

SELLING (IN)EQUALITY

The Case of Colourism and Marketing Practices in South-East Asia

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“Are marketing practices and colourism interlinked in South-East Asia, and if so, what are the dynamics and implications of this link?”

PROBLEM

COLOURISM

Higher value is placed on lighter skin, which creates a hierarchy where fairer skins are perceived as more prestigious and powerful (Gilboa & Marlatte, 2017)



S-E Asia has the Highest Skin Tone Bias Globally (Chen & Francis-Tan, 2022)

MARKETING

87%

Of Beauty Ads Do Not Feature Darker Skin Tones (EYECUE LLC, 2020)

2nd

Asia Pacific: Region with 2nd Highest Ad Spend Globally (Navarro, 2023)

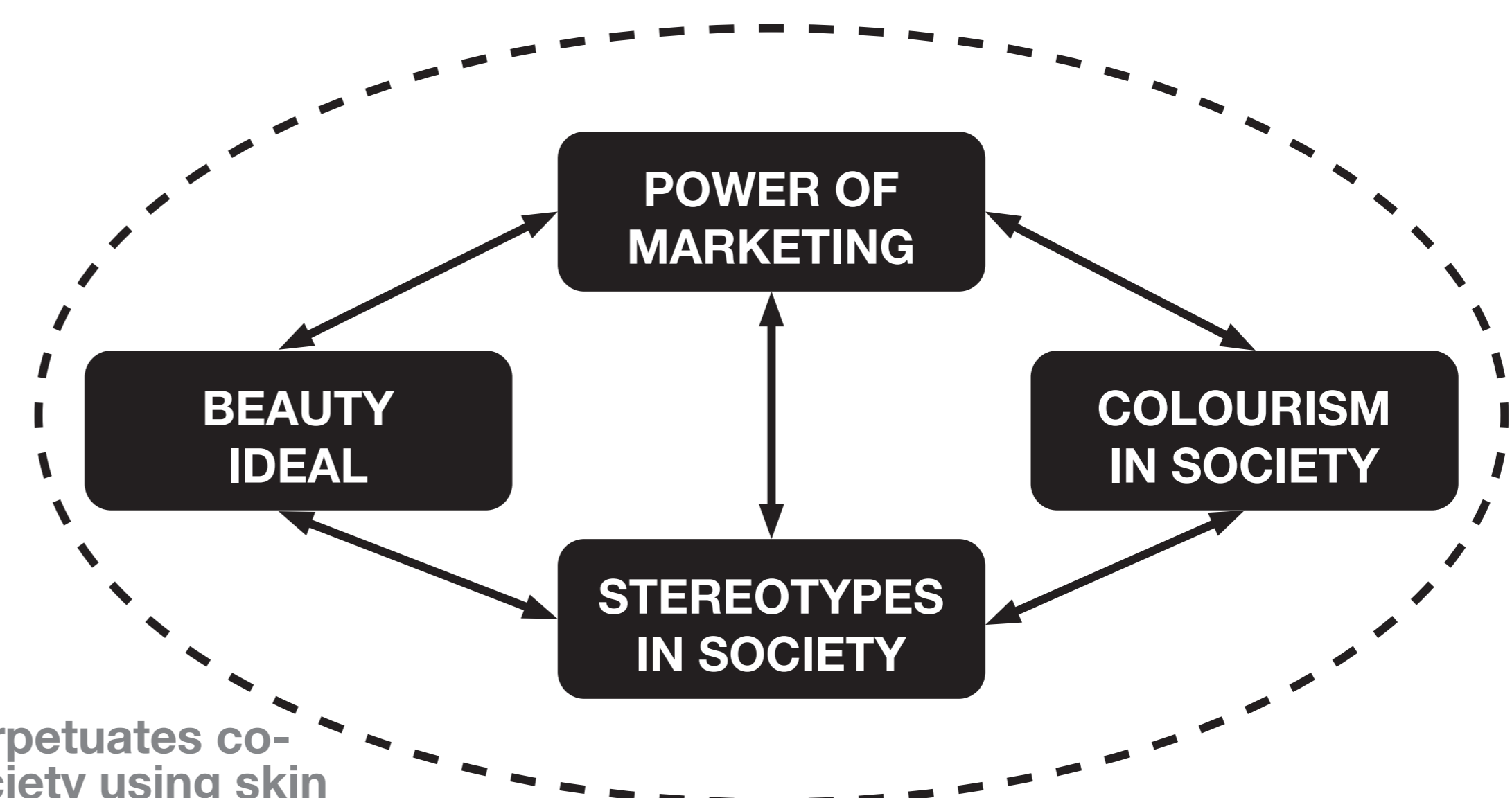
METHODS

Sequential Qualitative Mixed Methods Design

Narrative Literature Review

Semi-Structured Interviews

RESULTS



Marketing perpetuates colourism in society using skin tone stereotypes and by promoting the fair skin beauty ideal

MOTIVATIONS FOR SKIN WHITENING USE

This results in enhanced motivations for skin whitening use, most importantly celebrity endorsement and idealisation of prospects

SKIN WHITENING CULTURE

This leads to a culture in which skin whitening is pervasive and omnipresent

BARRIERS VS. FACILITATORS

DESIRED CHANGES

CONCLUSION

YES Marketing perpetuates colourism in South-East Asia through its potential to shape views and the ubiquity of skin tone stereotypes in advertisements.

This results in enhanced motivations for skin whitening & a pervasive skin whitening culture which has important implications in the form of barriers vs facilitators and desired changes.

IMPLICATIONS

- Price as Possible Barrier to Skin Whitening Use
- Education Might Trigger Change
- More Corporate Social Responsibility Desired

References:

- Chen, J.M., & Francis-Tan, A. (2022). Setting the Tone: An Investigation into Skin Color Bias in Asia. *Race and Social Problems*, 14, 150-169. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-021-09329-0> (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-021-09329-0>)
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- Navarro, J. G. (2023). Global ad spend 2000-2024, by region. Statista.