

Female Endorsers in TV Commercial Advertisements: Men's Perspectives on Physical Appearance and Personhood

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ABSTRACT

At the height of female-endorsed liquor commercials in Philippine television gave birth to a local study in Northern Samar, Philippines to assess men's perspectives on the physical appearance and personhood of female endorsers for liquor commercials advertisements in Philippine television.

This descriptive-research involved 131 research participants, composed of professional and skilled workers, students, and out-of-school youths who are exposed to local TV commercial advertisements of liquors endorsed by female models.

Data revealed the "fair" perception of the male-respondents on the physical appearance and personhood of the female endorsers. Although beautiful in their own individualities, but based on the perspectives of the male-respondents the female endorsers neither surpassed nor fitted-in with their perceived standards of beauty ideals.

KEYWORDS: *female endorsers, TV commercial advertisements, beauty ideals, men's perspectives, physical appearance, personhood*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Commercial advertisements play a critical role in the people's self-image by informing, reflecting, reinforcing, and persuading what the public will consider to be beautiful or attractive. They invest on "physical attractiveness" as this is an ultimate condiment to influence people's buying behavior. At times female bodies are revealed to meet externally the perceived visions of beauty. The images used in advertisements are seen as representing the "ideal", and therefore impact on the self-images of the audience (Grau, Roselli and Taylor, 2007).

Females represent a large consumer group and the majority of products are advertised to attract their attention (Hung, Li & Belk, 2007). Women's body has been constantly used to sell consumer products in all forms of advertisements across media-channels. Advertisers attempt to motivate consumers to purchase by linking their products with consumer needs for sexual intimacy (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003).

It can be noted that from the perspective of marketers and advertisers, gender is a primary segmentation variable in developing marketing strategies and defining target groups (An and Kim 2007; Milner and Collins 2000). It can be attributed to the accounts that historically the media has had strong ties with social behaviors, and research shows that the media affects behaviors as much as behaviors influence the media (Grube 2004; Jernigan and O'Hara 2004). As in the case of advertisements which often have the aim of embedding products into people's daily lives (Jernigan and

O'Hara 2004; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005), thus making advertisements an important part of each one's learned behaviors and socialization (Grube 2004; Krupka and Vener 1992; Law 1997).

The Philippines has its fair share of using women as endorsers for liquor commercial advertisements in all media platforms and outlets. Hence, ideal beauty has also been defined by the Philippine media. It is but timely, however, to unlock if the product consumers share the same ideals of beauty with that of the mass media.

Much had been scholarly inquired on media stereotypes on women. This research finds the premise to unfold an attempt to assess men's perspectives on the physical appearance and personhood of female endorsers of liquor commercials advertisements in Philippine television. It also sought to figure out their perceived-standards of beauty ideals.

2. Objectives

This study shed light on the hereto enumerated objectives:

1. determined the perspectives of the male-respondents on the physical appearance of female endorsers;
2. figured out the perceived standards of the male-respondents for female endorsers of liquor products; and
3. identified the viewpoints of the male-respondents on the personhood of the female endorsers.

3. Review of Literature

Advertising is known for its endemic power to persuade, manipulate, and shape behavior. It makes use of various techniques, tools, and strategies just to win consumer's consumerism. Advertisers have a short amount of time to make an impression; thus, they prey on cognitive short-cuts used by individuals (Davis, 2003).

Historical accounts on advertising confirm that since 1970s, sexual images in advertising have become much more overt and both male and female models have been increasingly shown wearing less clothing (Soley and Reid, 1988; Plous and Neptune, 1997; Jones et al., 1998; Reichert et al., 1999). Considering the proliferation of sexual appeals in advertising, it is surprising that attention actually increased (Judd and Alexander, 1983).

Oftentimes, media viewers would associate their personal acceptance of beauty based on how the latter is defined and portray by the media. Cusumano and Thompson (1997, 2000) designed a scale to measure dimensions of media influence on body image perception called the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS). The scale identifies three dimensions: (1) the *awareness* that the media promotes the body ideal, (2) the perceiver's *internalization* of this ideal, and (3) the perception that the media is *pressuring one to adopt* the ideal.

4. Methodology

This descriptive research was conducted in 2006-2007 in Catarman, the capital town of Northern Samar, Philippines.

Purposive sampling was employed to determine the 131 research participants – which involved professional and skilled workers, students, and out-of-school youths who are exposed to local TV commercial advertisements of liquors endorsed by female models.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1 Perceptions on the Physical Appearance of Female Endorsers

Body Parts	Weighted Mean	Perception
Skin	2.50	Favorable
Hair	2.45	Fair
Face	2.43	Fair
Legs	2.40	Fair
Body	2.33	Fair
Butt	2.23	Fair
Shoulder	2.23	Fair
Breast	2.20	Fair
Hips	2.20	Fair
Waist	2.20	Fair
Over-all	2.30	Fair

Table 1 presents the data on the perceptions of the male-respondents on the physical appearance of the female endorsers of liquors advertised in Philippine local television.

It can be gleaned from the table that with a total weighted mean (TWM) of 2.30, the female endorsers' physical appearance was generally perceived as "fair".

Among the physical attributes, only the skin, 2.50 was perceived favorably. All the other attributes, hair (2.45), face (2.43), legs (2.40), body (2.33), butt and shoulder (2.23), and breasts, hips, and waist (2.20) were perceived "fairly".

It can be inferred that the male respondents were not that fully satisfied with the physical appearance of the female

endorsers. Hence, they possess a very high standard of "physical beauty". Hence, the findings do not show support with Grau, Roselli, and Taylor's (2007) conformation that the images used in advertisements are seen as representing the "ideal". Reichert and Ramirez (2000) argued that sexual appeals in advertising can depend on physical features and physical attractiveness, thus, the endorsers of liquors under study were not that sexually appealing.

The data divulged that the endorsers' hips and waists along with the breasts got the lowest weighted mean of 2.20 when they are considered to be the highly attractive parts in women's body by Wass, Waldenstrom, Rossner, & Hellberg (1997) and Zaadstra *et al.*, (1993).

Table 2: Perceived Standards of the Male-respondents for Female Endorsers of Liquor Products

Standard	Frequency	Rank
Natural / Fair attributes	131	1
Proportionate Body Parts	66	2
Simple Body	37	3
Shiny hair	31	4
Flawless	25	5.5
Fatty/Healthy	25	5.5
Long-legged	23	7
Perfect Posture	21	8
Motherly Body Parts	20	9
Cute	19	10

** Multiple responses*

Generally, the male-respondents have set a very ideal standard of beauty for female endorsers of liquors which were not met by the endorsers under study. This goes along with the claims of Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, and Brownell, (2003) that although media represent appearance ideals as achievable, they are rather unrealistic to achieve in reality. On the other hand, it contrasts from the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS) designed by Cusumano and Thompson (1997, 2000) where the scale identifies three (3) dimensions: (1) the *awareness* that the media promotes the body ideal, (2) the perceiver's *internalization* of this ideal, and (3) the perception that the media is *pressuring one to adopt* the ideal.

As shown in Table 2, the male-respondents considered the female endorsers' physical attributes as natural/fair (33). This supports their fair perceptions on the physical appearance of the female endorsers as stipulated in Table 1. They do not exactly find the endorsers as having "perfect posture" as 21 said so. On the one hand, half (66), considered their body parts as proportionate. Other common observations they arrived at were: simple body and morena-type-of-skin (31), flawless and fatty/healthy (25), long-legged (23), perfect posture (21), and motherly body parts (20).

The height standard of the male-respondents for female endorsers resonate the tallness criterion, of having long legs, as a central feature of the ideal body shape that is promoted in popular media (Dittmar, Lloyd, Dugan, Halliwell, Jacobs, & Cramer, 2000).

The data find support in the study of Tove'e, Reinhardt, Emery, & Cornelissen (1998) and Tove'e *et al* (1999) that the significant predictors of female attractiveness are weight scaled for height, hence, the male-respondents considered the endorsers as having natural/fair attributes and simple body.

Table 3: Viewpoints of the Male-respondents on the Personhood of the Female Endorsers

Statement	Weighted Mean	Perception
Possess strong personalities.	2.5	Favorable
With bad family background.	2.4	Fair
Have low educational background.	2.4	Fair
Have low social standing.	2.3	Fair
Worthy of love, care and respect.	2.3	Fair
Worthy of criticisms.	2.2	Fair
Co-equal of men.	2.2	Fair
Sexually-experienced.	2.1	Fair
Not actually needed in the TV commercials ads that cater to men.	1.8	Fair
Their seductive appearances in TV commercial ads for liquors are actually contrary to their real personalities.	1.8	Fair
Total Weighted Mean	2.2	Fair

Table 3 presents the viewpoints of the male-respondents on the personhood of the female endorsers. With a total weighted mean of 2.2, the respondents perceived fairly the latter.

On top of the viewpoint-roster, the male-respondents perceived favorably that the endorsers appearing in liquor TV commercials possess strong personalities (2.5). Thus, this data deviates from the claim of Meyers-Levy (1988) that women in general have been described as weak, nurturing, dependent, indecisive, and emotional.

On the other hand, the male-respondents fairly perceived that the female endorsers: have bad family background (2.4); have low educational background (2.4); have low social standing (2.3); worthy of love, care, and respect (2.3); worthy of criticisms (2.2); co-equal of men (2.2); sexually-experienced (2.1); not actually needed in the TV commercial advertisements that cater to men (1.8); and their seductive appearances in TV commercial ads for liquors are actually contrary to their real personalities (1.8). It can be deduced from the findings that despite the sexy appearances of the female endorsers, the male-respondents still value their womanity – to be valued, respected, and cared for.

The fair perception of the male-respondents on the female endorsers as co-equal of men is in congruence with the hopes of MacKay and Covell (1997) for advertisers to create and perpetuate gender stereotypes, which may erode gender equality and harm society at large. On the other hand, the data show no support with the accounts of Lindner (2004) that increasing sexuality, degrading, submissive and objectified portrayal of women led back to inequality between the genders.

Conclusions

This study banked on its premium to assess men's perspectives on the physical appearance and personhood of female endorsers of liquor commercials advertisements in Philippine television.

This study revealed the "fair" perception of the male-respondents on the physical appearance and personhood of the female endorses. Although beautiful in their own individualities, but based on the lens of the male-

respondents the latter were not able to surpass or fit-in with their perceived beauty ideals.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusions of this study, the recommendations below are hereby forwarded.

1. Local advertisement planners should involve other sex roles and gender groups as endorsers for alcohol commercial ads. Experimenting other "buying appeals" other than sexual-objectification should be given a priority.
2. Advertising literacy should be in placed to increase awareness on matters related to ads appreciation, responsible buying behavior, and media consumerism.
3. The national government, the academe, the advertising councils, product owners, consumers, and other stakeholders should collectively work together for the passing of a bill that promotes moral formation and integration for all commercial advertisements across media platforms in the Philippines.

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