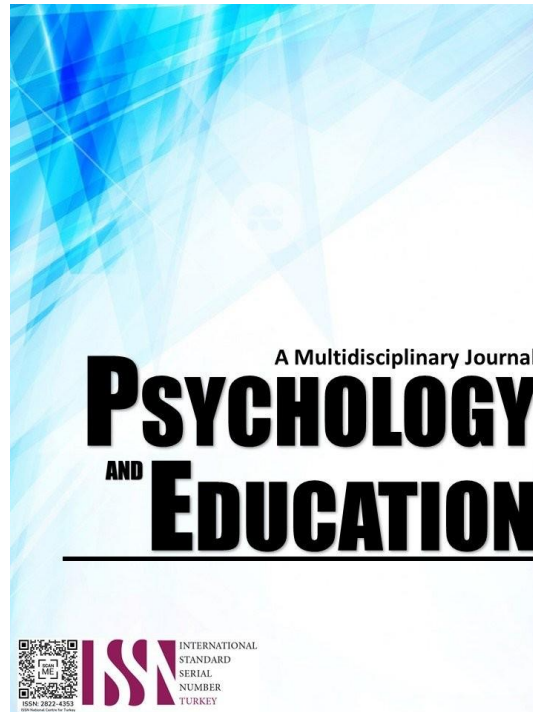


# STRIVING FOR ATTRACTIVENESS: THE IMPACT OF COSMETIC ADVERTISEMENTS ON FILIPINAS' SELF-PERCEPTION



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## Striving for Attractiveness: The Impact of Cosmetic Advertisements on Filipinas' Self-Perception

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### Abstract

The concept of "beauty" is largely shaped by the success and promotion of cosmetic advertisements, which often target women seeking to enhance their physical attractiveness or conceal perceived imperfections. These advertisements heavily influence Filipinas' perceptions of their own beauty. This study aimed to explore how Filipinas perceive their beauty amidst the idealized standards perpetuated by cosmetic advertisements. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, the study involved 10 Filipino participants aged 18 to 24 from Metro Manila, selected through convenience sampling. Participants were interviewed using a validated semi-structured questionnaire, and thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. Findings revealed that representations of light-skinned or mixed-race Filipinas in advertisements often exclude and distort the self-perception of Filipinas, leading them to undervalue their own beauty in comparison. Despite these influences, Filipinas demonstrated resilience in recognizing their attractiveness, influenced by historical, cultural, societal factors, and technological advancements. Cosmetic advertisements were found to play both positive and negative roles in shaping Filipinas' self-perception, with some participants significantly influenced by these ads while others remained unaffected or disaffected. This study underscores the complex interplay between media representations and individual perceptions of beauty among Filipinas, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach in cosmetic advertising.

**Keywords:** *self-perception, cosmetic advertisement, Filipinas*

### Introduction

The influence of colonial histories on contemporary beauty standards is a crucial area of investigation, particularly in countries like the Philippines with a complex past of foreign dominance. Understanding how these historical and socio-cultural factors interact with modern media practices is essential for comprehending the evolution of beauty ideals in this context. Chen et al. (2017) explored how American colonial rule contributed to shaping beauty standards in the Philippines, associating physical features such as fair skin and a slender physique with superior status and an elevated aura. This historical context helps explain the preference for these traits among Filipinos. Additionally, the rapid advancement of technology has further impacted beauty standards in the country. Cosmetic advertisements, intended to enhance physical appearance and boost confidence, often perpetuate unrealistic beauty ideals, such as "fair skin" and a "petite" body type. These ideals set expectations that women are pressured to meet, despite the fact that such standards are often unattainable (Ichsani, 2016). As Greenfield (2018) notes, individuals, particularly women, are continuously exposed to persuasive and subtle advertising messages that can distort perceptions of beauty.

Today, as cosmetic advertisements expand, young women are becoming more beauty-conscious (Vyas & Parmar, 2019). The problem needs attention because of the unrealistic beauty and the standard of beauty that cosmetic advertisements present, causing women to buy products that are assumed to enhance their self-perception and achieve the beauty perception of society, which may also lead women to be uncomfortable being themselves. In social comparison theory, women comparing themselves with models in cosmetic advertisements may lead to negative self-perception (Bilal et al., 2016).

Historical influences on beauty standards in the Philippines have shaped the nation's perceptions of attractiveness over centuries. The integration of both Spanish and American cultural ideals has contributed to the formation of current beauty norms, which are now increasingly influenced by modern technology and media. Beauty standards in the Philippines have been historically influenced by various foreign cultures, including Spanish and American (Chen et al., 2017). Coupled with the rapid advancement of technology, these evolving standards may significantly impact contemporary beauty ideals in the Philippines. This study seeks to explore and understand Filipinas' perceptions of their own beauty amidst the increasing prevalence of idealized images promoted by cosmetic advertisements. The research aims to determine whether these advertisements exert pressure on Filipinas to conform to these beauty ideals.

This study presented data on the role of cosmetic advertisements in Filipinas' self-perception. It shows whether cosmetic advertisements affect how Filipinas perceive themselves or just like in other countries, where the culture is much stronger than the persuasive advertisements that it doesn't affect their self-perception. The data that was collected shows a broad spectrum of how Filipinas perceive themselves as they are exposed to new and constantly changing beauty standards.

The problem addressed by this study is the impact of cosmetic advertisements on Filipinas' self-perception of beauty. As cosmetic advertisements increasingly promote idealized beauty standards, this research investigates how these advertisements shape and influence Filipinas' views of their own attractiveness. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the extent to which the formation and promotion of beauty ideologies through these advertisements affect Filipinas' self-esteem and body image. By exploring this issue, the research aims to provide insights into the psychological and social effects of cosmetic advertising on individual self-perception among

Filipinas.

## Research Questions

This study explored the role of cosmetic advertisements' formation and promotion of beauty ideologies on Filipinas' self-perception. Specifically, it answered the question, "What are the impacts of cosmetic advertisements on Filipinas' self-perception?"

## Literature Review

### *The influence of cosmetic advertisements on women's self-perception*

Women customers play a major role, and their purchasing behavior is essential with relation to the rise of online shopping through various platforms and applications. In this regard, online advertising via social networks is rapidly evolving, and advertisements across numerous platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, as well as other shopping apps such as Nykaa, Amazon, Sephora, Myntra, and others provide women with a plethora of shopping options from locally and internationally cosmetic brands (Sultana, 2015). In addition, Cosmetic companies create advertisements to influence women's views regarding cosmetics and encourage them to purchase more items. Many advertisements influence this mentality by influencing women to be self-conscious about their image (Thompson, 2017). Furthermore, a study by Free (2019) explored how unrealistic expectations, objectification, and sexualization have been some of the negative consequences of fashion and beauty advertisements on women. As an outcome of an increasingly materialistic culture, advertising's effect has grown. Advertising has played a significant influence in the growth of a culture that prioritizes material items and acceptability over essential beliefs. From vehicle advertisements to food advertisements to clothes advertisements to the most troublesome industry, fashion, and beauty advertisements. Women suffer from poor self-esteem since society has set a standard for how to view beauty. This situation results in the usage of cosmetic products, which provides happiness and confidence. (Aquino et al., 2017).

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design, which involves gathering data to test hypotheses or address issues related to the current state of the study's subject. According to Sahin and Mete (2021), descriptive qualitative research is specifically aimed at obtaining detailed insights into a phenomenon by capturing and analyzing the nuances of the data to address research problems and provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

### Participants

The researchers employed convenience sampling to select participants for the study. Ten Filipinas, aged 18 to 24, residing in various cities across Metro Manila, were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. Online interviews were conducted via Zoom, allowing participants to join the meetings from any location within Metro Manila as long as they had access to the provided link.

### Instrument

The researchers utilized a semi-structured interview as the primary research instrument, designed specifically to gather in-depth views and opinions on the role of cosmetic advertisements in shaping Filipinas' self-perception. The interview guide was researcher-made and included questions in English with Filipino translations to ensure clarity and accessibility for all participants. To enhance the instrument's reliability and validity, it was reviewed and validated by experts in the field. This validation process ensured that the questions were both relevant and effective in eliciting meaningful responses from the participants.

### Procedure

The accompanying methods used by the researchers for data gathering included several key steps. Initially, the researchers sent letters to relevant authorities and individuals to obtain the necessary permissions to conduct the study. Following this, the researchers constructed a consent form and an open-ended questionnaire designed to encourage broader responses and facilitate open discussion, allowing participants to express their perceptions freely. This questionnaire was validated by a panel of professionals over the course of one week. To recruit participants, the researchers posted advertisements on various social media platforms, inviting ten Filipinas residing in Metro Manila. Once participants expressed their interest, their availability was coordinated for interviews conducted via Zoom, a cloud-based video conferencing service. During the data-gathering process, the validated consent form was provided to participants, who were required to review and acknowledge it, which outlined the study's precautions and interview procedures before the questioning began. The interviews were conducted over five days, depending on participants' availability. After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the responses using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis process, which includes familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up the findings.

### Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations used for this study holds significant importance as it includes collecting data from the target participants.

## Informed Consent

The process in obtaining informed consent is used as a formal agreement between the researcher and the participants used in the study. Since researchers employed validated semi-structured interview questions, the researchers needed to gain insights of the participants regarding the impact of cosmetic advertisements on Filipinas' self-perception. The informed consent includes their rights to access their information and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time.

## Confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is important that is why assuring the participant's confidentiality is also included in the informed consent since it is not only to safeguard their identities by refraining from using self-identifying statement in the study but also to provide assurances beyond identity protection to protect participants from potential harm.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Emerging Themes*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subordinate Themes</i>
Positive Impacts of Cosmetic Advertisements on Filipinas' Self-perception	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Boost an individual self</li> <li>2. Open Standard</li> <li>3. Embracing one's beauty</li> </ol>
Negative Impacts of Cosmetic Advertisements on Filipinas' Self-perception	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jealousy</li> <li>2. Change people's conceptions of beauty</li> <li>3. Holds good-looking physical appearance</li> <li>4. Increases pressure to improve appearance</li> <li>5. Underrepresentation of beauty</li> <li>6. Advertisements founded on male's viewpoint</li> <li>7. Ambiguous</li> <li>8. Undesirable effects on oneself</li> </ol>

The Positive Impacts of Cosmetic Advertisements on Filipinas' Self-Perception highlights how such advertisements can enhance self-esteem, broaden beauty standards, and encourage the acceptance of one's inherent beauty, contributing to a more positive self-image among Filipinas. This was further categorized into three sub-themes: (1) Boosting Self-Esteem, (2) Expanding Beauty Standards, and (3) Embracing One's Beauty. Boosting Self-Esteem highlights how cosmetic advertisements can enhance individuals' confidence by promoting products that are perceived to improve physical appearance. This positive effect is associated with increased self-assurance as individuals feel more attractive and valued when using advertised products. Expanding Beauty Standards reflects how cosmetic advertisements can contribute to a broader and more inclusive understanding of beauty. By showcasing a variety of beauty ideals and diverse representations, these advertisements challenge narrow definitions of attractiveness and encourage individuals to appreciate a wider range of physical appearances. Then, Embracing One's Beauty underscores the potential for advertisements to foster self-acceptance and promote the value of inherent beauty. This positive impact is evident as individuals become more comfortable and confident in their natural appearance, influenced by advertisements that celebrate diverse beauty. Overall, these findings suggest that, while cosmetic advertisements can sometimes perpetuate unrealistic standards, they also have the potential to positively influence self-perception by enhancing confidence, broadening beauty ideals, and promoting self-acceptance.

On the other hand, the Negative Impacts of Cosmetic Advertisements on Filipinas' Self-Perception underscores how these advertisements can perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards, leading to dissatisfaction, decreased self-esteem, and heightened pressure to conform to idealized appearances. This theme is further elaborated through several sub-themes that collectively highlight the detrimental effects of cosmetic advertisements on how Filipinas view themselves. Firstly, jealousy emerges as a significant issue, with advertisements often portraying unattainable beauty standards that can lead to negative self-comparisons and feelings of inadequacy. Secondly, these advertisements contribute to shifting people's conceptions of beauty, reinforcing narrow ideals that may not align with diverse personal or cultural definitions of attractiveness.

Additionally, cosmetic advertisements frequently emphasize the importance of possessing a conventionally "good-looking" physical appearance, which intensifies pressure on individuals to conform to these ideals. This pressure is compounded by the advertisements' tendency to underrepresent the full spectrum of beauty, often excluding diverse body types and skin tones. Furthermore, many advertisements are constructed from a male-centric perspective, which can perpetuate gender-specific beauty standards and expectations, thereby exacerbating the impact on women's self-perception.

The study also reveals that the ambiguous nature of many cosmetic advertisements—often filled with idealized imagery and vague promises—contributes to undesirable effects on self-esteem. These advertisements may not only foster unrealistic beauty expectations but also lead to a sense of dissatisfaction and low self-worth among Filipinas who feel unable to meet these standards. The findings underscore the need for a more inclusive and realistic approach in advertising, aiming to represent a broader range of beauty and mitigate the negative impacts on self-perception.

Cosmetic advertisements are strategically designed to convey messages that enhance individuals' physical appearance and boost their confidence. However, despite their purported goals of self-improvement, these advertisements often rely on idealized and unattainable beauty standards that elevate the bar for physical attractiveness. As Greenfield (2018) notes, individuals, particularly women, are inundated with a relentless stream of advertising and subtle, persuasive messages that bombard them with unrealistic beauty ideals. These far-fetched standards create a skewed perception of beauty, setting a high and often unattainable benchmark that can lead to dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem among viewers

The primary objective of this study was to explore the impact of cosmetic advertisements' promotion of beauty ideals on Filipinas' self-perception. As highlighted in the findings, the constant exposure to idealized beauty standards in advertisements has a profound effect on how women perceive their own beauty. Women today are increasingly aware of their appearance and often turn to cosmetic products that promise to enhance their looks and align them with societal standards. This reliance on advertised beauty solutions reflects a broader trend where beauty ideals promoted by the media become a benchmark against which individuals measure themselves.

Understanding the influence of advertising on women's self-perception reveals how advertisers leverage these beauty ideals to drive consumer behavior and achieve profit-driven objectives. As Gupta and Jain (2017) suggest, by tapping into the desires and insecurities of women, advertisers can shape and reinforce their ideals, thereby influencing self-perception and consumer choices. The study underscores the need for more realistic and inclusive representations in cosmetic advertisements to mitigate negative impacts on self-esteem and promote a healthier and more diverse understanding of beauty.

## Conclusions

Filipinas' exposure to cosmetic advertisements significantly influences their self-perception, as these advertisements often present exaggerated and unrealistic beauty standards. The study revealed that these idealized portrayals have a more negative impact on Filipinas' beauty perspectives than positive ones, leading to dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and an elevated and often unattainable standard of beauty. While some Filipinas remain unaffected or minimally impacted by these advertisements, the predominant effect is detrimental, causing many to struggle with their self-image. To address these negative impacts, it is recommended that cosmetic advertisements adopt a more inclusive and realistic approach, showcasing a diverse range of beauty types that reflect the natural diversity among Filipinas. Additionally, promoting campaigns that emphasize self-acceptance and the value of inherent beauty can help counteract the harmful effects of idealized standards and foster a healthier self-perception among Filipinas.

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