

# Case study: cultural norms, fair and lovely, and advertising assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



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BIBLIOGRAPHY10 1 INTRODUCTION Since 1987, the Indian company Hindustan Lever LTD has developed the revolutionary skin lightening technology.

With its branded product Fair & Lovely it has been the market leader for several decades (HLL. com, 2007). In the Indian culture fair skin is associated with positive values like class, beauty and wealth. The Indian skin care market is growing rapidly. Between 2001 and 2007 the growth rate had risen by 42. 7 percents to \$318 million market. With skin lighting creams as most popular products the sales of Fair and Lovely have been growing about 20 per-cent every year (Timmons, 2008). The high demand of skin lighting

creams implicates a stronger competition with existing competitors and new market entrants.

One of these competitors is Cavin Kare with its brand "Fairever". After entering the market Cavin Kare reached a market share of 15 percent (cavinkare.com, 2008). It was obvious for HLL to radicalize its advertising by showing very provocative ads. After the company has been criticized that their commercial "were racist, they were promoting son preference and they were insulting to working women", HLL withdraw its TV campaign. Due to the case it provides much space for discussions. 2 QUESTIONS 2. 1 Is it ethical to sell a product that is, at best, only mildly effective?

First of all I would like to define the term "ethical". Something is "ethical" if it is of or based on a system of moral beliefs about right and wrong (Kaldewey, 1984). To come back to the question, from my point of view it is not ethical to sell a product that is, at best, only mildly effective. The product which is mentioned in the case is a cosmetic that lightens skin color. It is promoted as "the miracle worker" which can deliver your skin a difference from one to three shades. According to the new Fair & Lovely technology ad, the cream is supposed to change your skin even in four weeks.

However, Indian dermatologists explain "that fairness products cannot truly work as they reach only the upper layers of the skin and so do not affect melanin production". Moreover experts state, the main reason why people believe that the cream is working, is a bleaching ingredient which just whitens facial hair and not the skin. The result of the product differs quite from what it has been promoted. Therefore, the HLL's marketing strategy

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contains some kind of fraud. Referring to our textbook, the company cannot answer the question with “ yes”, that the product optimizes the “ common good” or benefits of all constituencies.

So for me it is not ethical to sell a product which is mildly effective while customers have no clue what the cream is doing to them. In fact HLL should inform their clients how their technology works and which ingredients they use. If there is clearness, customers have access to any information and the product does not harm people than it is ethical to sell this kind of product. 2.

2Is it ethical, to exploit cultural norms and values to promote a product?

Normally it is the main task of international marketers to use cultural values and norms of an area to promote their products.

In India and Asia skin color is a very important and powerful topic. Referring to the caste system, lighter skin colors represent a higher status. When we have a look at the different caste levels we can see the caste of the teachers, scholars and priests then the kings and warriors followed by the traders and the agriculturists, service providers, and some artisan groups. Another group which is excluded from the main society they are lower section than the agriculturists, are the so called “ untouchables”. The lower the cast level the darker is the skin (Bock, 1995).

That is the origin of the Indians’ preference for fair skin. The companies mentioned in the text take advantage of the dark skin of Indian people and emphasize the benefit of having a lighter skin. HLL shows for example in its ad the “ fairer girl gets the boy theme” or a dark-skinned girl becoming a flight attendant and be a financial support for the family just by using the

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fairness cream. The commercial communicates that women can just be successful due to fair skin but not by having special skills or an educational background. The advertisement is delusive and pretends that all problems are solved with fair skin.

Although the case is talking about a decreasing number of Indians who think lighter skin is more beautiful, women who “prefer their own complexion” or the worldwide trend which goes for black beauties, the advertisement is exaggerating the situation. It always catches the consumer’s eyes to buy the cosmetic products. Therefore, in my opinion it is not ethical to exploit cultural norms and values to promote a product. According to our textbook, we see that the action of HLL does not respect the involved individuals. They say that women have just a chance if they are fair.

Everybody was born with a different background, race and skin color. It is not right to relate the skin color to success or social status as a product promotion. 2. 3 Is the advertising of Fair & Lovely demeaning to women or is it portraying a product not too dissimilar to cosmetics in general? The most cosmetic companies advertise their products in the “beauty” theme and that it has a special effect on you by using it, which brings you to prettiness. In India “fair” can be seen as a synonym of “beauty”. HLL has advertised its product in this way. Using the skin lightening cream makes woman whiter and much more confident.

If we see the advertisement in this way it is definitely not too dissimilar to other cosmetics in general. But Fair & Lovely is using ethical subjects to convince the customer. If they use the “miracle worker” they will be

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beautiful, will be successful in their career and will have a higher social status. In a very negative way, the advertisement connects a job offer for women with the way she looks and not with her qualifications. In my opinion the advertising of Fair & Lovely is pretty demeaning. It is not right to judge anybody about religion, caste, nationality, race or skin color any-time and even more not in advertisements. . 4 Will have HLL's Fair & Lovely Foundation be enough to counter charges made by AIDWA? Withdrawing the provocative TV advertisements after a year-long campaign was enforced by AIDWA. The launching of the " Fair & Lovely Foundation" which encourages " economic empowerment of women across India by providing resources in education and business" is a pleasantry. In addition, HLL sponsored career fairs in over 20 cities across the country offering counseling in as many as 110 careers. From my point of view HLL just pretends to do something for women.

In fact they emphasize the problem that dark-skinned women need help to have a career in business. The " Fair and Lovely Foundation" is so kind to take care about these women and help them. Of course they spend a lot of money on this project. But on the other hand the foundation is very useful for HLL themselves in different ways. First of all they will have some kind of academy where they can educate people specified for their company. Moreover they use the " charity channel" as a new marketing strategy: Making friends with AIDWA by pulling its ad off the air, providing a foundation to be on everyone's lips and being the great rescuer.

For me the foundation is just a farce and definitely not enough to counter charges made by AIDWA. But it is a start to change the radical advertising strategy and its image into an action where the “ common good” can benefit and the brand is “ well-known”. 2. 5 In light of AIDWA’S charges, how would you suggest Fair & Lovely promote its product? Would your response be different if Fairever continues to use “ fairness” as a theme of its promotion? My advice is that Fair & Lovely should emphasize more on the quality of their product.

As discussed in question 1, it would be a great step if they inform customers about their technology. Furthermore they could concentrate on the effect of cosmetics that they do not damage the skin but makes it fairer. The company could win the customers loyalty and the fairness cream could become the “ women’s daily friend”. Another suggestion is that the company should stress more on the confidence of women than the beauty. They could show how happy a woman is after using their products and not just show how beautiful the woman is because of the fair skin.

This would be a completely new approach to demonstrate women’s confidence for their future career and life. It is not made up out of thin air that Fairever uses fairness as their promotion theme, because whitening the skin is the main task of the cream. But my advice for “ Fair & Lovely” would be the same as I mentioned above. The Product is already known, so they don’t have to break into the market. For them it is important to promote their qualities. In a market where the products are very similar customers mostly decide between low cost or quality.

But in our case the product is for the skin, for the face, so people go for the quality. However, even the promotion strategy of Fairever shouldn't be the same like Fair & Lovely did before. It was too radical to show women that having a fair skin is the key of becoming successful. Not the company should make the choice for a society if fair skin is fashioned or not, which makes people attractive and successful, every woman should make the choice for herself, if she prefers fair skin and if she does she could use the cream to change her taint. 2. Propose a promotion/marketing program that will counter all the arguments and charges against Fair & Lovely and be an effective program. As I mentioned above my suggestion is to focus on the quality which finally leads to a higher sale and a better reputation. The customers are women and also men of India with darker skin. I want to have a look at the inner circle of international marketing tasks which depicts the controllable elements that constitute a marketer's decision area. Our product is a cosmetic that lightens skin color. We offer a range of products as for example creams, gels and soaps.

Due to the fact that we raise our quality our product will be a little bit higher priced than before but still affordable for common Indian people. The product can be bought in supermarkets, drug stores and we try to be also available in pharmacies. Our product will be promoted in form of the "Fair & Lovely foundation". Articles and reports describe the function of the foundation and invite woman to apply for a scholarship. Advertisements which concentrate on the theme of quality and clearness, describe exactly how the technology works and that the Fair & Lovely product is not damage but a benefit for your skin.



Moreover they should pack the topic of confidence into the advertisements instead of just using beauty as the main goal of life. The marketing plan should be realized within 3 ??? 5 years. 2. 7 Comment on the change in the two statements by HLL between 2003 and 2005. Do the changes in the statements reflect a change in marketing/advertising strategy? The first statement by HLL in 2003 shows the business range of HLL and a brand-oriented marketing strategy. The statement by HLL in 2005 talks about the revolutionary technology achievements in the cosmetics industry.

The change in the two statements reflects a change in the marketing strategy of HLL. The 2003 brand-oriented marketing strategy focused on supplying branded products and services which raise the quality of the customers' life. In 2005, HLL focused on the development in technology to improve the products which make them well-known and raise the consumption. 2. 8 Comment on Shanaz-Husain's introduction of " fairness cream for the masses" in 2004 in light of AIDWA's charges. Having a skin lightening cream for just rich people would be some kind of contradiction.

Especially poorer people work a lot outside and get a darker skin. Shanaz-Husain's product would fail. But the company succeeded in entering the mass market. From my point of view Shanaz-Husain could be fine according to AIDWA'S charge, because we do not know anything about a provocative advertisement. They do not act racist, showing that being a son is a great advance or insulting working women. Moreover Shanaz-Husain is well known for healthy and probably good quality products. The company is really

caring that the cosmetic product is available for everybody who wants to have a white skin.

Also poorer people who especially would like to have this cream can buy it. 3

SUMMARY The case is about Fair & Lovely a product of HLL which lightens skin color. After facing a harsh competition Fair & Lovely sets up a provocative advertisement cam-paign. AIDWA a women's organization had criticized the cosmetic company in 3 ways for its radical promotions: First for being racist, second for promoting son pre-ference, third of insulting working woman. In India " fair" can be seen as a synonym of " beauty".

This idea is based on the Indian caste system. In the case I discussed ethical business principles, like the mildly effectiveness of products and the abuse of cultural norms for promoting a product. I provided sugges-tions how Fair & Lovely could change its marketing strategy to become a " well-known" company and benefits the ??? common god": on the one hand by selling high quality products, on the other hand by concentrating on the women's confidence. This new approach could activate a huge change in future careers and life of Indian women. BIBLIOGRAPHY Beech, J. , & Chadwick, S. (2004). The business of Sport Management. USA: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall Bock, M. & Rao A. (1995). Aspekte der Gesellschaftsstruktur Indiens: Kasten und Stamme. (P. 112-131) In Dietmar Rothermund: Indien. Munchen: Beck cavinkare. com/fairever. html (2008). Cavin Kare HLL. com (2008). Hindustan Unilever Limited Kaldewey, R. (1984). Grundwissen Religion. Munchen: Kosel Timmons, Heather (2007). Telling India's Modern Women They Have Power, Even Over Their Skin Tone. The New York Times.

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