauty standards. Through this paper, we delve into the mechanisms that marketing employs, such as the representation of fair-skinned individuals in advertising, the promotion of skin-lightening products, and the subtle cues that equate fair skin with desirability. As we venture deeper, we uncover the psychological and societal impacts of this colourist marketing.

In this journey, we are not merely observers but advocates for change. We call for awareness, for responsible marketing practices that celebrate diversity, for policies that challenge colourism, and for a society that embraces every shade of beauty. As we navigate the intricate "Palette of Prejudice," we hope to paint a future where colourism is but a faint memory, and where every woman, regardless of her skin tone, can fully enjoy the colours of life in vibrant and unapologetic hues. In a world of diverse belief systems, atheism stands as a unique perspective that challenges the existence of a higher power or deity. Atheists, as individuals who do not subscribe to religious beliefs, approach life and decision-making through different lenses compared to their religious counterparts. The understanding of decision-making patterns among atheists is crucial for gaining insights into the factors that shape their beliefs and behaviours.

Itisha Nagar (2018) conducted an exploratory research that delved into the impact of skin colour on the preferences for potential marriage partners. To investigate this, they employed a 2×2 (gender \times skin colour) between-group experimental design. A total of 108 mothers with marriage-age individuals in their families were presented with five marital profiles containing solely educational and occupational information. Depending on whether they had a son or daughter, participants were shown profiles of either males or females.

Once a profile was selected, the participant was presented with a photograph of an individual who was highly attractive, with the only difference being the manipulation of their skin tone using computer software, resulting in a light-skinned or dark-skinned appearance. Participants were then asked to rate how strongly they would recommend the individual as a potential bride or groom for their children.

As anticipated, individuals with fair skin, regardless of gender, received higher ratings compared to their dark-skinned counterparts. However, it is noteworthy that the ratings for dark-skinned women were not significantly lower than those for dark-skinned men. This intriguing finding suggests that skin colour can potentially override other factors, including general competence and physical attractiveness, in influencing preferences for potential marriage partners in both men and 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.

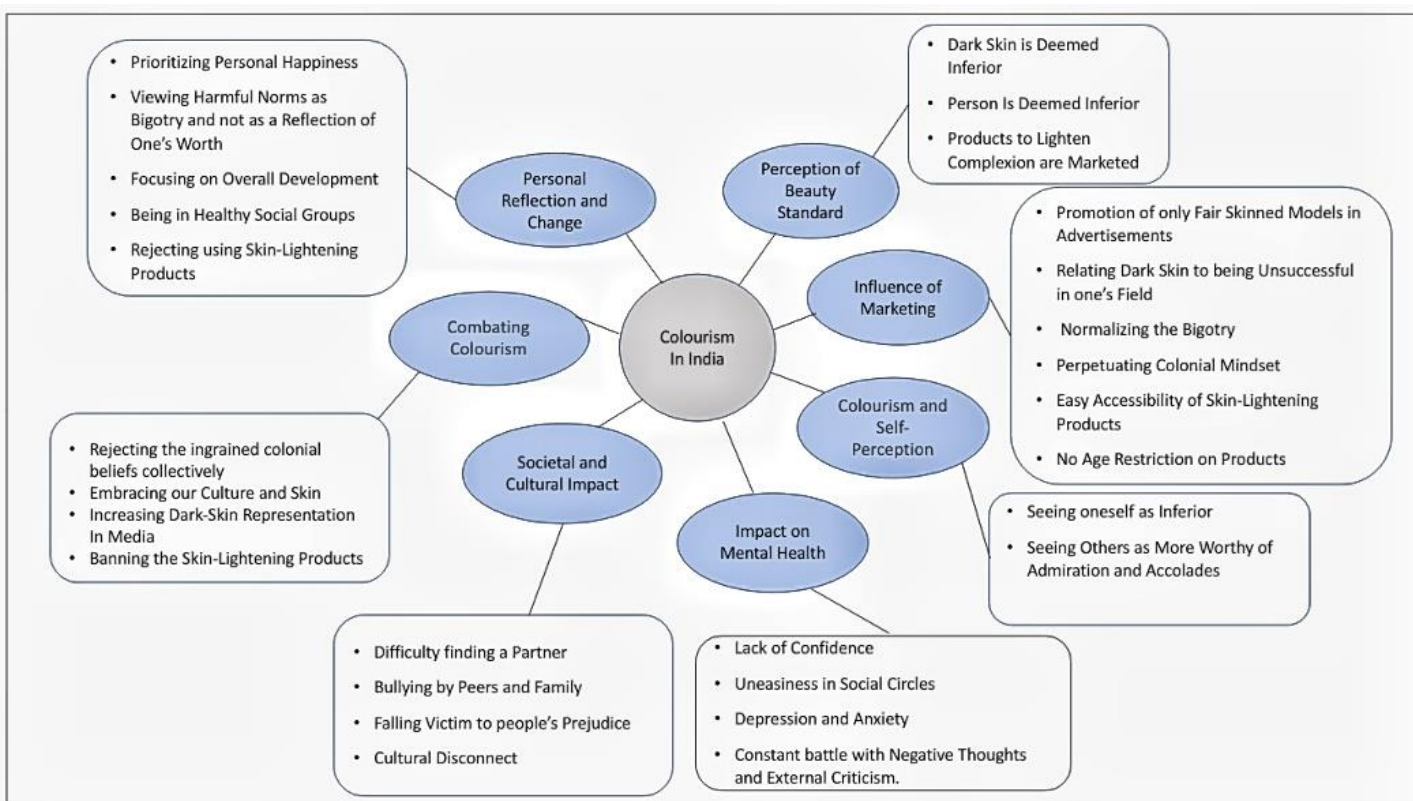
III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

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
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

The data collected in this study paints a stark picture of the pervasive issue of colourism in Indian society, underlining the profound impact of marketing strategies on women's lives. We will discuss the key findings within the framework of the outlined categories.

1. Perception of Beauty Standards

The data unequivocally reveals that dark skin is still widely perceived as inferior in Indian society. This perception doesn't just stop at physical appearance; it extends to judgments of a person's overall worth. Furthermore, the presence of skin-lightening products in the market emphasizes the normalization of this bias.

2. Influence of Marketing

Marketing's role in shaping colourism is evident in the data. The consistent promotion of fair-skinned models in advertisements links dark skin with a lack of success in various fields, reinforcing the colonial-era mindset that fair skin is superior. The easy accessibility of skin-lightening products, often without age restrictions, further compounds this issue.

3. Colourism and Self-Perception

The data highlights that individuals subjected to colourist marketing are more likely to view themselves as inferior because of their skin tone. This negative self-perception can lead to self-doubt, low self-esteem, and an enduring sense of inadequacy.

4. *Impact on Mental Health*

The study underscores the severe impact of colourism on mental health. Participants reported a lack of confidence, uneasiness in social circles, and higher rates of depression and anxiety. The constant battle with negative thoughts and external criticism further accentuates the psychological toll.

5. *Societal and Cultural Impact*

The societal and cultural ramifications of colourism are extensive. Women with darker skin tones face difficulty finding suitable partners, often falling victim to prejudice from peers and even family members. This not only impacts their self-worth but also creates a disconnection with their own cultural identity.

6. *Combating Colourism*

In response to the perpetuation of colourism, participants expressed the need to collectively reject ingrained colonial beliefs. Embracing one's culture and skin tone, increasing dark-skin representation in media, and advocating for the banning of skin-lightening products were suggested as ways to combat this deeply ingrained bias.

7. *Personal Reflection and Change*

On a personal level, the data suggests that prioritizing personal happiness and viewing harmful norms as bigotry rather than a reflection of one's worth are essential steps. Focusing on overall development, maintaining healthy social circles, and rejecting the use of skin-lightening products are actions that individuals can take to challenge and change the status quo.

The data vividly illustrates that colourism is a pervasive issue with far-reaching consequences for women in Indian society. Marketing plays a substantial role in perpetuating these biases. To combat this, a collective effort to reject ingrained beliefs, promote cultural pride, and challenge the beauty industry's norms is essential. Additionally, individual choices, such as rejecting harmful products and embracing one's identity, contribute significantly to dismantling the "Palette of Prejudice" and fostering a society that celebrates diversity and inclusivity.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data collected in this study unequivocally exposes the pervasive nature of colourism within Indian society, with marketing serving as a potent amplifier of this deeply rooted prejudice. Our discussion, spanning various facets of this issue, demonstrates the profound influence of these biases on the lives of women.

From perceptions of beauty standards to the insidious influence of marketing, and from the profound impact on self-perception and mental health to the far-reaching societal and cultural implications, the data underscores the urgency of addressing colourism.

The path forward lies in collective efforts to challenge ingrained beliefs, celebrate cultural diversity, and demand change in the beauty industry. Additionally, individual choices to reject harmful products and embrace one's identity are pivotal in dismantling the "Palette of Prejudice." Ultimately, we must strive to create a society that not only acknowledges diversity but also celebrates it, fostering inclusivity and equality for all.

Limitations and Critique

Future research could expand the study's impact by conducting a broader cross-sectional survey involving a more diverse and representative sample of Indian women. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing colourism, such as media literacy programs and corporate responsibility initiatives, could provide practical solutions to address this pervasive issue in society. Furthermore, investigating the intersectionality of colourism with other forms of discrimination would offer a more holistic understanding of its impacts on women's lives.

Area of Future Research

The area of future research could include exploring the long-term impact of atheistic decision-making on individuals' well-being, personal growth, and relationships. Additionally, researchers might investigate how these decision-making patterns evolve over time and whether they remain consistent or undergo changes in response to life events or experiences. Exploring the cultural and societal factors that influence atheists' decision-making processes may also yield a deeper understanding of how broader social contexts shape individual choices and values within the atheist community. Lastly, considering the implications of atheistic decision-making in various professional and organizational settings could shed light on the role of secular ethics in shaping ethical conduct and leadership behaviours. These potential areas of future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of decision-making among atheists and its impact on individual and societal well-being.

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.

REFERENCES

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