

**“Dark is Beautiful, Too” - A Counter-Narrative
of Feminine Beauty: Reactions of Dhaka-based
Beauty Conscious Women**

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June, 2016

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
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LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

Masters in Communication

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ABSTRACT

Skin tone has historically been used as a parameter for beauty, from as early as the Nordic history to the Shakespearean era when the queens would rub dangerous compounds on their faces to be fair. But today, unlike history, this parameter of beauty has been commercialized by conglomerates in their marketing attempts to create a need and to fuel that need with insecurity by using almost every trick in the book to make a female wish 'for a fairer skin'. Commercializing this need was particularly easy in the subcontinent where the British ruled like the mighty Titans for more than 200 years, associating their skin tone with power, i.e. fair equals power, a fact that was never outright mentioned nor advertised, but worked subliminally and culturally to slowly take a firm root in our social construction of beauty. That's the reason why the sales of skin whitening products are increasing day by day. In fact, India and Bangladesh represents significant markets for skin whitening manufacturers, so much so that they have become the largest spenders on media right after telecom. The industry is booming worldwide, with sales crossing the 2 billion dollar mark annually. The conglomerate most active in Bangladesh is promoting that fairness equates to power is none other than Fair and Lovely, a product and brand of Unilever Bangladesh, who works six days every week in Bangladesh to ensure that our females are extremely insecure about their skin tone. Not a hard job considering our nation's equatorial location that ensures that we are almost all shades of brown. But in 2014, Meril Splash, a soap product and brand of Square Toiletries, launched a new campaign titled 'Beauty is not only in fairness, it is in freshness too.' This campaign rallied against the contemporary, established notion that 'fair is beautiful' by showing the plights of girls when family, society and media are constantly telling them that they have to be fair, or else... This thesis has been conducted to assess the success of the campaign of Meril Splash in establishing the counter narrative of feminine beauty by measuring the attitude among urban females.

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Name of the student: Asifur Rahman Khan

Signature

Date

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SUMMARY

I am a **Communication Professional** with a passion for building and maintaining brands by generating innovative campaign ideas to fulfill realistic objectives. I learned the trade of building brands at one of the most reputed advertising agencies in the country, Unitrend Limited, the agency that created brands like Philips Bulbs, American Express, Rahimafrooz IPS, Nescafe, BSRM, City Bank, to name a few. I have also worked at the Daily New Age as a Sr. Feature writer for more than two years, an experience that significantly developed my ability to articulate precise communication messages. In 2011, I became the first person in the country's history of communication to represent Bangladesh at the Cannes Lion Festival of Creativity in France. Currently, I am enrolled in the Masters in Communication program at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, having graduated from North South University with a Bachelors of Business Administration degree, passing both O & A Levels from Aga Khan School, Dhaka.

WORK EXPERIENCE

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April 2010-till date

Leading the creative team in understanding and decoding the brief's of clients'. Understanding strategies to formulate the best creative solution in order to fulfill the objectives given by the clients. Creating the blueprint for developing brands and connecting them to people by understanding the psychology of people, both niche and mass. Deriving the most effective communication route based on fundamental findings of consumer insight. Nurturing young talents at the office. Major brands I have worked with are BSRM, Nestle, Nescafe, City Bank, American Express, Rahimafrooz, Berger, Ispahani, AlwaysOn Networks and Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Winner of the Cannes “Young Lions” Competition-2011 in Bangladesh

By beating out all the top agencies at a competition organized by Brand Forum, I won the chance to represent Bangladesh at the prestigious Cannes Lion Festival of Creativity for the very first time

Launched American Express Credit Card in Bangladesh

Developed and executed a communication route for American Express that gave a cardmember base of 100,000+ in just the first year, enabling the brand to be the 2nd ranked credit card in the country.

Established BSRM as the # 1 choice for steel reinforcement bars

Generated and executed campaign ideas to address the issues that arose during the purchase decisions, catapulting the credibility of the brand, making BSRM the largest player in the steel industry.

Launched Nescafe Get Set Rock Competition in Bangladesh

Developed the communication route and the campaign materials for the nationwide competition that eventually drew the attention of 20,000 musicians to the audition rounds.

Rebranded Beximco Pharmaceuticals

Helped in the development of the core identity for Beximco Pharmaceuticals, which was extended for both external and internal communication.

Established the Corporate Brand for AlwaysOn Networks

Developed AlwaysOn Networks’ corporate identity. In just the first week of communication, 120 phone calls were made to enquire about AlwaysOn Networks’ video conferencing solution.

TBWA BENCHMARK | Copywriter

Sep 2008-Jun 2009

Assisted the creative team in developing suitable campaigns as outlined by the client’s need. Writing the content for different print advertisements, radio and TV commercial scripts. Generating ideas for executions as different brands demanded. Checking and editing the content of advertisements. Major Brands I worked for are Grameen Phone PR, Standard Chartered Bank, Transcom Ltd. and United Airways.

PAPER RHYME | Copywriter

Jul 2007 – Mar 2008

Generated ideas and developed different concepts for different types of advertisement. Checking advertisement for any errors. Writing the contents for advertisements as well as writing scripts for radio and TV commercials. Major Brands I worked with are Best Air, Lanka Bangla, Acme, Green Delta and Premier Cement.

THE DAILY NEW AGE | Sr. Feature Writer
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A levels	Aga Khan School	2003	3Bs (Physics, Maths, Chemistry)
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- Member of the Aga Khan Chess Team 1998-2003
- Member of the Aga Khan Table Tennis Team 1999-2002
- Member of the Aga Khan Social Club 1998-2001
- Member of the North South Football Team 2004-2010
- Member of the North South Table Tennis Team 2004-2007

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Microsoft Office applications
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The research paper put forward a proposition which argues that there is a counter narrative on feminine beauty in contemporary Bangladesh that highlights the message that ‘fair skin should be the only marker for beauty’, a message that clashes with the culturally accepted norm and established definitions of the feminine beauty in the subcontinent that says ‘fair is beautiful’.

To delve into the topic, the paper will simplify the scenario into the following comparison. Fair & Lovely, a brand and skin-whitening product of Unilever, has been the proponent of the message ‘fair is beautiful’ in Bangladesh (Islam *et al*, 2006). It is one of the biggest media spenders in the country and profits for making women insecure about their skin tone, marketing its product while showing in its commercials that dark skin tone is an obstacle to progress and is the reason for not getting respect. Fair & Lovely’s campaigns have traditionally been accepted as part of the cultural norms and practice, where fair skin is sought for. On the other hand, the campaign of Meril Splash is diametrically opposite to Fair & Lovely’s campaigns, where Meril Splash talks about the plight of women in a society that values fairness (Islam *et al*, 2006), and focuses on the message that

everyone is beautiful regardless of their skin tone. This campaign goes against the cultural belief and stands up to the established thoughts and practices.

Thus, to exactly understand the root of the belief that 'fair equals beauty' and how belief has spread out and been commercialized, the following section is organized in the following manner: British rule-post colonial rules, impact of colonial rule on beauty and status (fairness became the yardstick for beauty), the growth of the skin whitening industry all over the world, the advertisements in Bangladesh that reinforced the old narrative, then talk about the emergence of the new narrative.

During 1757-1945 when India was colonized by the British, during which time, Bangladesh and Pakistan were part of India, a lot of changes came forth for the women of the subcontinent. Some were positive, like decreasing female infanticide, early marriage and fair education for women, among others, through the establishment of legal precedents (Chitnis and Wright, 2007).

Others were negative, like establishing notions of racial difference, white supremacy, sexism, and patriarchy that constituted the power relationships and hierarchical structures within the colonial endeavor. Colonialism was manifested through the "configurations of power" (Said, 1994) that worked and still work to control indigenous lands and populations.

The established British supremacy in India was based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, and it effectively justified colonization. The colonizers were depicted as the advanced civilization, while the colonized were depicted as backward nations. This conception permitted "ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality" (Said, 1994).

To explain the aforementioned statement, first we need to look at how a race is defined, through which the inequality can be further explored. The concept of race has historically signified the division of humanity into a small number of groups based upon five criteria: (1) Races reflect some type of biological foundation, be it Aristotelian essences or modern genes; (2) This biological foundation generates discrete racial groupings, such that all and only all members of one race share a set of biological characteristics that are not shared by members of other races; (3) This biological foundation is inherited from generation to generation, allowing observers to identify an individual's race through her ancestry or genealogy; (4) Genealogical investigation should identify each race's geographic origin, typically in Africa, Europe, Asia, or North and South America; and (5) This inherited racial biological foundation manifests itself primarily in physical phenotypes, such as skin color, eye shape, hair texture, and bone structure, and perhaps also behavioral phenotypes, such as intelligence or delinquency (James Michael, 2016).

Taking the last point in the context of my paper, one of the manifestations of the inherited racial biological foundation takes the form of skin color. It is this

difference in skin color that has been the foundation of a social construct that gives rise to racism, a construct that consists of both prejudicial and discriminatory ideas based upon social perceptions of biological differences between peoples. This results in social actions, practices or beliefs, or political systems that consider different races to be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other, based on presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities, or qualities. It holds that members of different races should be treated differently. That's how the West was and still is associated with superiority, and the East was and still is represented as primitive, weak, and in need of salvation.

The advanced/backward dichotomy worked effectively to support dominance and control (Said, 1994). Men were epitomized as "the progressive agent(s)" and women are signified as "inert, backward-looking and natural" (McClintock, 1995). The native and the woman were objectified and seen as lacking, further justifying the bases of relationships of domination and submission. This subservient roles played by the natives of India to their British colonial masters subliminally affected their minds.

Fair skinned was associated with power and dominance, wealth and high status. This resulted to the dominant narrative of feminine beauty that exists today in India and Bangladesh, except for South India and Sri Lanka. This dominant narrative of beauty established the notion that fairness equaled beauty. Fair girls were naturally more beautiful than darker girls. In fact, those who didn't have fair

skin, ended up mimicking those who did, trying to regain self-esteem by looking down upon those who do not or cannot.

This effect has been stated by the Post-Colonial Theory (Said, 1994), which is a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled "Third World" cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments.

Post-colonialism, as both a body of theory and a study of political and cultural change, has gone and continues to go through three broad stages; (a) an initial awareness of the social, psychological, and cultural inferiority enforced by being in a colonized state, (b) the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy and (c) a growing awareness of cultural overlap and hybridity (Frantz Fanon, 1959).

The attraction for fair skin can be profoundly seen in the emergence and growth of skin whitening products across the world, especially in South East Asia, which included India and Bangladesh. The global skin lightening market is predicted to reach \$10 billion by 2015, driven by new markets in the West and sustained growth in Asia-Pacific, a report by Global Industry Analysts (GIA) has revealed.

Since the 1970s, Asia has been the fastest growing sector in the global skin-lightening market. Asia is a lucrative market with high-growth potential because of a rising middle-class with increasing disposable income and centuries-old entrenched

cultural impressions of beauty. The beauty business in the Asia-Pacific region is estimated to be worth an enormous US\$80 billion and the skin-lightening market alone is valued at over US\$13 billion.

In 2010, India's whitening-cream market was worth \$430m, according to a report by market researchers ACNielsen, and was growing at 18% per year. As a result, India's whitening cream market swelled from \$397 million in 2008 to \$638 million over four years, according to market researchers at Euromonitor International. The market for skin lighteners in Asia-Pacific still remains the strongest area of growth. Japan dominates the market, while India and China are the fastest growing markets. According to GIA, the Asian market for skin lighteners will consequently cross the \$2 billion mark by 2012.

Due to the lack of statistics in Bangladesh regarding the skin whitening industry, from the above data that talks about the Asian skin whitening market's growth, I have assumed a similar growth in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, the definition of beauty that 'fair is beauty' has been and still is fueled mercilessly by societal preference, media portrayal, and psychological insecurity among the females of Bangladesh. Companies with vested interest in this definition frequently show commercials that highlights the struggle of dark girls in getting respect and admiration. This is followed by the use of the product that makes them fair, and instantly, their luck changes. They get all the attention and admiration that they deserved. Another tactic employed by these companies is to use fair girls as

the models for their commercials. In the language of advertising, fair girls are far more inspirational than dark girls in initiating the purchase of the product in question.

One need not look further than the TV commercials of Fair & Lovely and Lux to understand the effect of this cultivation effect. Economics also play in the land where dark girls outnumber fair girls. The demand is more than the supply, thus positively reinforcing the demand. This creates the insecurity among the girl and among the family members about the complexion of their girls, with lasting effects.

The combination of the media portrayal, societal preference, colonial mentality and its subsequent creation of insecurity among females about their skin tone has reinforced and strengthened the old but dominant narrative of feminine beauty. But in August 2014, Meril Splash Beauty Soap, a soap brand from Square, launched a campaign in August 2014 that communicates the message “fairness is not beauty, freshness is”. This bold campaign goes against the dominant narrative of feminine beauty across the Bangladesh, putting Meril Splash in a direct fight against Lux and Fair & Lovely. This is a unique case, as this is an emergence of a new narrative on feminine beauty in Bangladesh.

In light of the dominant narrative on feminine beauty and the emerging one in Bangladesh brought through the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash, my research paper will investigate the impact of the campaign on the attitude of urban beauty

conscious females to understand the acceptance of the campaign messages, i.e., the counter narrative of feminine beauty.

1.2 Problem Statement

What is the understanding of feminine beauty in Bangladesh in the eyes of urban beauty conscious women? What are their reactions to the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash, which put forward a counter narrative of feminine beauty?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand the dominant narrative of feminine beauty through the eyes of beauty conscious urban Bangladeshi females; and
- To know the reactions of these women regarding the counter narrative of feminine beauty put forward by the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research paper will shed light on the effect of skin care advertising messages and its effect on the psychology on women, giving us an understanding about the

resonance of these messages among women. With the findings of the research, the advertising industry can be more sensitive towards the growing cultural shift that is occurring amongst women in light of the dominant narrative and the context of the counter narrative. By enlightening us on the effect, my research can hopefully make both companies and advertisers more sensitive towards the psychology of women, by endeavoring to make realistic ads that target specific problems instead of a general weakness. Also, the findings of the research can uncover insights and truths amongst women that can help advertisers derive communication that makes women look good, instead of injecting insecurity through mass advertisement.

Since this is the first research of its kind in this matter, future researches can get a guiding tenant from this paper. There is a surprising dearth of information on this matter, and this research can be the first paper to fill that void, as this research paper includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis, giving us insights about the psychology of women in Bangladesh. For the academic field, this paper can help researcher understand the growing change in mentality of women in light of their increased ability to support their family and the rise of their social statuses.

This paper can also hopefully enlighten the media industry to omit ‘fairness’ out of the equation when it comes to recruiting people for modeling, anchoring, acting, among others. Such a filter have often rejected worthy candidates in the face of complete ignorance. Without this filter, quality personnel can finally have a fair

shot for spots normally designated for fair girls. This can only increase the quality of media outputs, which is far cry from the quality that exists today in Bangladesh.

1.5. Scope and Delimitation

To understand the impact of the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash in establishing the counter narrative of feminine beauty, it was imperative to study the impact of the campaign on the people who believed in the dominant narrative the most. That is why the research paper has been conducted among only beauty conscious urban women between the ages of 18 years to 23 years, because this age group of females represents the largest customer base for Fair & Lovely, according to inside industry information. This was also the reason why males were deliberately excluded from the study, because the research paper has focused on the studying the change in attitude among the aforementioned females on the subject of the counter narrative when contrasted against their belief of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. The research paper has focused only on beauty conscious women because of the understanding that the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is strongest among the beauty conscious women, who were verified users of Fair & Lovely. Only Fair & Lovely users were used as respondents because these respondents were unwittingly the carrier of the dominant narrative, since their actions, i.e. purchase of Fair & Lovely, reflected their belief in the beauty ideas as put forward through the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. The respondents include a mix of fair and dark skin women to represent a diversity of opinion regarding their perception towards the counter narrative put forward with the 2014 Meril Splash campaign.

Secondly, the research paper does not take into account the effect of the campaign on the attitude of rural or semi-urban women. For all purposes, the findings of this research paper should not be extrapolated to the context of semi-urban or rural women.

Third, because of the researcher's lack of resources in terms of both money and time, the study was conducted only in Dhaka City, which is why the findings of this research should not be extrapolated to other regions of the country. As there was no additional funding given to the researcher by the university, there was a limitation of money to actually include a greater number of people within the sample size. Time was also of the essence since the data gathered for this research was conducted in two months, where the respondents within the sample had other priorities, which is why the researcher did not have much time to talk to other people.

At the end of this report, the responses of only 5 out of 30 respondents have been included in the appendix in order to show the question and answer pattern adopted by the researcher and respondent respectively. The rest of the responses have not been included as it would unnecessarily increase the size of the report without adding any real value to the content of the research. The inclusion of the 5 responses had the most appropriate responses pertinent to the scope of the researcher, and was the best representative of the answers that the rest of the respondents gave.



CHAPTER II

STUDY FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the literature review behind the dominant narrative of feminine beauty in order to bring the counter narrative of feminine beauty into context.

To do so, the chapter first delves into the current scenario of the skin whitening industry by triangulating the reasons that drive the growth of the skin whitening industry and analyzing the factors behind the social construct of beauty.

The analysis of the factors behind the social construct of beauty will make the context of the dominant narrative in Bangladesh much clearer. This understanding of the context is imperative for putting the reaction of the urban women against the counter narrative of feminine beauty in perspective.

As part of the social construct of beauty, the chapter explores both the historical background of the social construct of beauty, and the literature review pertaining to the historical background revealed the underlying factors that has defines the modern means of perpetuating the dominant narrative of feminine beauty in terms of skin tone.

After establishing the historical anchor of social construction of beauty that has defined the modern paradigm of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty in terms of skin tone, the chapter focused and explored the construct of beauty in Bangladesh from the view point of skin tone only. Following the above continuation of exploration, the chapter then assessed the impact of such beauty ideals based on skin tone and the social construction of beauty on women, both in terms of their societal standing and their mentality. The observations were then tagged to the health impact of skin whitening products, and thereafter, the negative association of skin whitening products to the health conditions of the skin.

Lastly, after clarification of all the above mentioned points with the assistance of literature review, the chapter then identified the area of research that will contextualize the field of focus or research.

This was followed by the theoretical and conceptual framework.

2.2 Skin Whitening Phenomenon

‘I want to be fairer’- is the statement of conviction among women that has helped the global skin whitening industry to grow at a phenomenal rate. Global Industry Analysts, a reputed company revered for its accurate analysis of the market, estimates that the global skin lightening market has reached \$10 billion by 2015 (GIA, 2009).

In fact, according to a report by market researchers ACNielsen, the skin whitening cream market in India was worth \$430 million, and the market was growing at a rate of 18%! Fuelled by the growth of the Indian and Chinese market, Asian market for skin whiteners crossed the \$2 billion mark back in 2012.

The success of the skin whitening industry can be seen on every form of media vehicles. Advertising messages highlighting the benefits of being 'fair' is promoted left and right by conglomerates with the intent of acquiring new users to enlarge the market even more. And it's working quite well, reflected by the growth of the industry and sales.

2.3 Social Construct of Beauty

Beauty is a language of identity and a promoter of self-esteem (Man, 2000). Beauty is not just an aesthetic category applied to faces and bodies, instead as Peiss (2000) adds, it helps to define social status, gender and class. Thereby, beauty ideals are formed by *social relations* and *cultural categories and practices* which eventually created opportunities and commercialization of fashion and beauty industries (Peiss, 2000).

Johnson and Lennon (1999) state that socially constructed ideals towards beauty not only encourage individuals to create appearances but also determine how they define themselves based on self-worth and their perception towards appearances in the societies they come from. From demure to playful, Man (2000)

believes historical and contemporary women project their self-images through make-up and fashion as current or new “frames of references for beauty” (p. 193).

Throughout many eras, beauty has frequently mattered as an inevitable and underlying socio-political framework for how it tells women what is acceptable as ‘beautiful’ within societal and cultural norms (Brand, 2000). Baumann (2008) adds that ideals regarding beauty vary between societies and cultures as well as groups within a society such as “ideals for height, body shape, facial parts, hairstyles and skin tone” (p. 4). Grogan (2008) agrees by adding that slenderness in the Western norm represents social success, happiness and social acceptability.

In the modern age, Halprin (1995) observed that the maidenly appearance of the extreme, slender youth, cast in a European style of beauty, has become a global standard for women of all cultures which is often “opposed to individuality” (p. 42) or in most, uniqueness.

2.4 Historical Preference of Skin Tone

Draelos (2002) and Phelan (2002) write that skin color has always been a source of fixation for mankind from all cultures where it not only represents one’s health condition or attractiveness but also his or her social status and wealth. In fact, Glenn

(2008) believes skin tone¹ is often perceived as a “form of fixed or unchangeable capital” (p. 282) which individuals attempt lighten or darken to enable them to be accepted as desirable or part of the in-crowd where one’s worth is judged based his appearance.

Sherrow (2001) and Pointer (2005) provide an example of how women during the Roman Empire and the Elizabethan era resorted to using face whiteners made of ceruse, a type of lead compound, which they thinly applied to their faces and necks to achieve the pale matt complexion.

From the colonization era in the 1800s and the present, Hunter (2002) and Glenn (2008) write that women of color, especially from Africa and many parts of Asia, are oppressed by the European ideals of beauty where dark or tanned skin is often associated with primitiveness, lack of sophistication, hard labor and lower social status. Additionally, fair skin is not only an ideal of Asian feminine beauty but also a sign of nobility or aristocracy (Bray, 2002), associated with better employment and marital prospects (Dadie and Petit, 2009).

During the reign of Queen Victoria, tanned skin was the sign of a lowly status or a negative connotation associated with the term “temptress”. Frantz Fanon,

¹ **Skin Complexion (Tone, or Color):** "The shade of skin with which an individual has been genetically endowed."

the patriarch of postcolonial discourse has analyzed very minutely the psychological aspects of colonialism and myths of racism² in his works like *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *A Dying Colonialism* (1959) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

According to Frantz Fanon, the colonizers deliberately paralyze the natives' consciousness and insert their ideology into the fabric of consciousness of the colonized with an aim to justify their rule and occupation of the native's territory. The ideology that 'fair was beautiful' was tied to the power balance between the colonizers and colonized, where the colonizers were 'fair' and the colonized were 'tanned'. A gradual association was made between fair skin and power. The indigenous world of the native was thus corrupted by using the so-called supremacy myths and attributing the opposite qualities of what they represent reason, sophistication, morality and so on. The natives are thus forced to believe that they are by definition irrational, uncultured or barbaric, immoral, feeble and therefore require the correcting hand of the 'cultivated man'.

2.5 Modern Terrain of Skin Tone

The fixation on being 'fairer' is a particularly recent phenomenon, especially after the rise of commercial skin whitening products with widespread availability and the

² **Racism:** An ideology that supposes specific positive characteristics to a race and upholds that these characteristics infer superiority over other races.

globalization and stereotyping of beauty ideals. One of the beauty ideals that is now being stereotyped.

Shankar and Subish (2007) and Leong (2006) state that the greater preference for fair or 'white' skin in both post-colonial African and Asian societies is a colonial legacy where advertisements and skin-lightening products feature pale-skinned celebrities and models which present a combination of traditional and Westernized visual signifiers to evoke sophistication and purity.

Jeffreys (2005) believes the concept of Western and non-Western beauty practices create a stereotyped masculinity and femininity where women are subjected to criticism instead of being regarded as natural or progressive. Orbach (1988, cited by Blood, 2005) and Lennon, Lillethun and Buckland (1999) conclude that the stereotyped representation of women in media, cultural and societal levels not only define women's relationship to men and to themselves as individuals but increase the pressure to conform to the ideal body or beauty type.

According to Eric (2008), in Asian cultures, white skin is considered an important element in constructing female beauty. White skin does not only affect woman's beauty but also affects her job prospects, social status, and earning potential (see Ashikari 2003; Goon and Craven, 2003; Leslie, 2004). Wagatsuma (1967) states that, "the beauty ideal of white skin in Asia predates colonialism and the introduction of Western notions of beauty".

White skin is not only an ideal of Asian feminine beauty but also a sign of nobility or aristocracy where the Asian cosmetic giants offer an array of products for their consumers to “brighten, whiten, lighten and illuminate” their yellow-toned or dark skins (Bray, 2002).

Halprin (1995) agrees that the beautiful white woman myth represents a “limited or narrow standard of beauty which renders all others unbeautiful” (p.43), thereby, denying the value of non-Western beauty ranging from Asian beauty to the indigenous beauty.

2.6 Construct of Beauty in Bangladesh in Terms of Skin Tone

In the Bangladeshi context, according to Arif (2004), we first evaluate a person through his or her external appearance and later consider his/her other intrinsic characteristics. In Bangladesh, most of the people evaluate women’s beauty only by their skin color and do not observe their qualities; if men and women are dark skinned, they are considered as unattractive (*ibid.*). Arif (2004) explains that even if a black complexioned woman is good looking, well-mannered with an attractive figure, she is not considered beautiful at all because of her dark complexion; as a result women want to be fair and bright at any cost.

In Bangladeshi culture, according to Arif (2004) pre-marriage program called ‘Gaye-Holud’ (smearing turmeric on the skin), is nothing but a symbol to brighten the skin of bride or groom (*ibid.*). This has become a symbol of prestige

and enjoyment when we see a ‘fair’ bride or groom go through Gaye-holud program (see Arif, 2004; Haq, 2003).

2.7 Impact of Beauty Ideals on Women

Wolf (1990) and Blood (2005) write that beauty standards have not only undermined women’s self-worth but also pressure them to conform to the beauty practices of femininity in the attempt to emulate the ideal images of womanhood presented by media and society. When a woman ignores or fails to conform to the alleged standards of the ideal beauty, she is not only vulnerable of becoming an outcast from normality, desirability and femininity but also, as Blood (2005), adds she is blamed for resisting societal influences by accepting her body instead of changing it to fit the beauty ideal.

Although not applicable for the developing countries such as India and Bangladesh, Grogan (2008) observed that contemporary women of the west resort to diet regimes and cosmetic surgery to try and attain the “culturally defined” (p. 41) ideal body. As the beauty industry, including cosmetic surgery, continues to thrive, Greer (1999, cited by Gauntlett, 2008) explains the mediated beauty ideal is “often a substantial pressure on women” (p. 86) to attain the ‘perfect body’.

And even though the same practice is not as prevalent in India, some practice in the subcontinent show that the words ‘fair’ and ‘beautiful’ are synonymous (Franklin 1968; Hall 1995). Here, beauty contest winners are almost invariably fair

skinned. At present, Ashikari (2005) and Chong (2005) state many non-Western women, especially from Asian communities, are resorting to skin-whitening cosmetics or beauty regimes, wearing masks and hats, and shielding themselves outdoors with umbrellas and long gloves in order to preserve or enhance their pale complexion.

In the Indian subcontinent, Lever Brothers, which is a transnational company, markets a fairness cream named 'Fair & Lovely' to brighten human's skin (Islam *et al*, 2006 and Arif, 2004). On the packet of the cream the said company uses a slogan 'Extra Fairness Cream'! And, in the ad of the product they say, 'it is the bestselling fairness cream of the world'. Arif (2004) says that, this product is highly popular in the Indian subcontinent as the women of this region want to see their skin 'fair' or 'bright', and not black. Parents of this region encourage their daughters to use fairness products and to use turmeric on their skin as they are very much anxious of their daughter's future and their marriage (Arif, 2004 and Islam *et al*, 2006).

2.8 Area of Research

McBryde (1999) and Grogan (2008) believe that if women can choose to ignore the need to discipline, compare and conform to unrealistic ideals promoted by media and beauty industries, they will be able to "appreciate their unique beauty" (p. 7) and enhance their self-esteem. To gain an understanding into the beauty culture is to not only encourage us to think critically about women and beauty but also understand how a woman's body can be a "tool for resistance and agency in the construction

and reconstruction of a contemporary selfhood” against the cultural objectification of the body amidst modern consumer culture (Gimlin, 2002).

This choice for women can arise from the emerging narrative of beauty, where the message is that dark is beautiful too.

2.9 Study Frameworks

2.9.1 Theoretical framework. This research will be based on the theoretical framework of the Social Construction Theory of Reality, a theory postulated by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966. A major focus of social construction is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, known, and made into tradition by humans. Socials constructs are ongoing dynamic processes and don't occur “naturally”, they therefore require constant maintenance and re-affirmation in order to persist. This dynamism introduces the possibility of change and paradigms may shift from one generation to the next.

The social construction of the existing dominant narrative of feminine beauty is rooted in history, and is part of the colonial legacy, as stated in the beginning part of Chapter 2, which is validated by Shankar and Subish (2007) and Leong (2006), who stated that the greater preference for fair or ‘white’ skin in both post-colonial African and Asian societies is a colonial legacy where advertisements and

skin-lightening products feature pale-skinned celebrities and models which present a combination of traditional and Westernized visual signifiers to evoke sophistication and purity. Additionally, fair skin is not only an ideal of Asian feminine beauty but also a sign of nobility or aristocracy (Bray, 2002), associated with better employment and marital prospects (Dadie and Petit, 2009).

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In the modern age, Halprin (1995) observed that the maidenly appearance of the extreme, slender youth, cast in a European style of beauty, has become a global standard for women of all cultures which is often "opposed to individuality" (p. 42) or in most, uniqueness.

Some practice in the subcontinent show that the words 'fair' and 'beautiful' are synonymous (Franklin 1968; Hall 1995). Here, beauty contest winners are almost invariably fair skinned. At present, Ashikari (2005) and Chong (2005) state many non-Western women, especially from Asian communities, are resorting to

skin-whitening cosmetics or beauty regimes, wearing masks and hats, and shielding themselves outdoors with umbrellas and long gloves in order to preserve or enhance their pale complexion.

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Social Construction Theory of Reality was relevant to this study because the preference for fair skin and its subsequent usage in determining the beauty is a social construct that was enforced during the colonial times, a legacy that was reinforced during the present times through media influence and conglomerates selling skin whitening products. The Social Construction Theory creates a connection between micro and macro, by analyzing micro (images, words, actions) level to explain a macro (structures, institutions) process (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Through this study, the researcher looked into the existing dominant narrative of feminine beauty as perceived by urban Bangladeshi women and their subsequent reaction to the counter narrative of feminine beauty.

To study the reaction of the urban, women of Bangladesh towards the Meril Splash campaign, i.e. the counter narrative of feminine beauty, required an interpretive study because interpretive research methods attempt to uncover what people think or how they feel, achieving greater depth and detail of responses, and resulting in close-up descriptions that better realize the subjective nature of the phenomenon studied (Bellenger, Bernhardt, and Goldstrucker 1976; Van Maanen, Dabbs, and Faulkner 1982). These techniques have been used to gain insights into the brand attitudes of women (Kanner 1990), attitudes towards packaging aesthetics (Shapiro 1990), and attitudes towards financial services (Trachtenberg 1987). Similar papers researching on behavioral change have taken the interpretive approach, (Salwen, 1988). The aforementioned research paper investigated perceptions of media influence and support for campaign message restrictions during the 1996 presidential campaign. The study was theoretically grounded in the third-person effect approach.

Interpretive methodology has been widely applied to interdisciplinary research over recent decades because this approach seeks to understand the lived experiences of people and to establish the everyday meanings of phenomena in their lives, thoughts, and ideas (Lowenberg, 1993). The purpose of interpretive inquiry is to gain an understanding of human experience through establishing the meanings of phenomena with the intention to objectively interpret the meanings of phenomena that hide behind expressions of experience (Tzu Chi Nursing Journal, 2005; 4:4, 8-13.). Meanings of phenomenon can be established by undertaking multiple data

collections through in-depth interviews and observations and by analyzing and decoding transcriptions (texts) in order to understand the meanings residing within a phenomenon (Denzin, 2002; Koch, 1995). Hence, to understand a phenomenon and its relevant meanings, research needs to probe for meanings through accessing the meanings participants assign to the world around them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Additionally, interviews or observations generate rich descriptions of the lived experiences, and these descriptions provide substantive data for the researcher to identify main themes and key metaphors of the events and phenomena in question (Denzin, 2002; Koch, 1995). Understanding the relevant relational structure and configuration of the context also enables the researcher to have a more complete interpretation of the significance that things have for a person (Walker, 1996).

2.9.2 Conceptual framework

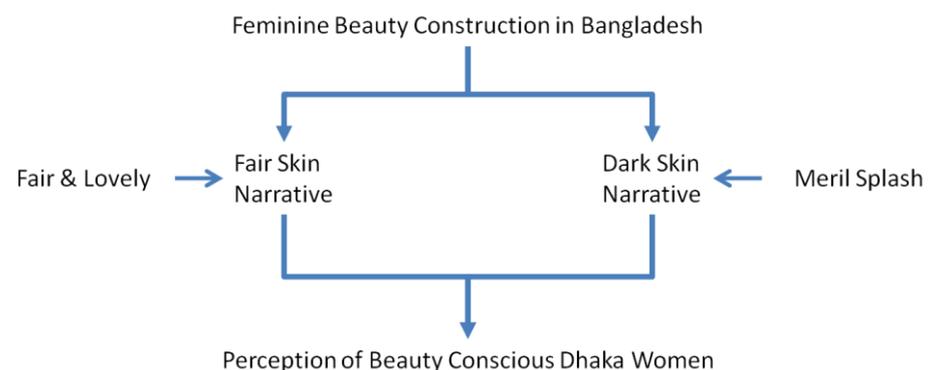


Fig 1. Conceptual framework

The construction of feminine beauty in terms of skin tone in Bangladesh can be divided into two parts; fair skin and dark skin.

Fair skin is an aspect of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty which was established during the colonial times, where fair skin was associated with power and dominance, wealth and high status. This association of fair skin to power, wealth and status eventually resulted in the establishment of the notion that fairness equals to beauty in the subcontinent, especially in India and Bangladesh, except for South India & Sri Lanka. Fair girls were naturally accepted by society to be more beautiful than darker girls. In fact, those who didn't have fair skin, ended up mimicking those who did, trying to regain self esteem by looking down upon those who do not or cannot. This effect has been stated by the Post-Colonial Theory (Said, 1994), which is a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies.

In Bangladesh, most of the people evaluate women's beauty only by their skin color and do not observe their qualities; if men and women are dark skinned, they are considered as unattractive (*ibid.*). In Bangladeshi culture, according to Arif (2004) pre-marriage program called 'Gaye-Holud' (smearing turmeric on the skin), is nothing but a symbol to brighten the skin of bride or groom (*ibid.*). This has become a symbol of prestige and enjoyment when we see a 'fair' bride or groom go through Gaye-holud program (Arif, 2004; Haq, 2003).

In Bangladesh, one of the proponents of the message 'fair is beautiful' in Bangladesh is Fair & Lovely (Islam *et al*, 2006), a brand and skin-whitening product of Unilever. Fair & Lovely's campaigns have traditionally been accepted as part of the cultural norms and practice, where fair skin is sought for. It is one of the biggest

media spenders in the country and profits for making women insecure about their skin tone, marketing its product while showing in its commercials that dark skin tone is an obstacle to progress and is the reason for not getting respect.

On the other hand, the campaign of Meril Splash is diametrically opposite to Fair & Lovely's campaigns, where Meril Splash talks about the plight of women in a society that values fairness (Islam *et al*, 2006), and focuses on the message that everyone is beautiful regardless of their skin tone. This campaign goes against the cultural belief and stands up to the established thoughts and practices. This bold campaign goes against the dominant narrative of feminine beauty across the Bangladesh, putting Meril Splash in a direct fight against Fair & Lovely. This is a unique case, as this is an emergence of a new narrative on feminine beauty in Bangladesh.

In light of the dominant narrative on feminine beauty and the emerging one in Bangladesh brought through the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash, the research paper will investigate the impact of the campaign on the attitude of urban beauty conscious females to understand the acceptance of the campaign messages, i.e., the counter narrative of feminine beauty.



CHAPTER III RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Research Design and Method

The chapter explores the research methodology undertaken to understand and study the impact of the 2014 Meril Splash campaign on the attitudes of Bangladeshi people by tackling the question whether or not the campaign was successful in associating the symbolic meaning of the campaign, i.e. the new narrative of feminine beauty, to the product, Meril Splash. A strong association will be a measure of a strong preference, i.e. attitude, among the Bangladeshi people.

Consumer behaviorists have used the concept of attitude for a variety of applied purposes. They ranged from predicting consumer choice behavior (e.g., Bass & Talarzyk, 1972; Ginter, 1974), to serving as a basis for market segmentation (e.g., Mitchell, 1974; Myers & Alpert, 1968), to use as a criterion for advertising effectiveness (e.g., Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Greene & Stock, 1966; Winter, 1973). In addition, the concept of attitude has been used as the ubiquitous inclusion as an explanatory construct in theoretical models of consumer behavior (cf. Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, 1973; Hansen, 1972; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Nicosia, 1966; Sheth & Park, 1973). To understand the attitude among consumers regarding the counter narrative of feminine beauty, an interpretive study is required.

In this context of extracting the necessary information to decode the meanings of phenomenon, in-depth interview technique was chosen as the key method to collect data for the study since an interpretative approach was adopted for the investigation. Consumer researchers have reported the use of four types of qualitative research techniques to investigate consumer attitudes: open-ended surveys, individual interviews, focus group interviews, and nominal group interviews. For the aforementioned techniques, Maykut & Morehouse (1994:46) stated that “The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people’s words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. Observation and interview data is collected by the researcher in the form of field notes and audio-taped interviews, which are later transcribed for use in data analysis.”

There are quite a number of interpretive methods (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006) to analyze the data collected through in-depth interview and focus group discussion. They are: case study analysis, category analysis, content analysis, conversational analysis, narrative analysis, general analysis, etc.

Out of the methods listed above, the research data was analyzed using general analysis and the use of matrices. A data matrix is a two dimensional tabular representation of data in which data fields can be organized by rows and columns.

The point of intersection between a row and column is a cell. Data matrices are a means of integrating large amounts of qualitative data to help develop understanding of its meaning. They can also be used for presenting data in a report, enabling readers to see how an interpretation was derived.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population of this study consisted of females between 18-25 years of age. The rationale for choosing this age range and gender is because females between the ages of 18-25 years are the largest consumer segment of Fair & Lovely, the carrier of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. These are the consumers whose beauty ideology regarding skin tone is deeply rooted in the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the attitude of these consumers regarding fair skin and the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is extremely favorable, since fair skin is their aspiration. Hence, the best result of this research can be obtained if we measure their attitude regarding the campaign of Meril Splash since the change of attitude (new narrative of feminine beauty) can be compared to their existing attitude (dominant narrative of feminine beauty).

Thus, the sample consisted of respondents who had the following criterion: One, only females were included in the study since the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is strongest among the beauty conscious women. Two, they belonged to the age range of 19-25 years since they were representative of the largest consumer base for Fair & Lovely. Three, they had to be verified users of Fair

& Lovely, which was validated by a referral system, where respondents had to recommend another respondent for inclusion in this study. Only Fair & Lovely users were used as respondents because these respondents were unwittingly the carrier of the dominant narrative, since their actions, i.e. purchase of Fair & lovely, reflected their belief in the beauty ideas as put forward through the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. Four, the respondents had to spend at least Tk. 2000 on beauty products every month, a necessity for establishing that the respondents were indeed beauty conscious women. Five, they were aware of both the campaigns of Fair & Lovely and Meril Splash. This was important as their unaided recall of the campaigns could be interpreted as to strength of their connection to the messages of the campaign.

For the scope of the study, Purposive and Snowball Sampling was used to select the respondents for the study because Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgment, selective or subjective sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is characterized by a deliberate effort to gain representative samples by including groups or typical areas in a sample. The researcher relies on his/her own judgment to select sample group members. Purposive sampling is mainly popular in qualitative studies. Purposive sampling was conducted using the criterion for selecting respondents as mentioned in the last paragraph. Snowball sampling was achieved by asking the respondents to refer other respondents who were, to the best of their knowledge, a Fair & Lovely user (which also provided validation for the inclusion of other respondents) and were willing to participate in a research that

touched a subject that many people might hesitate answering honestly to and to select the people within the locale of study, i.e. Dhaka, to minimize the efforts of travel and cost (Dawson, 2000).

For the purpose of this research, and since the research was conducted through purposive sampling, a sample size of 30 was selected.

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments

To gather the requisite data for the research, an interview guide was developed in conjunction with the supervisor, where the entire interview guide was divided into four parts that eventually addressed the problem statements and fulfilled the objectives of the study.

3.3.1 Construction of beauty in Bangladesh. The following questions were derived to establish the dominant narrative of beauty in Bangladesh in the eyes of urban Bangladeshi women:

Table 1: Questions pertaining to the establishment of the dominant narrative
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What comes to your mind when I say the word 'beauty'? 2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features? 3. Why do you think these markers are important? 4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman? 5. Do you think these markers are still used now? 6. If you had mentioned skin tone, how would you describe skin tone? What skin tone is desired in Bangladesh? 7. Why do you think fair skin is desired?

Through the use of these questions, the data gathered was imperative in establishing the dominant narrative that existed in society in the construction of beauty in Bangladesh. The questions delved first into the understanding of beauty, which is subjective for each respondent, and then, even on the basis on interpreting beauty on a subjective level, the questions narrowed down the interpretation of the dominant narrative among each respondent. The data gathered through the aforementioned questions first isolated the meaning of beauty in each respondent's eyes, then delved into the construction of beauty in the Bangladesh society in the eyes of urban Bangladeshi women, after which, the questions narrowed down the construction of beauty into the context of skin tone and its subsequent strength in the formation of the dominant narrative in Bangladesh. One of the questions, though, asked about the change in judgment of beauty in the eyes of Bangladeshi society, which sets up the platform for the acceptance of the Meril Splash campaign.

3.3.2 Plight of dark skin in Bangladesh. Following the establishment of the dominant narrative in the eyes of Bangladeshi women, the following questions listed in the table below details out the plight of dark skin in Bangladesh to further reinforce the strength of the dominant narrative in Bangladesh:

Table 2: Questions pertaining to the plight of dark skin in Bangladesh
8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?
9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?
10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?
11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?
12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks

about dark complexion?

Through the use of these questions, the strength of the dominant narrative of beauty in Bangladesh was established, which was crucial in addressing the problem statement and objectives of the study.

3.3.3 Reactions of respondents towards the Meril Splash Campaign.

After the establishment of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty in Bangladesh and its subsequent strength of existence in the perception of the respondents, the following questions was derived to understand the reactions of the respondents towards the 2014 Meril Splash Campaign:

Table 3: Questions for understanding the reactions of the respondents towards the 2014 Meril Splash Campaign
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- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash? 14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society? 15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general? 16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC [Post exposure] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Spontaneous association b. Likability: key likes and dislikes c. Main message d. Connection/ relevance with the theme e. Credibility of the theme f. Conviction of the theme |
|--|

Through the use of these questions, the strength of the reactions among respondents towards the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash was assessed, where their key likes and dislikes were discussed at the point of data gathering to assess the merit of their reaction.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process was started off by first being introduced by one of my colleagues at my office to her niece who studied in Green Herald School. I had to go to her house on the morning of February 12 to take her interview, after which, she recommended me another respondent, who she validated as a Fair & Lovely user. Then I had to visit her house on the same day to take her interview, and this went and on and on for the next two months, where each respondent I would interview would recommend someone else, who they knew to be Fair & Lovely users and someone who spends at least Tk. 2000 on beauty products. Out of the 30 respondents, 7 respondents were full time employees, so it was necessary for me to visit them at their office to get their interviews, which was not a problem as I found links in my own office that had connections to the respondents' offices. Furthermore, the interviews of the university students were mostly conducted at their homes with a few taken places at restaurants. Since I was being referred by people to other people, I did not face too much problem on gaining their trust for deriving the answers.

I had used my Dell Inspiron 2-in-1 laptop to take down the notes of the interview since I preferred the convenience of typing up the information immediately instead of later going through the same points again. This also made it more clear and more professional in the acquisition of data, and proved to be more useful than taking notes via pencil or pen.

Although some of the questions were direct, the respondents were not given the questionnaire. The questionnaire was used only for my consumption and understanding in order to guide the interview in a certain manner, and I typed up the relevant information under each of the question. The interviews themselves were conducted in a free flowing manner without the respondents knowing what the specific questions were and what they were answering to, although it was made clear at the beginning of the questionnaire about the scope of the research and the subsequent formulation of the information derived. Before the interview was conducted, each of the people who recommended me to other respondents was asked to inform the other person about my research as to acquire their consent to partake in the research.

For analyzing the data, a Case Oriented Analysis was followed. This is an understanding of social processes in a group, formal organization, community, or other collectivity that reflects accurately the standpoint of participants (Schutt, 2011).

3.5 Time Schedule

Activities	September 2015 – April 2016							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Questionnaire Survey								
In-depth Interview with respondents								
Data Analysis & Reporting								
Thesis Write-Up								
Submission								



CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Profiles of the Respondents

Out of the 30 respondents, 7 had started working full-time in the last year after graduating from various private and public universities while the rest 23 respondents are still students studying in schools and universities. The age range for the respondents was between 19-25 years of age, in keeping with the core consumer base of Fair & Lovely.

In the context of the affluence level among the respondents, which was imperative in ascertaining their claim of spending at least Tk. 2000 behind beauty products every month, the range of family income for the respondents chosen started from Tk. 30000 to Tk. 100000 and more.

To acquire a more diverse range of respondents, the respondents were chosen from all regions of Dhaka City, which included places like Old Dhaka, Dhanmondi, Banani, Gulshan, Ramna, Uttara and more.

4.2 Construct of Beauty in Bangladesh in Terms of Skin Tone

There were multiple factors mentioned by all respondents in the construct of beauty. They ranged from personality traits to physical traits, and in the context of the paper, the physical features ranged from height, weight, figure to skin tone and complexion. Majority of the respondents had mentioned that although the parameters to measure the beauty of a woman is no longer limited to just the physical markers, but rather includes personality and behavior, the basic markers for measuring beauty has still remained the same in terms of skin tone, height, weight. When probed further in the context of Bangladesh, majority of the respondents ranked 'fair skin' as one of the top three markers in the construction of beauty among women in Bangladesh.

In that line, fair skin was found to be an important attribute in the construct of feminine beauty, with 'fair skin' coming up as one of the top 5 markers among majority of the respondents. Some respondents highlighted the importance of a good complexion and did not venture as to the tone of the skin.

Matrix 1: Importance of markers in the construction of feminine beauty in Bangladesh

Markers	Construction of feminine beauty in Bangladesh
Skin	R3: Fair skin is important because it shows signs of good health of a person and more importantly, it reflects the family background/class of the person. R8: Fair skin tone, sharp features, dress up

	R10: Skin, Hair, Figure, Dress-up, Smartness R2: Fair skin, slender figure, attractive face, well-spoken, latest hair style, tall.
Eyes	R9: Hair, Smile, Eye, Height – weight, Dress-up, Skin, Gentle, Natural, Smartness
Hair	R4: Good hair is a sign of tidiness. R3: Long hair, slender figure, fair skin, good teeth, hygienic.
Personality	R14: Strong personality, Fair Skin, Attitude, Smartness, Friendliness

When delving into the reasons behind the importance of these marker and especially the importance of having ‘fair skin, respondents gave two reasons. One was that fair skin was an important beauty attribute for standing out in a country where the natives had all shades of dark skin or were brown, hence the ‘differentiation factor’ was the skin tone, which is often seen as the primary mode of judging beauty. Second reason that the respondents postulated was the fact that fair skin indicated good health and good lineage, which automatically gave the impression of good genes and good upbringing. Thus, the skin tone itself spoke about aristocracy and class, thereby being more ‘desired’ than it’s darker counterpart. According to Eric (2008), in Asian cultures, fair skin is considered an important element in constructing female beauty.

This has been validated by research, where Draelos (2002) and Phelan (2002) wrote that skin color has always been a source of fixation for mankind from all cultures where it not only represents one’s health condition or attractiveness but also his or her social status and wealth. Furthermore, in the modern age, Halprin

(1995) observed that the maidenly appearance of the extreme, slender youth, cast in a European style of beauty, has become a global standard for women of all cultures which is often “opposed to individuality” (p. 42) or in most, uniqueness.

The other markers that the respondents put forward in the construct of beauty in Bangladesh – personality, attitude, smartness, long hair, good height – are outside the jurisdiction of this research paper. But for basic understanding, skin tone is often the deciding factor for judging a woman’s beauty before the other, aforementioned attributes are explored.

4.3 Reasons for Fair Skin Preference in Bangladesh

The respondents were clear on the reasons. The biggest reason was the societal preference, which is perpetuated mainly by the older generations, where fair skin brides and wives are the pride point for a family. In fact, some men also prefer fair counterparts to have that pride of choice. As some of the respondents mentioned, a ‘fair skin’ woman is like a prized asset, since majority of the women in Bangladesh are not fair. Having or being with such a prized asset becomes a point of pride for those associated with fair women. The other factor that was put forward by the respondents was the media influence, where respondents said that the western culture is being transmitted through media and the digital world in the form of movies, YouTube videos, music videos, series, etc. played a big part in forming the definition of beauty.

Matrix 2: Reasons for Fair Skin Preference in Bangladesh

Societal Preference	<p>R1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pride for families, boyfriends, for husbands. They feel good having a fair looking wife or girlfriend. <p>R2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fair girls are viewed as ‘pretty’ girls. ▪ Fair skin is a sign of healthiness. <p>R3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fair skin is desired because the majority of people in Bangladesh are not fair. ▪ It is the same reason why brown skin is desired in European countries, where majority of the people are fair. It’s simply uncommon, hence it is desired.
Colonial Legacy	<p>R8: Obedience towards the British Empire for more than 200 years have made us pro-fair skin.</p> <p>R16: Influence of west.</p> <p>R22: Since the time of the British rule in the subcontinent, the fair skinned people have always had the upper hand over the dark skinned south Asians.</p> <p>R24: Euro centrism/colonization is one major reason</p> <p>R30: Even today, people perceive fair skinned people as elite class. So they make this association and that is why fair skin is desired.</p>
Media Influence	<p>R5: I think shadeism is just racist propaganda perpetuated by fairness cream manufacturers to make money.</p> <p>R20: Maybe because most of the celebrities are fair and people want to be like them.</p> <p>R29: Nowadays most of the people are stupid and think that white-washing a local culture makes them superior. They are more interested in Americanizing themselves.</p>

As mentioned in the literature review section of this dissertation, the global definition of beauty is the ideal European standard, i.e. tall, slender, fair, and that image of beauty, when transmitted through the media and the digital world, plays a crucial role in people’s mind. One respondent, 19 years of age and a student of

Greenherald, mentioned, “Almost 99% of Hollywood and Bollywood movies, the main two streams of movies that are availed by the Bangladeshi people, portray actresses in the role of the main protagonist who are tall, smart, good looking and fair. This trend has existed for years now, and has defined that image of a beautiful woman in the minds of the people.”

Several respondents added that fair skin is especially desired in Bangladesh because of the associated perception of power and class given to fair skin. As one of the respondents mentions, “Ever since the British rule, white, i.e. fairness has been associated with power and class. This is especially true in a culture where the natives were mostly dark. That’s why we find fairness attractive.”

It was also mentioned by quite a few of the respondents that fair skin accentuates the beauty of a woman that makes the woman stand out in the crowd. When delved into the question more, they said ‘In a country where most people are not fair, fair skinned women are automatically differentiated from the rest.’

Respondents also mentioned that fair skin is desired because of the pride and distinction associated to fair skin in a tropical country where most women are not fair while 2 respondents did not agree with the statement that fair skin is desired.

Taking the overall answers of all the respondents, when subjectively analyzed, came down to two factors. One, the combination of fair skin amplifying the beauty of a woman and having fair skin in a country where most women are not

fair is a combination that makes a woman stand out in the crowd. Adding to that combination is the historic influence, where fair skin is associated with class and status along with the media influence, where fair skin is shown as the defining and desirable marker for physical beauty. This is validated by Shankar and Subish (2007) and Leong (2006), both of whom have independently stated that the greater preference for fair or 'white' skin in both post-colonial African and Asian societies is a colonial legacy. These two factors make fair skin desirable. As one respondent aptly put: "Take any girl that you know, make two copies of her but one will be dark and one is fair, and you will see that the fair girl is being looked at. In fact, to go further down the line, a fair girl with unattractive features is more desired in our society than a dark girl with attractive features".

Furthermore, the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is a real phenomenon, and affects the psychological states of dark skinned woman from childhood through media influence and societal pressure. The real prejudice starts off in a girl's life from childhood when women belonging to older generations enforce their belief system on the younger generation through various tactics, most notably of which is 'You cannot get a good husband if you are dark'. The enforcement of the traditional thought, combined with the media influence where every form of entertainment shows fairness as the yardstick for beauty, helps brands like Fair & Lovely capture the majority market share in Bangladesh. Moreover, while the advertisements of Fair & Lovely are a prime factor in strengthening the dominant narrative of feminine beauty, all forms of advertisements and Bollywood movies are also a source of

strength for the dominant narrative of feminine beauty, where dark girls have no place. This is a subliminal force at play that shapes existing perceptions of beauty. The inspirational values that these advertisements show is that fairness can take you very far, while dark skin can only hold you back. The issue of marriage and getting attention are only the superficial level of a primordial feeling that exists, one that is known as vanity. Throughout the conductance of the interviews, almost all the respondents, while unable to articulate their thoughts into actual words, mentioned that fairness is just a pride factor that families want to possess.

4.4 Influence of Advertisements on the reinforcement of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty

All the respondents agreed that advertisements play a major role in strengthening the perception regarding the dominant narrative of feminine beauty. As several respondents put in their statement, “People generally believe the things shown on TV. The issues shown on TV are not seen as right and wrong, but are seen as part of the society.’ In their words, the fact that Fair & Lovely is showing that being dark is a disadvantage in our society is strengthening the issue even more, even if the opposite is becoming a reality.”

Matrix3: Influence of Advertisements on the construct of feminine beauty

Dark skin	<p>R3: Advertisements create the insecurity among dark skinned people when they show them as being inadequate.</p> <p>R14: Dark skin is ranked below fair skin because of the impact of advertisements. Now whether or not society is influenced is a question that remains to be answered.</p>
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	<p>R220: Advertisements are becoming more believable, especially in the portrayal of dark skin disadvantage.</p> <p>R30: Since advertisement can capture the real story, it also can play a vital role to fight against the social phenomena of dark-skin.</p>
Fair skin	<p>R11: Advertisements show fair skins girls more beautiful and successful than the dark skinned girls. This plays a major role in our society having a demeaning point of view towards dark skinned women.</p> <p>R22: As advertisements reach a majority of people over a broad range, they have a very powerful role to form public opinion and views.</p>
Beauty icons	<p>R4: Considering the effect of Indian media, where they show thin, beautiful, fair girls. Obviously, these markers are more established by the media. Most definitely.</p> <p>R17: Not just advertisements, Hindi serial, Bollywood movies, Hollywood movies. Everything shows fair skin as the main hero.</p> <p>R23: That's what advertisement does; it distorts the perception of society even if society is not distorted.</p> <p>R29: They spread the message even more and amplify the desire in people by showing fair skin models and actresses everywhere.</p>

In fact, majority of the respondents said that the advertisements play a dual role; they strengthen the cultural issues as well as spreading insecurity among the consumers, both of which has a negative impact on the psychology of a dark woman and increases the sales of the aforementioned corporate institutions. Complementing the observations, several respondents also noted how Lux, a soap brand of Unilever, also promote the dominant narrative of feminine beauty by showing fair Bollywood actresses in their advertisements in order to promote the product, which is an indirect method of what Fair & Lovely had employed to promote the dominant narrative of feminine beauty.

4.5 Consequence of being dark in Bangladesh

The contention of the Meril Splash’s campaign falls right on the bull’s eye of this issue of desiring fair skin when respondents were asked about the consequences of having dark skin, where the main three issues cited were marriage proposals, job prospects and insecurity. Respondents commented on the lines that dark girls suffered from an insecurity caused and maintained by society from childhood. This pressure is created by society mainly to highlight the possibilities for marriage into a good family. One respondent commented – “I always used to hear from my mother and grandfather that having dark skin will dwarf my chances of getting a good husband, as if my life’s sole intention is to find a good husband for myself.”

Matrix 4: Consequence of being dark in the Bangladeshi society

Second choice in marriage proposals	<p>R13: They are passed over for “good” marriage proposals, and are constantly made to feel unattractive.</p> <p>R7: The only consequence that I see happening is when girls get married, and they are compared to the groom, to the people in the family by family and older generations who make comments like, ‘Chele eto forsha, meye to kalo’.</p> <p>R12: “You are not going to get a good husband” is the most common line a dark skin girl has to hear. The irony is sometimes this is true. Everybody wants a fair skinned wife.</p>
Suffering from insecurity	<p>R31: They suffer from depression since they are not being considered as so called good looking, not getting enough attention from people regardless of their personality and potentials.</p> <p>R27: Society starts worrying about her marriage, family members tell her to apply a lot of things to get a fair skin. All these things just smash her self-respect, self confidence and force her to do whatever they said to do so.</p>

	<p>R5: Women with dark complexions are always demeaned in our society.</p> <p>R22: People consciously and subconsciously underestimate them and their actions.</p>
Marital problems	<p>R24: Dark skinned girls are sometimes harassed by their in laws just because of their skin tone.</p> <p>R8: In low class society it's a big issue. It's difficult to get a girl married if she is dark skinned. A higher amount of dowry to be paid in these cases. These girls face problem in their own houses by their own parents for being dark and unwanted. Same happens after marriage from the in laws. In higher society, the problem is less, but it still prevails like a shadow.</p>
Second choice in employment	<p>R1: I guess dark skinned women have it hard; they are the second choice in marriages, relationships, job interviews.</p> <p>R11: Even when organizations are looking for a female employee, it's not unusual if they choose a fair skinned girl over a dark skinned girl despite being more qualified.</p>
Lack of attention	<p>R1: My dark skinned friends were not treated differently in my friend circle, but they did face a lack of attention when they went to weddings.</p> <p>R4: Girls who were fair within the group, did attract more phone calls and attention, but that's true for guys even.</p> <p>R30: At the beginning they were not very welcomed in the circle. But their accomplishments and achievements made everyone to treat them well.</p>

Upon analyzing the answers of the respondents, the primary drivers of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty are women with an age of 50+ years, who take it upon themselves to drive the thought that dark skinned girls will not get good husbands. . Parents of this region encourage their daughters to use fairness products and to use turmeric on their skin as they are very much anxious of their daughter's future and their marriage (Arif, 2004: 586 and Islam *et al*, 2006). Almost all 22 respondents agreed that the issue of marriage proposals came from family members

who always took extra measure of care to ensure fair skin by suggesting the usage of fair skin and limiting time outside under the sun. In the culture of Bangladesh, having a fair bride is like winning a lottery, where fair skin bride are considered as the pride of the family. Respondents also mentioned that fair skin was an added advantage over dark skin when it came to employment, as one respondent puts it – “Companies want to put forth good looking employees to the front where there will be employee-customer interaction, and so, fair girls automatically gets an advantage due to their skin tone over dark skinned girls.”

This fact has been cited by all the full-time employed respondents, and they all agreed that at the executive level of companies, every person wants to prove their mettle. In this battle for supremacy against other employees, men and women both employ strategic tactics, but women have their physical beauty to augment the efforts. One of the best ways to augment is to look good, and women who are fair are automatically ahead of the pack. This is also validated by other research, where it has been stated fair skin is not only an ideal of Asian feminine beauty but also a sign of nobility or aristocracy (Bray, 2002, p.1), associated with better employment and marital prospects (Dadie and Petit, 2009). Fair skin does not only affect woman’s beauty but also affects her job prospects, social status, and earning potential (see Ashikari 2003; Goon and Craven, 2003; Leslie, 2004).

All 30 respondents agreed that one of the surest consequences of having dark skin is the insecurity that grows over time. The insecurity happens because of societal pressure, much of which is generated by older generations, which 17

respondents agreed to. 10 respondents agreed that the younger generations unknowingly and unwittingly maintain that pressure because of media influence, and they unknowingly and unwittingly prefer fair skinned girls that increase the insecurity among dark skinned girls even more. Wolf (1990) and Blood (2005) write that beauty standards have not only undermined women's self-worth but also pressure them to conform to the beauty practices of femininity in the attempt to emulate the ideal images of womanhood presented by media and society. The societal pressure is further augmented by media where dark skin is shown as a lower-caste and advertisements shown by Fair & Lovely puts more pressure on dark women. As one respondent put it – “When we see advertisements of Fair & Lovely, it makes me wary of such thoughts out there, and I can't help thinking that people around me are thinking that way, that I don't belong in particular situations just because I am dark.”

Furthermore, being dark creates a problem post-marriage, since the issue of skin tone and the subsequent possibility of having children who are dark makes the in-laws ask for dowry, or even threatens dark skinned women with physical abuse for more dowry, citing her skin tone. The interpretation is that, dark skin is seen as a liability in our society, in many parts of the country, and so, to cover up that liability, more dowries are demanded.

Dark skinned women also do not warrant higher attention from crowds in events such as weddings, which is the traditional place for women getting attention. This has been reflected in the statements of the respondents, where the interpretation

came out that even at weddings, where women usually dress up to their maximum level, dark skinned girls start at a disadvantage.

To cover up for this disadvantage, dark skinned girls are normally more driven to do more in order to become more. Some choose to enhance their aesthetic exterior in order to cover their skin ‘issue’, while others pick up different skills and abilities to make them feel more important and more rewarding in the eyes of their social circles. Basically, their efforts are concentrated at making sure that they have other ‘assets’ that surpasses the perceived liability of their skin tone. But a few succumbed to the peer pressure and used skin whitening products to ‘improve’ their skin tone in order to rise up the social ladder.

Matrix 5: Reaction of dark skinned people against societal treatment

Being more stylish	<p>R1: They tried to neutralize the effect by being more stylish and picking up more skills to stand out in the crowd, to make sure that they get the attention they deserve.</p> <p>R17: They would go to parlors more often to try out more styles that would make them more attractive.</p> <p>R23: They would spend more time choosing the ‘right’ colored dresses as to downplay their skin color.</p>
Picking up more skills	<p>R6: I remember one of them getting into fire spinning because she wanted to, and I quote, ‘Fatae dite chai’. Not sure if it was for her dark skin, but I have seen that my dark skinned friends had more drive to be unique, to get more attention, to stand out.</p> <p>R19: I guess because dark skinned women have it rough from birth, they have this drive to prove to people that beauty is not just about skin tone.</p>
Using skin whitening products	<p>R4: Well, they tried harder to not get ‘darker’. They used different face pack to enhance their skin.</p> <p>R14: Some used Fair & Lovely.</p>

	R29: Some tried to never go out in the sun.
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4.6 Change in the construct of feminine beauty

Majority of the respondents acknowledged the fact that while physical parameters of beauty were more before in judging women, today, more important than the physical parameters are the personality and skill set that a woman possesses that are most used in judging a woman. In other words, the importance of physical parameters is starting to negate slowly as the society's thinking has started to become more and more liberal. As one respondent mentioned – “Today, women are working at International NGOs and corporate offices. They are driving cars and riding scooters. They are earning alongside their husbands to support the progress of their individual family. Her role in the family is no longer constrained within the confines of her home and her chores. Now she has the money to hire a maid to do the chores of the household. So, physical parameters are falling in terms of its importance in judging women. Rather, her abilities and skills are now more in play”.

Matrix 6: Change in beauty markers for assessing women

Increased financial capabilities	R3: Five years back, most women were judged solely on how they looked. But now, with women having jobs, I think their ability/ career is also a part of judging a beauty. R16: Women are now contributing to the family's income, thereby having greater value than just being a housewife.
More academic qualifications	R30: Today people are shifting their mindset in judging woman based on their skin tone and height. Nowadays people

	<p>are more concerned about their education, style, smartness and confidence.</p> <p>R13: As more and more girls are getting educated, their educational qualifications matter more in society.</p> <p>R26: Today, girls are usually judged by their qualification and character, not by their beauty. People's perceptions have changed</p>
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Another respondent highlighted the issue with the comment, “5 years back when a woman was ready for marriage, her physical beauty was the sole platform for her to be judged by the groom’s family. Nowadays, her occupation and her educational background is also a factor in determining her worth.”

Adding to the thought, another respondent commented, “Even women from rural and semi-urban regions of the society are no longer becoming maids or housewives, but they are going for employment in garment factories in order to be independent. So their worth is also equated by the amount of money earned.”

Overall, most of the respondents have agreed that the parameters for beauty has changed in the last 5 years a lot, and has been attributed to their rise in educational and employment status. When asked how money earned is connected to beauty, a respondent replied, ‘A penniless but beautiful girl is beautiful before marriage, but is not beautiful when the practical side of marriage has to be dealt with. Practical side deals with paying the bills, doing the chores, taking care of the children. But a lesser beautiful but an earning woman stays beautiful for a long time to come, especially because she has the ability to support her husband in the progress of the family.’

The interpretation from the collective feedback from the respondents has made it clear that the rising living cost in Dhaka City has made women an equal income partner for the sustenance of the family, which is why, the beauty of a woman is now inclusive of her ability to support her family. In this context, the skin tone of a woman is no longer the primary driver of her beauty. Rather, the economic conditions of the urban city has negated the effect of the dominant narrative to an extent that the counter narrative of feminine beauty brought forth by the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash is making sense to the women of today. Moreover, the counter narrative of feminine beauty came to Bangladesh at a time which coincided with the rise in women empowerment in Bangladesh, which has been proven in the social indices of Bangladesh along with the rise in women employment, a fact reflected in the Statistical records of Bangladesh. That fact that women's financial freedom and her standing in society is improving has also set the setting for the acceptance of the counter narrative of feminine beauty, as the counter narrative is eradicating the existing paradigm of measuring 'beauty' on an absolute term, and is bringing forward the wave of change where equality is seen as the primary driver of assessing a woman's beauty, not just a particular range of fairness.

After all the data was analyzed, it has been seen that the parameters of beauty has been changing in the last 5 years, with the former being measured only through physical parameters, but nowadays, with the rise in women empowerment, beauty is taking on the parameters of skills and abilities.

4.7 Acceptance of the Message of the 2014 Meril Splash Campaign

All the respondents agreed that the campaign spoke of a naked truth about the society, that the issue is real. Nearly one third of the respondents commented on similar lines that the issue of dark skin, as mentioned before, is slowly receding in the urban region due to the rise in women empowerment, educational status as well as better job opportunities available for women. As one of the respondent mentioned, ‘The campaign, through the use of Rabindranath Tagore’s song, has visually portrayed the ugly truth of society without saying it in so many words.’

Matrix 7: Acceptance of the message of the 2014 Meril Splash Campaign

<p>Breaking stereotypical thoughts</p>	<p>R12: YES! This campaign tried to show how dark skinned girls are humiliated and looked down upon in our society.</p> <p>R16: It's trying to break the stereotypical image of what defines beauty.</p> <p>R14: Yes, because the campaign showed how a dark skinned girl faces neglect and insults from everybody around them. This is probably the one of the darkest aspects of our society.</p> <p>R31: In our society, fair people are considered as good looking in general. This is the unspoken truth of our society which was revealed by Meril.</p> <p>R6: Definitely. All my friends loved it, and I heard my Dad talk about this ad with my Mom. From that, I can conclude that the message is accepted by people in general.</p>
<p>A needed change for society</p>	<p>R20: Good message for some narrow minded people of the society, especially considering the changing roles of women in our society.</p> <p>R22: I think that people definitely were startled by the bold and beautiful slogan of the campaign.</p>

	<p>R30: I would say that the campaign was a much needed and much awaited lesson for our society. I accepted it. In general, people should accept it too.</p> <p>R8: It has a promise and it doesn't say anything bad about anyone rather promotes awareness against a social prejudice.</p>
Needs more time to be established	<p>R9: This campaign is accepted by me so maybe people having same mentality, may accept it. But I am not sure about others.</p> <p>R29: Acceptance can emerge but how many will truly react? I personally think it will take much longer and a lot more stereotype breakers for people to be more accepting and shed their previous 'beauty' notions.</p> <p>R15: But I don't think everyone will take this message easily, specially the old school people. But I hope this type of advertisement can change the society when done more.</p> <p>R19: I do think the society needs more time to actually implement these thoughts and get over those baseless social parameters of beauty.</p>

When the question came to whether the campaign's message was received by the general people in general or not, nearly every one of the respondents responded positively that the message was highly accepted by the general mass, or at least the people within their social circles, while 2 respondents responded that the campaign's message was not accepted by the people in their social circles, citing reasons such as people felt that this was just an advertising gimmick that took away the attention from the effort of showing a new narrative of feminine beauty. Majority of the respondents commented that the campaign was seen to impart a social message while a few of the full-time working respondents felt that while the campaign did carry a social message, the campaign was an advertising gimmick designed to differentiate and uplift the brand. The acceptance of the message is rooted in the

research of both McBryde (1999) and Grogan (2008), who believes that if women can choose to ignore the need to discipline, compare and conform to unrealistic ideals promoted by media and beauty industries, they will be able to “appreciate their unique beauty” and enhance their self-esteem. The fact that the campaign of Meril Splash is giving the new avenue of thought, i.e. the counter narrative of feminine beauty, the message is wholly received by especially the women with dark skin tone.

4.8 Reaction to the 2014 Meril Splash Campaign

Since the message of the campaign was well accepted by the respondents, and in their collective opinion, the campaign was also accepted by the people around them, it should come as no surprise that apart from the few stray comments about being an advertising gimmick, the respondents reacted to the campaign quite positively.

Matrix 8: Reaction towards the Meril Splash Campaign

New perspective on beauty	<p>R1: It showed a new angle, and showed the flaw in our thinking.</p> <p>R6: It definitely is a fresh new idea, and I like the fact that Meril Splash took a stand to show a new thought, focusing on the insecurity of dark girls, to tell them that they are as good as their fair counterpart.</p> <p>R7: it’s the first time that a Bangladeshi company took a stand in breaking the social stigma.</p> <p>R11: Very good. It showed that dark skinned women also deserve respect and are not be neglected. Dark girls can also be beautiful.</p> <p>R30: It’s marvelous. It has tried to break the stereotypical image of what defines beauty.</p>
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	<p>R31: Very good. All the models were in natural look. I like this part of the TVC. Advertising campaign should be like this, portraying real stories from our lives.</p>
360 degree effort to engage everyone	<p>R6: The TVC was followed up with digital platform for girls to share their stories.</p> <p>R30: The new campaign is definitely unique and clutter-breaking. Generated a lot of media talk using different media channels.</p> <p>R21: I think for two months, I saw this campaign on newspapers, billboards, TV and others. I think the intense exposure level was good in promoting the thought.</p>
Social catalyst	<p>R10: so the theme was very credible considering societal stance.</p> <p>R3: The campaign was well received, as in, people saw the campaign as a good social message.</p> <p>R12: A very good effort. This is the kind of campaigns can bring change to our society.</p> <p>R14: Great ad! This kind of advertisements can play a huge role in changing society's point of view regarding skin tone. The idea and the message of the ad were excellent but the making could have been more beautiful.</p> <p>R22: I think this campaign speaks about the long awaited and appropriate movement that encourages people to look beyond the outer layer of the human body and really know the real person. A person can never be judged by her skin complexion , but her wisdom and actions should make us aware of the kind of person she is. So , whatever one's skin tone might be, if she is fresh and confident , she should believe that she can conquer the world.</p> <p>I think it has tried to change the perception of dark skin. In the most cases, in our society, beautiful girls are prioritized over other girls. They always get special privileges in all aspect whether in family, college or workplace.</p>

The respondents responded positively towards the 2014 campaign of Meril Splash, citing reasons ranging from being a unique idea that has bravely uncovered an ugly aspect of society to being an idea with the power to break the prejudice towards dark skin. As one respondent put it, “In a country where Fair & Lovely unashamedly shows advertisements demeaning dark women, it’s a refreshing change to see a company trying break the existing prejudice towards dark skin.”

Another respondent said, “I know that Meril Splash is trying to sell a product by showing a new angle, but it’s a commendable effort in going against the might of Fair & Lovely.” The interviews yielded more positive comments on the campaign of Meril Splash, more notably because Meril Splash has followed up the campaign with a digital platform where women from all over the country could share their stories of situations where they faced prejudice because of their skin tone. All the respondents have mentioned that the brand has gone all out in establishing the new narrative of feminine beauty, from sponsoring drama serials during Eid that had sections commenting on the new narrative of feminine beauty to publishing articles in different newspapers and magazines. Moreover, majority of the respondents had the same view that Meril Splash, as a Bangladeshi company, did an excellent job in breaking the norms, comparing the campaign of Meril Splash to Fair & Lovely, which is viewed by the majority of the respondents as an Indian company.

With the above context in place, the campaign of Meril Splash has been a hit among the respondents, with everyone pointing out that they issue that the campaign

touched was a real issue, and the new thought or new narrative of feminine beauty that Meril Splash was pointing out did more than make the brand more popular, but made Meril Splash a more relevant brand to the general people. By tapping into the real issue, Meril Splash's campaign did not seem like a sales tactic for majority of the respondents, who acknowledged the fact that Meril Splash could have easily gone into the beauty zone of advertising, but instead chose to bring to light an unspoken aspect of perception. This effort made the respondents see the brand in a new light. Although quite a few respondents complained about the making of the TVC, with their negativity focused on Tisha, but the main message was viewed as a real fact, and therefore, was viewed quite favorably.

As a result of the findings, it can be safely concluded that the campaign of Meril Splash successfully introduced the new narrative of feminine beauty in Bangladesh and has enjoyed acceptance among the general mass. Moreover, respondents also confirmed that the new campaign of Meril Splash has made their attitude towards the brands Meril Splash more favorable as a result of some honest advertising tactic that has made the brand more relevant and significant to the consumers by not showing any fake inspirational message but has spoke of a message that has resonated highly with the audience.

This means that that the campaign of Meril Splash was successful in introducing a counter narrative of feminine beauty in Bangladesh. This success is backed by the fact that Meril Splash has seen an increase in sales, a data that was gathered from Square Toiletries. As the table shows, Meril Splash was suffering

from a decline in sales between the year 2013-2014, but after the campaign was launched, sales grew a phenomenal amount of 0.5%. 0.5% might seem small, but in terms of market share, this is a huge figure in the context of Bangladesh, where



Shahriyar Sunny

to me ▾

Fyi

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Edward Prokash Bala (Mkt-STL)" <edward@squaregroup.com>

Date: Mar 22, 2016 1:36 PM

Subject: Meril soap market share

To: "sunny.du.30@gmail.com" <sunny.du.30@gmail.com>

Cc:

Sunny, find below please.

Brand	Ton			Volume share		
	Year '13	Year '14	Year '15	Year '13	Year '14	Year '15
CAKE	46,256	49,178	52,561	100%	100%	100%
MERIL SPLASH	1,596	1,680	2,047	3.5%	3.4%	3.9%

Fig 2: Sales Figure of Meril Splash between the year 2013-2015

Meril Splash is the second brand in the list of the top soap brands in the country. The increase in sales have been directly attributed to the campaign of Meril Splash, and although no one from the company will come on record, the fact is, unless the campaign was successful in introducing a counter narrative of feminine beauty, Meril Splash would not have been enjoying this increase in market share.

4.9 Evaluation of the Television Commercial of Meril Splash Campaign

Matrix 9: Connection with the theme

Social message	<p>R1: The TVC was extremely relevant to the theme because Meril Splash had always stood for freshness, so coming out with a social message in order to instigate a fresh new way to think was perfectly in line with Meril Splash.</p> <p>R15: A good social message to break the prejudices of the society.</p>
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	R24: It's what is needed in this changing society where the roles of women have transcended from being confined to their homes to the ability of supporting their husbands financially.
New perspective on beauty	R7: The campaign does provide a refreshing view of beauty. R13: This campaign brings to mind that dark skin is not the absolute marker on beauty. R26: A though provoking new campaign, where at least, advertising is seen supporting new angle.

Matrix 10: Key Likes of the TVC

Breaking prejudices	R5: Like the idea of calling people out on their prejudices; R12: this TVC has tried to show a girl's suffering from her childhood which is caused by her dark complexion
Unique theme	R30: unique theme of the ad

Matrix 11: Key Dislikes of the TVC

Showing 'fair' Tisha	R5: The punch line is delivered by the relatively fair-complexioned Tisha R6: Disliked the fact that a dark girl like Tisha was made fair to endorse the thought.
Lack of past positioning	R9: TVC lacks credibility due to the brand's previous history with Prova and other fair skinned models

The respondents, however, were divided in their opinion of the TVC shown. More than half of the respondents responded negatively in response to the TVC, particularly towards the ending of the scene where a dark model like Tisha was shown as a fair model endorsing the new thought on the new narrative of feminine beauty. Majority of the respondents connected with the theme of the TVC, and was in agreement with the thought of the TVC in the context of our culture, and almost

all the respondents felt that the theme was extremely credible because of the aforementioned context. Although they were convinced about the credibility of the theme, the conviction of the TVC was overshadowed with the presence of Tisha at the end of the TVC, which more than half of the respondents felt, did not go well to end the TVC on establishing a new thought.

As for user persona, more than half of the respondents felt that the product was for women in general and not for models, and this product will keep you fresh and will not turn you into models, while a few of the respondents felt that the user persona of Meril Splash was an empowered woman who was fighting to break the existing prejudice towards dark skin. As one respondent effectively put it, 'To show something like that, it takes courage, and I see Meril Splash as a woman who is ahead of the pack, who believes that action is louder than words, and is a woman who is breaking narrow-minded mentalities with a powerful ideology.'

The only negative aspect of the entire campaign was on the TVC, where most respondents felt that Tisha should have been 'made' fair at the end of the TVC to endorse the message and have the last word. Other than that, everything about the TVC was viewed favorably.



CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

In this thesis, the paper has attempted to find out whether the campaign of Meril Splash was successful in popularizing the counter narrative of feminine beauty or not. The key means to finding the success of the campaign was to measure of attitude that the respondent had towards the campaign.

The thesis paper, thereby, has first determined the context within which the aforementioned campaign was operating in order to deduce the change in attitude towards the campaign, and eventually, towards the counter narrative of feminine beauty.

To do this, the paper had selected 30 women, 18-25 years of age, mostly students mixed with professionals, to study their attitude change through in-depth interviews. From the in-depth interviews, the study discovered the following key findings:

The dominant narrative of feminine beauty is transmitted by media portrayal through brands such as Fair & Lovely and Lux and enforced with societal pressure which furthermore taps into the existing cultural anchor that the younger generations are trying to move away from.

It is because of this shift that the beauty parameters in the context of a woman are including her skills and abilities, which is mainly because of the rise in women empowerment as well as increased employment prospects. Women are now becoming more and more established through their economical independence and is achieving greater status within the family and society due to the evolving nature of the societies in Bangladesh, which is getting more and more educated. Both the factors are playing the slow but perceptible erosion of the dominant narrative in the eyes of the younger generation, particularly among the urban woman.

This is the reason why the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is slowly eroding in the minds of urban, women, which is why, the campaign of Meril Splash was a tremendous hit in the country and in the minds of the people.

The campaign of Meril Splash was a tremendous hit because the campaign showed a message that was currently in its infancy in the society of Bangladesh, which is why, it resonated well and is reflected in the sales data of Meril Splash.

Apart from the making of the TVC, which had been the subject of some discomfort among some of the respondents, the majority verdict was that the campaign along with all its execution and efforts has been highly appreciated.

5.2 Conclusion

In a country like Bangladesh where basic literacy among females are steadily on the rise, the fact that the campaign of Meril Splash has been appreciated means that the change in attitude will slowly propagate in the semi-urban and rural region because the cultural context is also changing with the rise in women empowerment and job opportunity.

In this respect, the paper has concluded that the campaign was successful in popularizing the counter narrative of feminine beauty in Bangladesh. Although the dominant narrative of feminine beauty is still going strong and will remain strong for a number of years to come, the fact that the counter narrative has been introduced and popularized means that the counter narrative will be the inception for the eroding of the dominant narrative of feminine beauty.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are given by the author:

- A. To open the option for using models having dark skin for advertisements.

With the findings of the research, the advertising industry can be more sensitive towards the growing cultural shift that is occurring amongst women in light of the dominant narrative and the context of the counter narrative. By enlightening us on the effect, my research can hopefully

make both companies and advertisers more sensitive towards the psychology of women, by endeavoring to make realistic ads that target specific problems instead of a general weakness. Also, the findings of the research can uncover insights and truths amongst women that can help advertisers derive communication that makes women look good, instead of injecting security through mass advertisement.

- B. Enable both companies and advertisers to be more sensitive towards the psychology of women by endeavoring to make realistic ads that target specific problems instead of a general weakness
- C. Enlighten the media industry to omit 'fairness' out of the equation when it comes to recruiting people for modeling, anchoring and acting, among others. Such a filter have often rejected worthy candidates in the face of complete ignorance. Without this filter, quality personnel can finally have a fair shot for spots normally designated for fair girls. This can only increase the quality of media outputs, which if s far cry from the quality that exists today in Bangladesh.
- D. Future researchers can use this research paper to understand the growing change in mentality of women in light of their increased ability to support their family and the rise of their social statuses.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Respondent Profiles

Respondent #	Age	Occupation	Family Income	Location
1	24	Executive, Always On Network	Tk. 50000+	Rampura
2	23	Model, Student, IUB	Tk. 130000+	Gulshan Avenue
3	20	Student, UIU	Tk. 70000+	Dhanmondi
4	23	Management Trainee, Energypac	Tk. 30000+	North Badda
5	19	Student, AIUB	Tk. 100000+	Mohammadpur
6	24	Executive, MTB Bank	Tk. 70000+	Bailyroad
7	20	Student, East West University	Tk. 80000+	Uttara
8	23	Student, Stamford University	Tk. 60000+	Shantinagar
9	19	Student, Green Herald	Tk. 60000+	Mohammadpur
10	24	Brand Executive, Dhanshiri	Tk. 70000+	Baridhara DOHS
11	25	Tele Caller, Banglalink	Tk. 70000+	Mirpur
12	22	Student, Dhaka City College	Tk. 60000+	Dhanmondi
13	24	Student, University of Asia Pacific	Tk. 80000+	Mirpur
14	24	Student, ACCA	Tk. 60000	Badda
15	21	Student, Stamford University	Tk. 100000+	Baily Road
16	25	Chartered Accountant	Tk. 90000+	Moghbazar
17	22	Student, Dhaka	Tk.	Tejgaon

		Commerce College	60000+	
18	24	Student, National University	Tk. 90000+	Mirpur
19	23	Student, BUBT	Tk. 70000+	Agargaon
20	19	Student, Dhaka City College	Tk. 90000+	Azimpur
21	23	Student, AIUB	Tk. 80000+	Azimpur
22	22	Student, Mirpur Bangla College	Tk. 80000+	Mirpur
23	25	Customer Care Representative, Doze Internet	Tk. 70000+	Mirpur
24	25	Student, Dhaka University	Tk. 50000+	Wari
25	25	Student, National University	Tk. 60000+	Mirpur
26	24	Student, Independent University Bangladesh	Tk. 90000+	Kallyanpur
27	23	Student, AIUB	Tk. 70000+	Rampura
28	24	Student, Prime University	Tk. 60000	Ibrahimpur
29	23	Student, BUBT	Tk. 70000+	Rayerbazaar
30	20	Student, East West University	Tk. 100000+	Uttara
31	23	Student, BRAC University	Tk. 90000+	Rampura
30	23	Student, BRAC University	Tk. 100000+	Mohakhali

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Respondent # 1

Date: 19th February, 2016 | Gulshan 1 Office | 1pm

Name : Leela Hamid
Age : 24
Occupation : Executive, Always On Network
Family Income : Tk. 50000+
Location : Rampura

1. What comes to your mind when I say the word ‘beauty’?

Green field, mother, Katrina Kaif

2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features?

Beautiful face, healthy hair, tall, fair skin, nice smile.

3. Why do you think these markers are important?

Because these are the markers by which we categorize ‘beautiful’ women. And yes, you will see these markers at play when families judge future brides for their families. You will hear comments like ‘Oh she is fat’ or ‘she is dark’ from elderly people.

4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman?

Most definitely. I think these markers were at play not just 5 years back, but for a long time.

5. Do you think these markers are still used now?

Of course. These markers are more used now because of media, and the kind of elements they portray.

6. Which skin tone is desired in Bangladesh?

Obviously, fair skin is desired.

7. Why do you think fair skin is desired?

Because it’s a pride for families, for boyfriends, for husbands. They feel good having a fair looking wife or girlfriend. Because fair girls always get more attention from everyone.

8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?

My dark skinned friends were not treated differently in the my friend circle, but they did face a lack of attention when they went to weddings. That's something I had always noticed because the fair girls always got more attention.

9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?

They tried to neutralize the effect by being more stylish and picking up more skills to stand out in the crowd, to make sure that they get the attention they deserve. I remember one of them getting into fire spinning because she wanted to, and I quote, 'Fatae dite chai'. Not sure if it was for her dark skin, but I have seen that my dark skinned friends had more drive to be unique, to get more attention, to stand out.

10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?

I guess dark skinned women have it hard; they are the second choice in marriages, relationships, job interviews.

11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?

Of course. All my life, I have seen fair people making a good first impression. It's an advantage that dark skinned people simply do not have.

12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks about dark complexion?

Yes. Advertisements show dark people as being victims of society.

13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash?

I think it was a very good campaign. It showed a new angle, and showed the flaw in our thinking. I loved it.

14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society?

Yes they did.

15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general?

Most definitely. Everyone in our friend circle loved it. It was really talked about.

16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC (Post exposure)

a. Spontaneous association

Freshness, Beautiful, Dark is beautiful too

b. Likability: key likes and dislikes

Loved the social message. Did not like Tisha making an appearance in the end, because she is not fair, but was made to look fair.

c. Main message

A fresh way to look at beauty.

d. Connection/ relevance with the theme

The TVC was extremely relevant to the theme because Meril Splash had always stood for freshness, so coming out with a social message in order to instigate a fresh new way to think was perfectly in line with Meril Splash.

e. Credibility of the theme

I thought it was very credible. The TVC was followed up with digital platform for girls to share their stories, so the theme was very credible considering societal stance.

f. Conviction of the theme

It was very convincing. Meril Splash followed it up with lots of PR.

Respondent # 2
Date: 18th March, 2016 | Banani KFC | 9am

Name : Sabrina Ahmad
Age : 19
Occupation : Student, AIUB
Family Income : Tk. 100000+
Location : Mohammadpur

1. What comes to your mind when I say the word ‘beauty’?

There are many different things I think of when I think of the word “beauty.” Of course the beauty in someone’s physique is easy to spot but for me, beauty is nature itself: the way a butterfly flutters about the flowers, or waves crashing against a shoreline. Beauty also comes out in baby’s smiles and a delicious home cooked meal. So, for me, beauty is like a tree with many branches extending into several different directions.

2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features?

As I mentioned earlier, beauty doesn’t have to be related to the physical attributes only. The fact is I’m looking for something more in depth than that. A formula for physical beauty might be cut the deal for other men, but it’s not my cup of tea. For me though the markers would be: her level of smartness, the way she carries herself, and the way she talks.

I do appreciate a nice smile, a good height, and good skin, though.

3. Why do you think these markers are important?

Because physical attributes are not something that you can take for granted. It will fade, as the person grows older. So, after a while the only thing there will be is her IQ. When all else fades, she will still be able to communicate with you, make you laugh and be a wonderful companion.

4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman?

I would like to believe the wise ones always referred to these attributes since the dawn of time. Good skin and hair, however, has definitely always been popular

5. Do you think these markers are still used now?

As I said, wise ones always referred to these attributes. Right now, physical “beauty” is being redefined to include a wide spectrum of looks. From skinny to fat, from light to dark, young and old, every group is beautiful.

6. Which skin tone is desired in Bangladesh?

I didn't mention skin tone. There should not be a "desired" skin tone, if one is talking about complexion. However, if I must answer, a desired skin tone is an even one, without patches or discoloration (such as scars and bruises).

7. Why do you think fair skin is desired?

Black or white, we are all humans and hence we all should be desired. I think shadeism is just racist propaganda perpetuated by fairness cream manufacturers to make money. There is no real logic to wanting skin of a particular colour.

8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?

They are all treated equally. As they should be.

9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?

They were disgusted by way society reacts against them but now, they are beyond the point where it used to bother them at all. I think at some point we all outgrow our childish stupidity.

10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?

Women with dark complexions are always demeaned in our society. They are passed over for "good" marriage proposals, and are constantly made to feel unattractive.

11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?

Yes, absolutely!

12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks about dark complexion?

Yes, advertisements are always first ones to demean people with darker complexions. Media messages do play a role in shaping opinions; however, the extent depends on the consumers' childhood experiences and education level

13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash?

Well-intentioned, but not well executed

14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society?

I'm not sure what "naked truth" even means. It does highlight some social attitudes

15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general?

I have no real basis for judging, but I've seen mixed reviews by people I've encountered

16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC (Post exposure)

- a. **Spontaneous association:** How shadeism is connected with soap, is not immediately clear, so not an association that comes quickly to mind.
- b. **Likability: key likes and dislikes:** Like the idea of calling people out on their prejudices; don't like that this activism is undercut by the crudeness of commercialism
- c. **Main message:** The need for a fresh mindset. And apparently freshness=Meril
- d. **Connection/ relevance with the theme:** Very tenuous
- e. **Credibility of the theme:** The punchline is delivered by the relatively fair-complexioned Tisha, so not very credible.
- f. **Conviction of the theme:** Undercut by the selling point
- g. **User persona of Meril Splash and perceived difference from self:** The user persona of Meril Splash seems to think that it's time to move away from shadeism. For me, even that argument is backdated

Respondent # 3**Date: 12th February, 2016 | Mohammadpur Home | 9am**

Name : Farhana Shaan
Age : 19
Occupation : Student, Green Herald
Family Income : Tk. 60000+
Location : Mohammadpur

1. What comes to your mind when I say the word ‘beauty’?

Beauty stands for smartness, fashion sense and definitely skin complexion.

2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features?

Hair, Smile, Eye, Height – weight, Dress-up, Skin, Gentle, Natural, Smartness

3. Why do you think these markers are important?

Because these markers are used to determine how beautiful a girl is.

4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman?

These are timeless markers of beauty. But some markers like voice and gestures are replaced by smartness and dress-up. But there are few markers which are constant like Hair, Eye, and Skin etc.

5. Do you think these markers are still used now?

Beauty markers are universal. These are used for years. It doesn't matter which markers are more important. The importance varies from person to person.

6. Which skin tone is desired in Bangladesh?

It is one of the important markers for me. To be honest, people call a woman beautiful by noticing fairer skin tones. So, definitely I prefer a fairer skin tone.

7. Do you think fair skin is desired?

Because people gives more value to external beauty of a woman. And fair skin is always attractive.

8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?

I don't care whether my friend is dark skinned or not as long as she is well-mannered and gentle.

9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?

Some are treated nicely, some are not. It depends not only on their skin complexion but also their behavior. I don't have a fair skin too. I had never faced any negative situation. But if I had to face, I would definitely opposed the reaction.

10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?

Sometimes in our society they are treated as ugly and specially, in time of marriage proposals, they are ignored! They usually get less attention from the people.

11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?

Never. This is not noticed in case of men. I have my own observation, as women are considered as the representatives of beauty, they are expected to be fair-skinned.

12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks about dark complexion?

Yes. Advertising is a strong support for social awareness so it can help. Advertisement will trigger people's thought about this issue. People might not consider this fact before, but after the advertisement published, eventually they would understand the message of it.

13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash?

It's a nice campaign with a nice concept. Film making of Farooki is also exceptional.

14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society?

Yes it did.

15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general?

This campaign is accepted by me so maybe people having same mentality, may accept it. But I am not sure about others. May be it will not be accepted by the most of the middle class people in our country, since they are educated enough to not harbor such mentality or favoritism towards fair skin.

16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC (Post exposure)

a. Spontaneous association

Black and White by Michael Jackson

b. Likability: key likes and dislikes

Liked the concept. Did not like the execution because they did not show the plight of dark girls.

c. Main message

Don't make skin tone a marker of beauty.

d. Connection/ relevance with the theme

The theme is well connected with the film.

e. Credibility of the theme

Poorly portrayed and lacks credibility due to the brand's previous history with Prova and other fair skinned models.

f. Conviction of the theme

Freshness is the key to unlock beauty.

Respondent # 4**Date: 27th February, 2016 | Dhanmondi Home | 10am**

Name : Fahmina Fahmy
Age : 22
Occupation : Student, Dhaka City College
Family Income : Tk. 60000+
Location : Dhanmondi

1. What comes to your mind when I say the word ‘beauty’?

Nature.

2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features?

Jolly mind, broad minded, nice smile, straight silky hair

3. Why do you think these markers are important?

These are markers of a good person.

4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman?

Yes. A good personality has always been valued.

5. Do you think these markers are still used now?

Yes. Although these markers are used now, physical beauty still comes first while judging a woman.

6. Which skin tone is desired in Bangladesh?

How much bright or dark the color of one’s skin is his/her skin tone. Everybody wants to a bright skin tone.

7. Why do you think fair skin is desired?

Bright skin tone is the number one marker of a beautiful woman in our society. Everybody admires a fair complexioned girl no matter who she is.

8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?

I don’t treat my dark skinned friends specially. A friend is a friend no matter who she is, where she’s from or whatever her skin tone is.

9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?

Some of my dark skinned friends seem to be frustrated sometimes with their skin tone. It's not that they hate their skin tone, it's just people around them often make fun of them and say hateful things to them. I have seen a couple my dark skinned friends wishing for fair skin just to be treated right.

10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?

“You are not going to get a good husband” is the most common line a dark skin girl has to hear. The irony is sometimes this is true. Everybody wants a fair skinned wife. Dark skinned girls are sometimes harassed by their in laws just because of their skin tone. Even when organizations are looking for a female employee, it's not unusual if they choose a fair skinned girl over a dark skinned girl despite being more qualified.

11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?

Women are the most sufferers due to skin tone. Men are sometimes teased or made fun of for having a dark complexion but it cannot be classified as suffering.

12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks about dark complexion?

Most of the beauty product advertisements show that having fair skin makes you attractive, makes you successful, gives you advantages etc. This is what makes people look down upon dark skinned girls. Advertisements should not demean dark skinned girls to sell their products. Advertisements should raise awareness and teach people that judging people by their skin is wrong.

13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash?

A very good effort. This is the kind of campaigns can bring change to our society.

14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society?

YES! This campaign tried to show how dark skinned girls are humiliated and looked down upon in our society.

15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general?

Not really. Fair skinned girls of our society feel superior to the dark skinned girls. They do not want the dark skinned girls to be considered beautiful. Our society is responsible for this mindset of the fair skinned girls.

16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC (Post exposure)**a. Spontaneous association**

True words.

b. Likability: key likes and dislikes

likes: this tvc has tried to show a girl's suffering from her childhood which is caused by her dark complexion. dislike: none.

c. Main message

Don't neglect dark skinned girls, don't humiliate dark skinned girls. They are beautiful too. Just give up your age old belief 'only fair skinned girls are beautiful'. Change your thinking, think fresh.

d. Connection/ relevance with the theme

The theme is well connected to the message.

e. Credibility of the theme

Good. But I have seen people who didn't take the theme seriously because its an advertisement of a beauty soap.

f. Conviction of the theme

Not compelling enough.

Respondent # 5
Date: 25th March, 2016 | Uttara Home | 9am

Name : Sanjida Tasnim
Age : 20
Occupation : Student, East West University
Family Income : Tk. 100000+
Location : Uttara

1. What comes to your mind when I say the word ‘beauty’?

Baby with a mother

2. What are the markers of a beautiful woman, i.e. what are the features that makes her beautiful? Rank the features?

Humility, confidence, intelligence

3. Why do you think these markers are important?

Women are the symbol of beauty. And these markers define beauty so are important.

4. Do you think these markers were used 5 years back to judge the beauty of a woman?

Not really. Beauty markers have changed depending upon the change in people’s perception.

5. Do you think these markers are still used now?

Yes. Nowadays, people are more into judging women based on these markers.

6. If you think skin tone is one of the markers of a beautiful woman, how would you describe skin tone? What skin tone is desired?

Skin tone is just a feature, like eyes or nails. It cannot be a beauty marker. Beauty stands for the perfect combination of outlook and personality.

7. Why do you think fair skin is desired?

Because British ruled over this region and fair skinned people were powerful at that time. Even today, people perceive fair skinned people as elite class. So they make this association and that is why fair skin is desired.

8. How were your dark skinned friends treated within your friend circle?

There's no difference. They are treated as the fair skinned friends are treated. Mostly, they are treated based on their attitude and gesture not skin tone.

9. How your dark skinned friends react against the treatment of the society because of their skin tone?

They don't react, usually. They are better off not reacting and giving this issue a more focus.

10. What are the consequences for women for having dark complexion?

Theoretically, the consequences are same as fair skinned women. Women are human being, they should face consequences for their actions not for their skin tone. But practically, they suffer from inferior complex because of social avoidance, less opportunities and less appreciation.

11. Do you think men and women both suffer due to their complexion?

This is a male-dominated society. And in reality, men are not weaker than women. So they don't have to suffer due to their complexion.

12. Do you think advertisements have any role to play in the way society thinks about dark complexion?

Of course. Our advertisements are becoming more believable. Even if they are fake, they don't seem like. Because nowadays advertisement can capture the real story. So it also can play a vital role to fight against the social phenomena of dark-skin.

13. What do you think about the new campaign of Meril Splash?

It's marvelous. It has tried to break the stereotypical image of what defines beauty.

14. Do you think the campaign's message spoke about a naked truth about the society?

Yes, definitely. I would say it was much needed. It gave our society a lesson.

15. Do you think the campaign's message is accepted by people in general?

I accepted it. In general, people should accept it too. It has a promise and it doesn't say anything bad about anyone rather promotes awareness against a social prejudice.

16. TVC Evaluation: Meril Splash TVC (Post exposure)

- a. **Spontaneous association:** Krishnokoli by Rabindranath Tagore

- b. **Likability:** likes: social awareness. Dislikes: limited visibility of this campaign
- c. **Main message:** Beauty stands for freshness
- d. **Connection/ relevance with the theme:** Portrays real situations.
- e. **Credibility of the theme:** Very convincing
- f. **Conviction of the theme:** Absolute beauty
- g. **User persona of Meril Splash and perceived difference from self:** Soap for women, not for models.