

Chapter 1

Introduction

Rationale and Significance of the Problem

Beauty, in all of its forms, has desirable qualities. All living beings, animals and humans alike, yearn to possess beauty. The differences lie in an individual's concept of how one strives to reach ideal beauty. Male animals of all species are seen preening their feathers or licking their fur to look attractive to the opposite sex. In animal kingdom, males are naturally more physically attractive than female. In contrast, female gender of human being is likely to pay a greater attention to beauty and strive to attain such physical attractiveness.

As a form of discourse, beauty is considered both a property (an innate attribute or characteristic) and feeling (a personal perception) associated with human beings. In a larger context, beauty is not only related to human beings but also associated with locations, specific concepts, specific things and many others. A Japanese model in a beautifully designed kimono may look ordinary to her native people but when strutting along a catwalk in Paris, she can be outrageously attractive causing onlookers to become awed with admiration, for example. However, the property and feelings called beauty

makes people happy about it. Anything beautiful is a joy for others to watch (Chandler, "Concept of Beauty is Universal").

Appearance plays an important role and greatly impact people's lives and relationship with others. When a person looks good and feels great, people treat the person as if he/she was special. His/her appearance sends signals to others about who he/she is and how he/she feels as well as his/her values and aspirations. There are many reasons why being beautiful is so important to so many people. To start with, beauty makes people feel good, inspires confidence, attracts attention and makes people happy. Research shows that beauty is a privilege. Examples abound of beautiful people earning more money and holding greater positions of power and physically attractive people get special treatment from other people. This is because beauty compels people to believe about the advantages of being beautiful (Luftman and Ritvo xii).

The fact that many people admire ideal beauty is not too complicated to understand. This is true for both genders. However, this may be more obvious among females. First, most women are naturally concerned about their appearance. Women, young and old alike, dread aging. Slim women and heavy ones try hard to meet the demands of the thin ideal. Black, brown and white women regard the ideal, beautiful women as someone who is asymmetrical, or flawless, someone they call "perfect", and someone whom they feel they are not. Nevertheless, unattainable as it seems, most women are not discouraged to strive harder to achieve their ideal beauty of fine and fair complexion, flawless facial features, or ultra slim body. This can be seen in a saying

about eternal and unchanging ideal like “Women have always suffered for beauty” (Wolf 1). It is understandable that women have tried every possible way to keep or enhance their appearance. In fact, the more beautiful a woman is, the higher her standards are and the more she is willing to suffer to become perfect. The idea of perfect woman is ingrained in women’s mind. Though most people know the fallacy of placing too great a value on appearance, they all have a desire of beauty and cannot disassociate themselves from it. The desire for beauty is basic human feeling, like the desire for food, nurturing, or happiness (Bailyn, “How Important is Physical Beauty”). This is particularly true for women. When a woman has the desire for beauty, she tries every possible way to become more beautiful. As her confidence grows, she will receive respect at work, at home, and everywhere else. As her insecurity diminishes, she becomes more daring, self-assured, and courageous. She finds she can do anything. Her life improves in every way. Therefore, most women feel striving for beauty at any cost is worthy of pursuit.

In addition, women strive for beauty to attract men’s attention so as to be accepted and admired by them especially in male dominance society. Allen G. Johnson stated that patriarchy is male domination in the positions of authority, political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military and domestic. These positions are generally reserved for men (5). According to Naomi Wolf (14), women are generally trapped by this society in which men are the decision makers and hold positions of authority such as heads of the household, leaders of social groups, bosses in the workplace and heads of government while women are powerless and subservient. Wolf also stated that ideal beauty was determined by politics. Therefore, the ideal beauty is

certainly set by dominant males in patriarchal society. Women in such society then struggle at best to attain the set standard of beauty in order that they would be cherished and desired.

Beauty is also an expression of power relations whereby women are used as resources for men. In such society, women are expected to accommodate themselves for patriarchal standards of female beauty. It often involves relating to their own body as an enemy or a failure, and molding, squeezing, and even starving themselves in order to reach a set standard of beauty to satisfy the male gaze. This is because men and authority groups in power created values surrounding the concept of beauty. Nowadays, patriarchal societies still exist and it is these societies that force women to make themselves attractive to please men.

The beauty industry, realizing these facts, has made full use of ads in creating their beauty product advertisements. Being fully aware that women need to achieve their goals in attaining ideal beauty, the industry has come up with various schemes to tempt their perspective female customers to buy their products. Women are led to believe in various adverts that the ideal beauty they wish for can be achieved through the use of the advertised product. The advertising continues to be successful and the sales keep soaring. Today, consumers around the world spend 330 billion dollars a year on fragrances, cosmetics and toiletries (Jones 1). The beauty industry is an obvious example of advertising success employing different appeals. These include a promotion of the latest fashions to instill a sense of being in trend in target consumers. Celebrities are also used

as spokespersons for the leading brands to build trust. Many advertisements also highlight the latest technological breakthrough designed to firm, uplift, and hydrate skin, reverse the signs of aging, and make hair shine as never before, for example. Certainly, these schemes have always been successful resulting in the popularity of the brands and great volume of sales

With a persuasive objective in mind, the companies producing cosmetics and all kinds of beauty product have to carefully plan their advertising strategies or appeals and means of information dissemination for utmost success. The advertising appeals make use of discourse, verbal and non-verbal. As quoted in Wongbiasaj and Freeouf, “Discourse is a string of sentences linked together which have meaning, unity and effectiveness” (2). It is also the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different sectors of social life (Kongpetch and Smith 151). Political discourse is certainly different from medical discourse, for instance. Discourse analysis is the analysis of these patterns in order to understand how verbal and non-verbal strategies are employed in the ads and to what effects (Jorgensen and Phillips 12).

According to Belch and Belch, advertising appeals or techniques include rational appeal and emotional appeal (2007). The former appeal focuses on facts or usability of the product. It attempts to convince consumers about the convenience, benefit, comfort and economy the product offers. Driving a new compact Nissan March is not only

comfortable but also economical as it has great mileage. Rational appeals also include comparative advantage emphasizing on the product's higher attribute compared to that of the competitive brand, but with comparatively lower or the same price. The other major appeal is called emotional appeal which includes safety, joy, love, pride as well as fear, sorrow, hurt and embarrassment. SafeT Cut, a device meant to prevent an electric short circuit, is advertised as a life-saving device itself. This plays on the target consumer's fear of being electrocuted and to be safe is to use the advertised product. The examples cited are only a few among many different advertising appeals used. However, the main goal is to attract attention and to increase the purchasing power.

The means of product advertisement are various kinds of media; namely, television, radio, newspaper and magazines. Product advertisements in television catch viewers' attention with their exciting messages and sounds as well as colorful pictures. Radio broadcast has its disadvantages as only messages and sounds can be projected. Newspapers can contain interesting advertisements of different products but they tend to be discarded in a short time. Among print media, magazines seem to be more profitable for advertisers to place in their advertisements. This is because they are eye-catching in design, content, lay-out, and colors. Also they tend to be read many times before the new issue comes out. The product advertisements placed in magazines then can reach more readers and linger longer in their mind.

Among different types of magazines, magazines for women appear to be the most effective means to advertise beauty and health products. This is because a female body is reflected and portrayed in an ad is intended to arouse the viewers' purchasing desire. A picture of a gorgeous woman featuring newly introduced spring apparel in a fashion magazine ad causes the viewer to desire her beauty and to achieve that goal through the purchase of that particular clothing. Products such as diet, cosmetics, and exercise gear construct a dream world of hopes and high standards through the media like printed ads, magazines, and other channels as well. Mass media has provided more positive role models for women than ever before. Such presentations are ubiquitous in television ads, printed ads, and magazines. More than 70 percent of these ads involve ideal beauty. Women magazines are full of articles and pictures urging that if women can just lose twenty kilograms, they will have a perfect marriage, romance, children, sex and career. From a study of the American research group on Anorexia Nervosa & Related Eating Disorders, women magazines have about ten times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men magazines do. In addition, over three-quarters of the covers of women magazines include at least one message about how to change a woman's bodily appearance by diet, exercise or cosmetic surgery (Cited in <http://www.media-awareness.ca>). Anna Gough-Yates cited the argument of early feminists that the magazine offered unreal and untruthful images of women (8). It was seen as a powerful force for the construction and legitimacy of gender inequalities. In this regard, women magazines aim to influence and shape up women beauty perspective whether or not it is

rational, sensible or distorted. The sole objective shared among advertising industries is to make great sales and profits.

Advertising has been central to the business of women magazines since the 1890s (Gough-Yates 56). Advertisements may be created to have various functions, e.g. to inform, to advise, to influence, to persuade or to warn. They use fictions, word play, compressed story-telling, stylized action, photography, cartoons, puns and rhythms in ways which are memorable, enjoyable and amusing. Many advertisers seek to maximize sales of products or services by using every communication process to create need which has not yet existed (Toolan, 1988, Myers, 1994, Woods, 2006, cited in Kongpetch and Smith 149). Beauty is an effective sale in magazines. Millions of dollars of advertising and marketing expenditures from companies are used for clothes and cosmetics. Advertisers pay between 1 and 2 million dollars a year to promote their products by popular and glamorous women (Langmeyer and Shank 27). This shows how important advertisements are in gaining profits from women magazines. Today, there are various women magazines both Thai magazines such as *Preaw*, *Sudsapda*, *Dichan*, *IMAGE*, *Ploy Kham Pech* and English translated magazines such as *CLEO*, *LIPS*, *Marie Claries*, *Her World*, *Instyle*, and *Cosmopolitan*. More than 40 women magazines are now in circulation to compete in market share in Thai magazine business. Most of them are full of beauty product advertisements. According to Synovate Co; Ltd. (Thailand), a market research company which studied the power of media affecting consumers, 42 percent

of people preferred looking at advertisements (Cited in www.econnews.org/old/krm0458.html).

According to “The History of Marie Claire”(1), among various magazines circulated in the Thai magazine market, *Marie Clarie* has had great circulation and gained its popularity among readers for many years. *Marie Clarie* was published in 1937 and was the first women magazines published in France. It is the first magazine aimed at women encouraging them to consider their own autonomy, charm and personal development. Today, there are 26 international editions, including Thailand, each either licensed or in joint-venture. Today, *Marie Claire* has proved successful in reaching many target readers and advertisers. It plays a great part in the landscape of glossy women magazine publishing. Therefore, doing research in “*Discourse Analysis on Beauty Product Advertisements in Marie Claire Magazine*” will not only be based on ample and significant data but also will bring to light tactful advertising strategies *Marie Claire* employed resulting in the magazine’s popularity and success. Moreover, though many studies have been done using *Marie Claire* as data, those studies were based on different frameworks and yielded different perspectives.

The study of human physical conditions such as health or life styles has long been of great interest among researchers. However, a study on beauty is quite different. Only in the past few years has beauty become an attractive aspect of study in current society. Feminist advocates think that beauty is a different dimension from others that concentrate

only on economics, politics and social sciences without perspectives on the relationship between men and women. However, perceptions on beauty vary among experts in different fields. Beauty is generally known as a basic attribute or component of people's personal life, and nowadays researchers have increasingly been concerned about beauty as discourse. Interest in beauty, both as concept and as a field of study remains until these modern days (ခုំနီໃຈ ເຈີຍນາງຸຣະກຸລ). In conclusion, it is obvious that up to 90% of the advertisements in many magazines are beauty products. As a media, an advertisement has the power to persuade and also change women's perception through its portrayal of an ideal beauty. This study then aims to analyze the mechanism of verbal and non-verbal languages used in beauty product advertisements in *Marie Claire* magazine based on Cook's discourse analysis and Kongpetch and Smith's advertising appeals. The data of the study will be beauty products advertised in *Marie Claire* issued between 2009-2010 with a total of 50 pieces.

Purpose of the study

The research objective of study is to analyze the mechanism of verbal and non-verbal languages used in beauty product advertisements in *Marie Claire* magazine.

Application and Educational Advantages

Discourse analysis on beauty product advertisements in *Marie Claire* will provide the benefits in two points.

1. To understand the language of advertisements especially how the mechanism of verbal and non-verbal languages is used in the advertisements.

2. To raise an awareness in the reader concerning the persuasive nature of advertisements so that they can make a right purchase choice.