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Selling the face: A Study on Visual Persuasion in Makeup Advertisement and its Influence on Women's Buying Intentions

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Abstract: *The study explores the role of visual persuasion in makeup advertising and its influence on women's buying intentions. In the contemporary advertising environment, makeup advertisements rely heavily on visually appealing elements such as attractive models, flawless skin, celebrity endorsements, and digitally enhanced imagery to convey ideals of beauty, confidence, and success. Visual strategies are designed not only to promote products but also to create emotional connections that shape women's perceptions of self-image and desirability. Belch & Belch (2021).*

The research examines how visual elements affect women's emotions, attitudes, and purchase decisions, with particular attention to the psychological impact of repeated exposure to these advertisements. It also investigates whether continuous engagement with idealized and digitally altered visuals contributes to the development of unrealistic beauty standards among women. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to establish a clear relationship between visual persuasion techniques used in makeup advertisements and women's buying intentions. The research aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and the ethical implications of visual advertising practices in the beauty industry (Nielsen, 2021).

Keywords: *Visual Persuasion, Makeup Advertisement, Women's Buying Intentions, Beauty Standards.*

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Introduction:

The effect of makeup advertising is prominent for women consumers. The ads not only showcase an item to the viewers but they make use of attractive visuals and imagery to associate beauty with concepts such as confidence, ability & social acceptance.This is the reason why the advertisement teaches more about a feeling of the product rather than what it is. (Leiss, Kline, Jhally & Botterill (2018).

The concept "selling the face" is because brands use attractive models, famous celebrities with an air of glamour and beautifully polished images to project a certain type of beauty. Such images can create standards for how women perceive beauty, and even affect their decisions in purchasing makeup products. In general, the real power of advertising lies in its

alignment with emotions and personal dreams or self-image.

Most of the makeup ads are filled with perfect skin, glamorous look and super attractive faces. These images can shape beauty standards that aren't always attainable in real life.

Despite this, they are incredibly successful at convincing women that by using the product being marketed, they, too, can have alike figure (Ogilvy 2011).

Objectives :

- To analyze the impact of visual appeal in makeup advertisements on women's purchase intentions.
- To analyze the relationship between visual elements in advertisements and consumers' buying behavior.
- To analyze the effect of celebrity endorsements and model representation on female consumers' purchasing decisions.
- To study how facial visuals, beauty appeals, and idealized representations influence women's decision-making process.

Hypotheses:

H_1: Visual persuasion in makeup advertisement has significant influence on women's buying intention.

H_2: Facial imagery and idealized beauty visuals in makeup ads affect women's purchasing behavior.

H_3: Celebrity Endorsement in makeup advertisements significantly impact women's buying decisions.

H_4: Makeup advertisements do not contribute to unrealistic beauty standards among women.

Research Methodology:

Data was collected using both Primary and Secondary sources. Online surveys and structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data from respondents. Different journals, publications were used as the sources for Secondary data.

Sample Size: 500 Respondents

Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling

Literature Review:

Visual persuasion is an essential part of today's advertising. Images tend to convey meaning instantly and can elicit emotional responses even before an individual reads the text in an ad. For this reason, visuals are sometimes more persuasive than written content. Researchers have attempted to work out not just whether images affect consumers, but how they do so. Things like composition, cultural symbology and overall the way images are portrayed on different platforms. This is especially noticeable in beauty and cosmetic advertising, where appearance and beauty ideals are central to the message (Paul Messaris, 1997).

A separate area of study has examined visual communication in social media advertising, specifically for skincare and skin whitening products. Instagram and Facebook are mainly content platforms for images and short videos, hence very effective for image/video marketing. These platforms offer micro influencers, stories, filters and shopping features that inform how advertising messages make it into the hands of consumers. There are ads, before and after shows, tutorials, influencer endorsements. Such formats can make the content feel more authentic and relatable to viewers. Many studies show that these visual elements on social media increase user engagement and also influence purchase intention for skincare products (Ida Puteri Mahsan, 2020).

Semiotic studies examining representations of women in cosmetic advertisements is another important perspective. They focus on advertisements, analyzing the signs and symbols that make up this genre in order to reveal how conceptions of femininity are created. The researchers identified a few common trends, like an emphasis on youth, perfect skin, passive body language and before-and-after transformation stories. These images can inspire consumers, but they also constrain how women perceive themselves. Semiotic analysis shows that visual and verbal elements in advertisements often present certain beauty standards as natural and desirable, such as lighter skin, slim bodies, and perfect complexions. These standards are

then connected with ideas of social success and acceptance (Jurnal Komunikasi, 2022).

Research Gap:

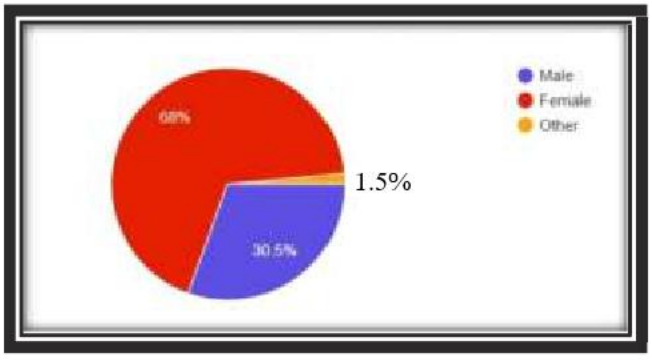
Many studies exist that involve visual imagery, signs and symbols that focus on social media influence in advertising. The research examines different factors individually rather than collectively showing the relation of digital image editing awareness and persuasion-authenticity-purchase intention. Although idealized visuals in advertising are effectively attention-grabbing, they can provoke suspicion as well. There is not much evidence showing how awareness of such image alterations affects the trust, motivation, and final buying decisions of Consumers.

Previous researches lies with the fact that semiotic studies exploring makeup ads tend to analyse the ads themselves. They do not include the reactions of the public. As a result, the relationship between how beauty is conveyed in advertising and how consumers read those representations is under-explored. To fill this gap, the current study merges semianalysis with survey data gathered from consumers." The aim is to understand how visual appeal, realism in images, and exposure to media advertisements influence consumer skepticism, perceptions of authenticity, and their purchasing decisions related to makeup products.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Gender:

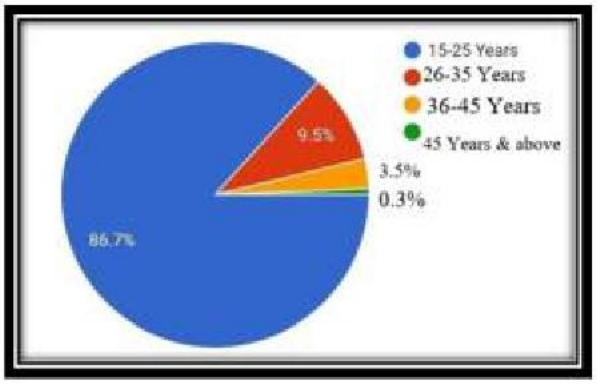
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Male	153	30.5%
Female	340	68%
Others	7	1.5%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Maximum respondents are female compared to other gender.

Age:

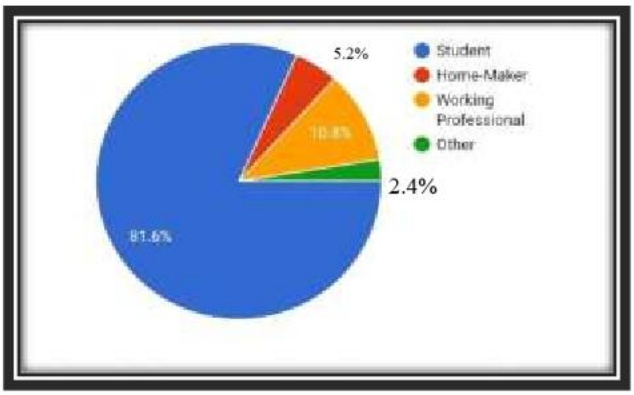
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
15- 25 Years	434	86.7%
26-35 Years	47	9.5%
36-45 Years	17	3.5%
45Years & above	2	0.3%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Maximum respondents belong to 15-25 years.

Occupation:

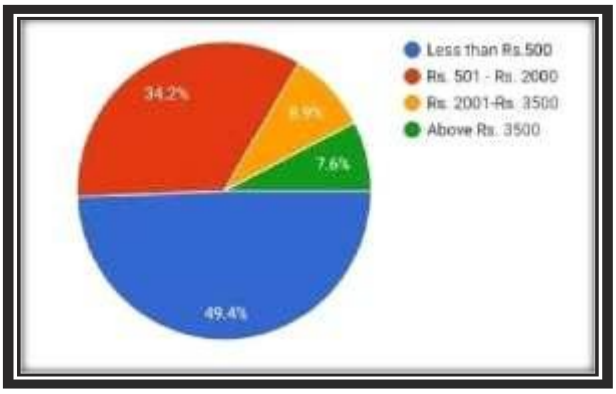
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Student	408	81.6%
HomeMaker	26	5.2%
Working professional	54	10.8%
Other	12	2.4%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents belongs to Students group in comparison to Working Professionals.

1. Average amount spent per month on makeup:

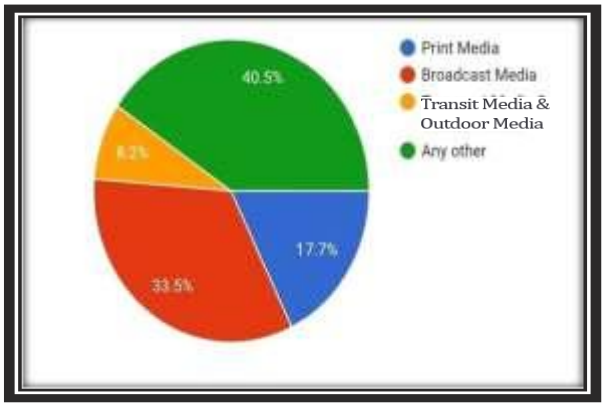
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Less than Rs.500	247	49.4%
Rs.501–Rs2000	171	34.2%
Rs.2001-Rs.3500	44	8.9%
Above Rs.3500	38	7.6%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents prefer to spend less than Rs.500 per month on makeup where as moderate respondents prefer to spend between Rs.501-Rs.2000.

2. Media Platforms for Makeup Advertisements:

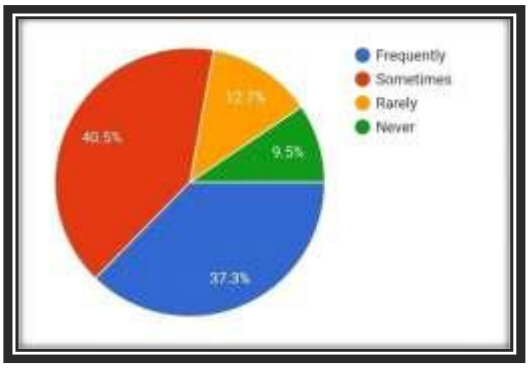
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Print Media	89	17.7%
Broadcast Media	167	33.5%
Transport Media	42	8.2%
Anyother	202	40.5%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents encounter makeup advertisements through other media like Digital media in maximum and moderately from Broadcast media.

3. Frequency of Exposure to Makeup Advertisements:

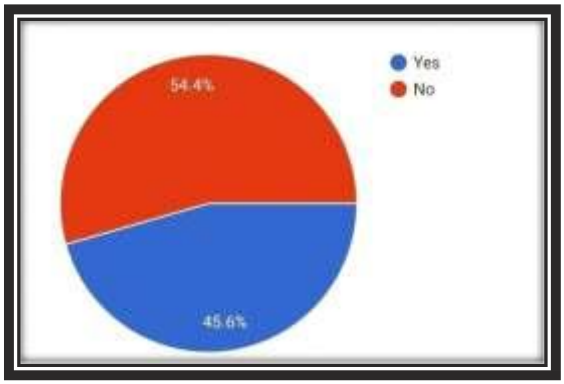
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Frequently	186	37.3%
Sometimes	202	40.5%
Rarely	64	12.7%
Never	48	9.5%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Maximum Respondents are sometimes exposed to makeup advertisements whereas others are exposed frequently.

4. Perceived Realism in Makeup Advertisement Faces:

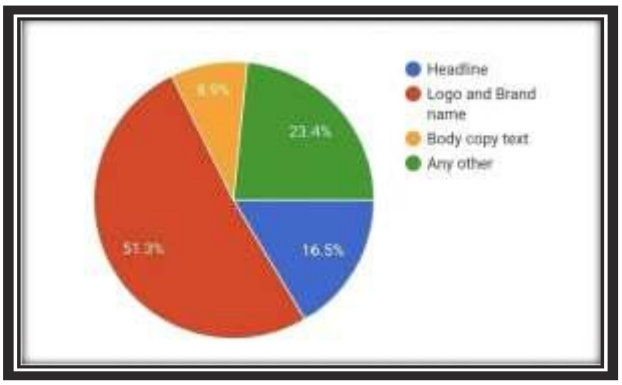
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Yes	228	45.6%
No	272	54.4%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Respondents are skeptical regarding the authenticity portrayed in makeup ads.

5. Attention-Grabbing Features in Makeup Advertisements:

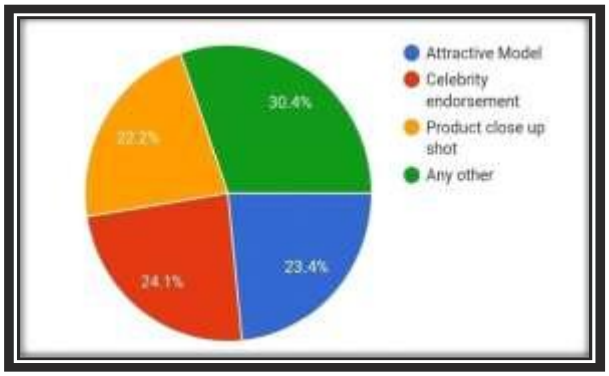
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Headline	82	16.5%
Logo and brand	256	51.3%
Bodycopytext	45	8.9%
Any other	117	23.4%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents feels that the most attention grabbing in makeup advertisement is its logo and brand.

6. Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions for Makeup Products:

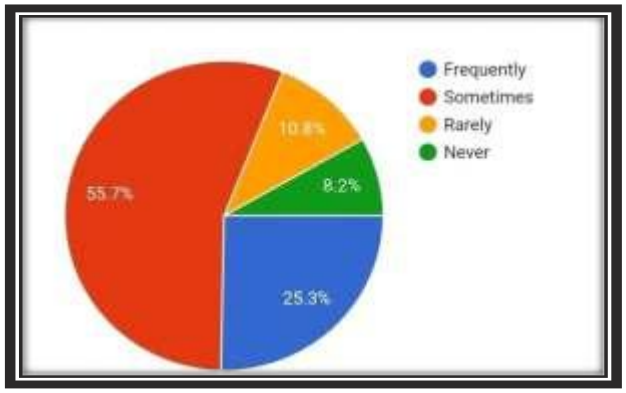
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Attractive Model	117	23.4%
Celebrity	120	24.1%
Productclose up shot	111	22.2%
Any other	152	30.3%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Brand Logo, Text, Tagline, Slogan, Background setting plays a significant role in influencing purchase decision.

7. Visual in makeup advertisement affects the purchase decision:

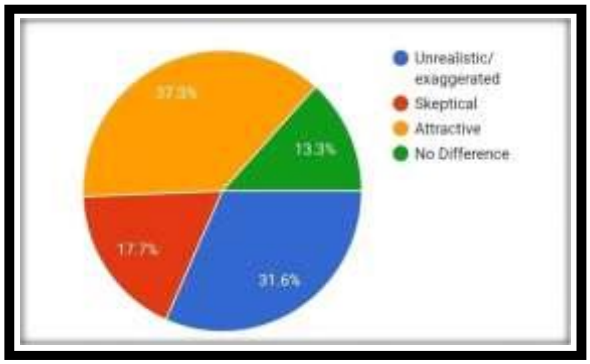
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Frequently	127	25.3%
Sometimes	278	55.7%
Rarely	54	10.8%
Never	41	8.2%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Respondents sometimes believe that visuals in makeup advertisements sometimes affects the purchase decision to buy the products.

8. Perception Toward Overly Polished Makeup Advertisements:

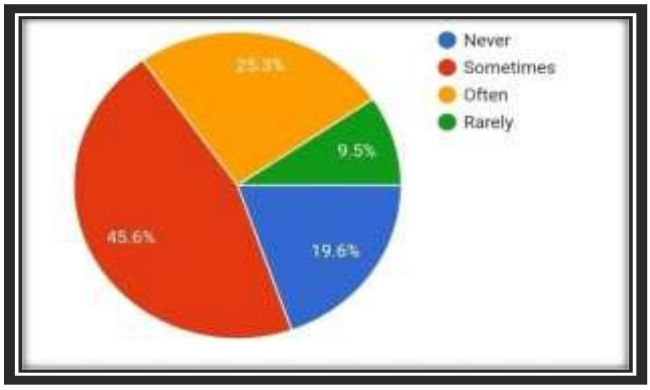
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Unrealistic	159	31.6%
Skeptical	88	17.7%
Attractive	187	37.3%
No Difference	66	13.3%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Respondents feel the perception towards overly polished makeup advertisements is attractive as well as un realistic.

9. Ability to Recognize Image Editing in Advertisements:

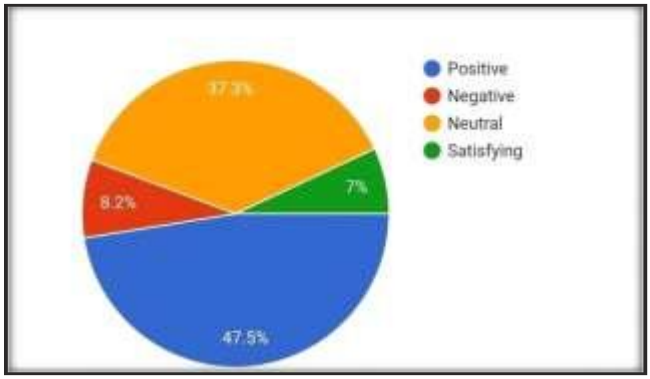
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Never	98	19.5%
Sometimes	228	45.6%
Often	126	25.3%
Rarely	48	9.5%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents occasionally recognize image editing in makeup advertisement.

10. Effect of Visual Presentation in Makeup Ads on Buying Motive:

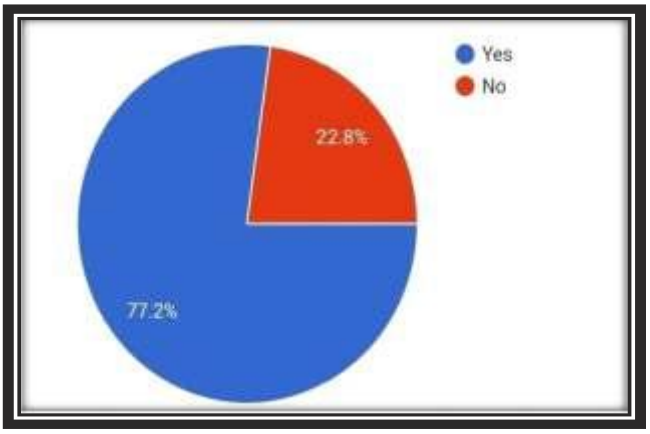
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Positive	237	47.5%
Negative	47	8.2%
Neutral	186	37.3%
Satisfying	30	7%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents feel the positive affect of visual persuasion in makeup advertisement.

11. Desire Created by Makeup Advertisements:

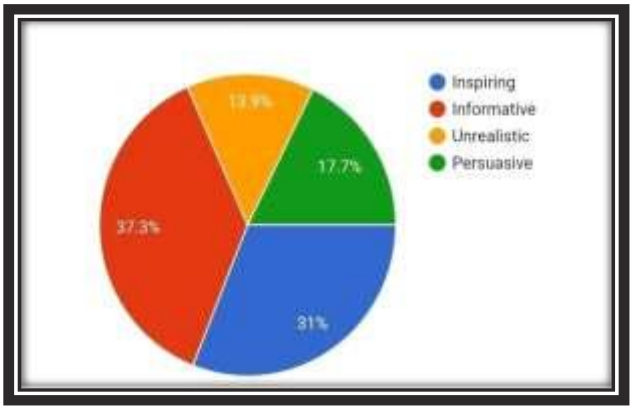
Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Yes	388	77.2%
No	112	22.8%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Maximum respondents feel advertising create a strong desire to purchase the product

12. Overall Opinion on Makeup Advertisements:

Particulars	Responses (In no.)	Responses (In %)
Inspiring	155	**31%**
Informative	186	37.3%
Unrealistic	70	13.9%
Persuasive	89	17.7%
Total	500	100%



Interpretation: Majority of respondents believe the overall opinion on makeup advertisement is informative and moderately inspiring.

Findings:

- Majority of respondents are highly exposed to makeup advertisement.
- Respondents are able to recognize the editing in image moderately.
- Visual persuasion in makeup advertisement influences the buying decision of the respondents.
- Image editing and visual persuasion of makeup advertisement creates a strong purchase desire among respondents.
- The makeup advertisement includes overall as well as inspiring information about the product which persuades and convince the respondents to purchase the product.

Limitations:

- Sample size was 500 respondents only.
- Survey was conducted in restricted geographical area.
- There was a time constraint for research.
- The research was based on the individual opinion of the respondents.

Suggestions:

- Brands should try to show more realistic advertisements rather than displaying heavily edited images in advertisements.
- Brands should make sure that advertisements are ethical by avoiding exaggerated claims or misleading visual presentations that may confuse consumers.
- Brands should also offer clear and honest information regarding product ingredients, benefits, and who should use the product.
- Advertisers must also avoid promoting unrealistic beauty standards that might lead consumers to develop a negative perception of their appearance.
- By using the services of influencers who provide real opinions, the content may appear to be original to the audience. This may make the audience trust the opinions of the influencers, thus building trust with the brand.
- The advertisements should include individuals with various skin tones, ages, and facial structures to ensure that many people can identify with the brand.

Conclusion:

The study indicates that makeup advertisements are crucial in influencing the perception of consumers towards the product and in the process of making purchasing decisions. Most of the respondents indicated that they often encounter such advertisements either frequently or at least on an occasional basis. However, most of the respondents indicated that the presentation in the advertisements is crucial in attracting their interest in makeup products. On the other hand, most of the respondents indicated that the faces and appearances in the advertisements are often not realistic and are overly idealized.

The study also indicates that factors such as brand presence, visuals, and celebrity faces are crucial in gaining the attention of consumers. This makes the advertisements more visible and attractive to the consumers. However, when the visuals are overly edited and polished, some consumers begin to doubt the authenticity of the advertisement. Despite this level of doubt, most of the respondents are encouraged to either purchase or attempt to purchase the product in the advertisement. This shows the power of visuals in marketing.

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