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## Perpetuating Beauty Ideals through Health and Beauty Claims in TV Promotional Segment

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Health and beauty have been proposed as mutually inclusive physical and psychological constructs, mediated by one's own personal emotional and spiritual state of well-being. While it has been widely accepted that health and beauty are interrelated in the sense that beauty reflects one's inner health, there has been a worrying trend in which health is exploited in peddling beauty products and vice versa. In understanding how health has been commoditized in the beauty market, this study examines the manner health in the name of beauty, have been constructed in propagating beauty ideals and hegemonic values in a popular daily television program in Malaysia, *Wanita Hari Ini* (WHI). The findings concluded that within the prevalent capitalist hegemony, health had been turned into an apparatus in selling beauty. For the product owners, it is not about promoting health in gaining beauty, but rather about capitalizing on health because it can sell beauty.

Keywords: Beauty ideals, gender, health and beauty claims, TV promotional segment

The modern beauty industry that began in the nineteenth century in Europe and America had only spread to the Asian Market post-war War II, particularly to Japan and China (Jones, 2011). Today, however, the world leaders in the beauty industry are found mostly in Asia and Oceania, capturing 40% of the global market share (Statista n.d.). The industry is dominated by four companies, namely L'Oreal, Procter, and Gamble (P&G), Beiersdorf AG, and Avon. These companies are expected to continue to lead the industry in the next eight years (Inkwood Research, 2017). In this development, rapid industrialization and growing capitalism contribute to making beauty products more accessible to everyone, and more importantly, in perpetuating beauty ideals as conceptualized by the global market leaders. While the global leaders continue to dominate in both market share and share of mind, local companies in the past struggled to gain a foothold. Interestingly, the past ten years saw the emergence of a vast number of Malaysian local beauty companies, induced and encouraged by several incentives by the government. For instance, in the Kempen Belilah Barangan Malaysia (Buy Made in Malaysia Products Campaign) (Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia, n.d.) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) the local herbal industry was identified as one of the new key economic areas (NKEA) (Farizah, Mohd Azlan, Noorasiah, & Fadzilah Adibah, 2015). This has, in turn, led to the emergence of many local brands in Malaysian market today.

Consequently, several local companies have gained a strong market position in the health and beauty category. Their strategy in combining both health and beauty in

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positioning their brands had carved a niche to compete within the vast but rather predictable beauty market. Products offered by these companies range from cosmetics through to health supplements intended for beauty benefits. Many local products and brands have now become household names perpetuating their health and beauty ideals, as deemed fit for the local society and culture. Of interest to this study is the consequent rise of hegemonic ideals of health and beauty, and subsequently, the rise of brand dominations through the perpetuation of these ideals.

The promotional strategies of some of the local companies have been questioned in the past for their controversial promotional messages such as in propagating myths, unfounded and to some extent dangerous claims and cultural stereotypes. Their construction of health and beauty, particularly through their promotional efforts requires a close examination in understanding their strategies not only in convincing their audience to buy their product but also in spreading health and beauty ideals that may or may not be favorable for the society at large.

Health and beauty have been proposed as mutually inclusive physical and psychological constructs, mediated by one's own personal emotional and spiritual state of mind (Health Womens Healthy Living Goals, n.d.). While it has been widely accepted that health and beauty are interrelated in the sense that the beauty reflects one's inner health (Edmonds & van der Geest, 2009), there has been a worrying trend in which health is exploited in peddling beauty products and vice versa. For example, a few brands have been found to claim that their products contain certain vitamins and minerals that are not only good for health but also offer unfounded beauty benefits such as skin lightening and firming effects.

Other brands have been observed to extend health claims that may negatively influence the health and beauty beliefs of the society, using beauty as the key enticement. For example, a brand may offer questionable postnatal products that are claimed to be able to help women rapidly reduce weight and return their libido, and hence once again become desirable to their partner. Some of these products pose health and safety risks (Mahyuddin, Juriah, Ida Madieha, Suzi Fadhilah, & Sahida, 2017), thus raising a question on what does 'health' in 'health and beauty' represent. Arguably, health, as witnessed in the promotional efforts, is more a means of making sales rather than a sincere attempt to offer a state of complete well-being (Edmonds and van der Geest, 2009). The tried and tested marketing strategy of adding more favorable and unique associations to gain the mindshare are applied here, with health as that extra brand association that has proved to be a winning formula.

In understanding how health has been commoditized and capitalized in the beauty market, this study examines the manner health, in the name of beauty, have been constructed in propagating beauty ideals and hegemonic values in a popular daily television program, *Wanita Hari Ini* (WHI). Firstly, the study explores the categories of health and beauty products featured in the promotional segments of WHI; secondly the themes from the claims in the promotional segments are mapped; and thirdly the emerging themes and the product types are linked to the health and beauty ideals and the hegemonic domains that would become evident in the segments.

### **Hegemony and the Ideal Woman**

In the lense of Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony (1971), it can be argued that in the beauty industry, the capitalist health and beauty companies are the ruling elites that perpetuate

the idea of women as the object of the gaze and their bodies as a commodity. These companies ride on the patriarchal order in the society that reduces women to commodity (Yee, 2018). Health and beauty companies disseminate their idea of beauty through promotional channels such as the print media, the audiovisual media, as well as the Internet. Therefore, beauty, often defined as a very subjective concept, is not always subjective in the health and beauty industry.

In the hegemony of beauty, only one form of beauty is recognized and accepted in society; therefore emphasizing the idea that the concept of beauty is socially constructed (Luna, 2013). There is also a very thin line between beauty and ugliness, hence for a woman to preserve her beauty is a never-ending hard work (Karacan, 2007). Women are more critically judged for how they look and carry themselves, and more severely rejected when they do not conform to these standards. Beauty standards set by capitalists, therefore, will have two major effects; the first is affecting women's self-esteem due to the fear of being judged, and the second is producing order in the society that views beauty as only skin-deep.

Beauty standards is one of the means of society to keep the social order in check – it has been argued as a means to control women by ingraining the idea that they do not have to be concerned about anything else other than how they look, dress and carry themselves in the society (Karacan, 2007). This discourages women from playing prominent roles in society. Such standards not only exist in patriarchal societies such as the Asian societies; it also exists in societies that are considered more progressive such as the American society (Ogundipe, 2014).

In Luna's words, in an increasingly beautified society, "the natural is shunned" and "the quest of beauty has become a pursuit for control and power." However, to the capitalists, this so-called social order is one of the ways for them to dominate the market, such as observed in cosmetics or fashion brands (Luna, 2013). In the United States and Europe, for example, the Caucasians or whites form the ruling class. As a result, the system and values – including beauty standards; are inherently 'white' (ibid).

As the health and beauty industry expands globally, especially in its early days, Western beauty ideals were marketed as the global benchmark of what beauty is (Ogundipe, 2014; Jones, 2011). Therefore, in this case, beautiful was also synonymous to being white. During this era, Western soap brands advertised the concept of cleanliness as equivalent to being white. In the United States, as well as in the colonial countries (in the case of Europe), racial stereotypes were used in advertisements of soaps and toiletries. Such example included an advertisement that claimed that the soap could clean and whiten the skin of people of color, therefore "civilizing" them (McClintock, 1995; Sivulka, 2001 in Jones, 2011). Ogundipe (2014) summed up the Western beauty ideals as "being in line with the ideology of white supremacy"; where physical attributes similar to that of the whites are idealized over the others.

The situation is similar in Asia, although there is a certain degree of differences between the image of ideal women in Asia and the Western world. In the Philippines for example, Luna (2013) pointed out the prevalence of Pan-Asian or "halfies" (a term used to refer to Asians with Caucasian ancestry) faces all over the billboards and advertisements in the country, projected as the image of ideal beauty.

Similarly, in Malaysia, De Cort (2009) found that more than 50% of the advertisements featured Caucasian and Pan-Asian models, and only 25% of the advertisements studied featured models with Asian features. It is also a commonly known fact that there is a prevalence of models with Pan-Asian features in advertisements in Malaysia. Similarly, in South Asia, fair skin is also a matter of obsession. This obsession

also has its roots deeply embedded in the historical background of the South Asian countries; or other Asian countries in general for that matter.

Back in the day, the ruling class in Asia were predominantly the European colonizers. In the case of South Asia, it was the British, and before that, the Moghuls (Ravi Shankar & Subhish, 2007). The main characteristics of both ruling classes are that they have fairer skin tones compared to the other classes of society. This notion has given rise to the obsession towards fair skin, and the double standards towards people of darker skin tone – those with fairer skin were looked up to, and those with darker skin were looked down upon.

With the modernization process has taken place, one may assume that such values no longer exist and women are no longer expected to conform to these values. However, the reality is far from these assumptions. Such a phenomenon is also observed in advanced countries where women managed to 'breach the power structure.' As described by (Wolf, 2002, p. 10);

During the past decade, women breached the power structure; meanwhile, eating disorders rose exponentially, and cosmetic surgery became the fastest-growing medical specialty. During the past five years, consumer spending doubled, pornography became the main media category, ahead of legitimate films and records combined, and thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal. More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers.

The literature suggests that despite modernization and the rise of gender equality movements, women are still 'unliberated' from unrealistic beauty ideals. It can be expected that the situation is no better in less developed countries; where the beauty ideals are generally the same – women are expected to be concerned only of their looks and take up only domestic roles (Sofia Aunul, 2015; Edmonds & van der Geest, 2009).

Studies by Yoshida and Sateemae (2011); Sateemae, Abdel-Monem, and Sateemae (2017) on gender inequality in Southeast Asia revealed that a patriarchal social order is still favored by many in the continent, especially in Muslim communities. It is evident that the previously stated ideals are still expected of women in most Southeast Asian societies. Karacan (2007) also pointed out that such subordination of women does not only need to be analyzed through patriarchy, but also capitalism as the two goes hand-in-hand. Capitalism excludes women from the productive labor and forces her to remain in the domestic sphere, at the same time patriarchy subordinates women through its main institutions such as religion, language, family and motherhood (ibid.)

These hegemonic ideals and values became an easy source of profit for beauty businesses. After all, a woman's body is a commodity for the capitalists. One of the many ways of achieving this is by triggering their emotions to persuade them to purchase the products (Davies, 2016). Taking the case of CJ Walker, for example; back in the days, the features of African American women, particularly their hair; were deemed unprofessional and unsuitable for corporate looks. This is part of the hegemonic Western beauty ideals that have been practiced in American society. CJ Walker's business capitalized on this issue by producing a line of hair products targeted at African American women who aimed to 'relax' their hair to look more 'professional,' hence accepted by the American society (Ogundipe, 2014).

Another similar example is the fairness cream industry in South Asia. South Asian population generally have medium to tan skin tones, yet there is an immense obsession for fair skin. This so-called ideal or obsession is capitalized upon by manufacturers of fairness

creams; with advertisements constantly portraying the female character being unhappy and unaccepted by people around her; yet the opposite happens after she uses the cream and her skin lightened up by two tones (Ravi Shankar & Subhish, 2007). Based on these examples, this research will attempt to relate the types of health and beauty products and emerging themes in WHI's promotional segments to the concept of hegemony as well as its relations to the construction of beauty of Malaysian women.

## **Consumption of Health and Beauty Products in Malaysia**

Past research indicates that the majority of the consumers of health and beauty products in Malaysia are women from the urban area with higher education level and a higher level of income (Ghazali, Mutum, & Lee, 2006; Krishnan, Amira, Atila, Syafawani, & Hafiz, 2017; Rezai, Mohamed, Shamsudin, & Zahran, 2013). In addition to the ability to afford these products, the reason behind their consumptions could be due to these women being conscious about their appearance and physical conditions influenced by societal pressures and media's perception on beauty (Nur Syuhada & Mahfuza, 2017).

Although it was found that women still form the majority of the consumers, Malaysia is also seeing an increase in male users of health and beauty products, particularly those from the urban area (Asia Personal Care & Cosmetics Market Guide, 2016; Mohd Azmi, Al-Tamimi, Dawood, Verma, & Saleem, 2015). This shows that women are no longer the sole target consumers – although they still form the majority – of these health and beauty brands, men are also being commonly targeted.

## **Construction of Beauty Ideals in Advertisements**

Several studies have been carried out on themes in cosmetics advertising in both foreign as well as the Malaysian context. As beauty ideals and advertising strategies are closely connected to the culture of its target audience, different themes may emerge from advertisements from different parts of the world. Interestingly, although cultures differ across the world, the characteristics portrayed as beauty ideals across cultures have proved to bear some similarities to one another (Searing & Zeilig, 2017; Itkin, 2010; De Cort, 2009; Kaur, Arumugam, & Norimah, 2013).

These beauty ideals are propagated through either words or visual images, in various types of media such as print media, television as well as the internet. Advertisers tend to use various linguistic devices such as positive vocabulary and catchy slogans to attract the attention of their target consumers (Kaur, Arumugam, & Norimah, 2013; Chang & McGuire, 2017). The general pattern that emerged from these studies is that the majority of the beauty advertisements studied promoted the idea that their beauty products will change women's lives for the better (ibid).

In Western countries, the most common theme in cosmetics advertisements is aging. In the words of Searing and Zeilig (2017), Western beauty ideals put high regard to youthfulness. The pressure to stay youthful is immensely felt by women, and the anti-aging sector of the skincare market is expected to expand further as the anti-aging skin care products are one of the most commonly marketed in the West (ibid.). A study by Frith, Shaw and Cheng (2005) also highlighted that visual beauty advertisements in the U.S. are often constructed around a woman's body, while in Asia, beauty advertisements often highlight pretty faces. A similar difference was found by De Cort (2009) while comparing the beauty advertisements in the magazines from Belgium and Malaysia; where the Belgian

advertisements are focused towards bodies, while the Malaysian ones are all about the pretty faces. One reason that may lead to this is that in the Asian culture, modesty, i.e., not showing too much skin is considered as part of the beauty ideals (De Cort, 2009).

Past studies also found that the beauty ideals in Asia contain elements that are characteristics of Western features, such as fair skin tone, deep eyelids, and a high-bridged nose. Majority of the models featured in Southeast Asian beauty advertisements had Western features – they were either completely foreign or of mixed heritage (also known as Pan-Asian). This depiction is rather contrary to the genetic makeup of majority Asians; where the skin produces more melanin (hence the skin tones are darker) and the facial features are less sharp or prominent compared to the Western features that are deemed 'ideal.' Furthermore, the obsession with skin lightening products particularly in Asia and Africa in the past sixty years has helped the market for these products to grow immensely (De Cort, 2009; Shankar & Subhish, 2007; Luna, 2013; Chauhan & Tiwari, 2019). As the ideal of having fair skin already exists in the cultures of these countries, it is not difficult for the beauty businesses that produce these products to maintain the dominance of this beauty ideal in the minds of the target consumers.

The media, through advertisements, constantly reminds women of the beauty ideals that they must adhere to. At times, these so-called 'reminders' can be harsh and offensive. In Malaysia's case, it was seen in the recent controversial advertisements from Watsons and Slimme White (Hew, 2017; Candice, 2017). The former implied that darker skin tones are unattractive, and the latter implied that a woman with darker skin tones and overweight deserved to be mistreated by her partner.

The review of past studies on beauty ideals found that although cultures may differ across the world, somehow the beauty ideals across these countries are similar to one another; which suggests that these ideals are being controlled and disseminated all over the world through the advertisements in the mass media. Overall, it was found that there is a significant research gap on health and beauty claims as well as how they construct beauty in the Malaysian context. The past studies only involved advertisements; either print, media, or Internet. There has yet to be promotional segments on television programs dedicated to locally made health and beauty products.

## **Advertising Claims of Health and Beauty Products**

At present, the rising awareness and interest in the health and beauty, have seen to the rise of products in the health and beauty category, marketed as being highly beneficial and 'extraordinary.' Exaggerated advertising claims are made and widely used typically in health supplements and cosmetics products, meant to convince the market of its safety and benefits.

Studies involving unrealistic health claims have also been done on print media, both locally and internationally. Schoonees, Young, & Volmink (2013) looked into the advertising of nutritional supplements in women's magazines in South Africa. Similar studies involving health supplements and cosmetics were done by Lee, Vasquez, Wong, and Shin (2015); Ethan, Basch, Berdnik & Sommervil (2016), and Fowler, Reisenwitz & Carlson (2015) in the United States. In the Malaysian context, studies involving advertising claims were done by Mohd Azmi, Aljadhey, Salem, and Khan (2012) and Mahyuddin, Juriah, Madiyah, Fadhilah, and Sahida (2017), and Kaur, Arumugam and Norimah Mohamad Yunus (2013). The latter involves cosmetics advertisements in magazines, while the first two involve the advertisements of health supplements in magazines as well as the Internet.

One common finding of these studies is that there is a significant portion of the advertisements that contained exaggerated claims. Examples of such claims include the prevention or cure of certain health conditions, slimming and weight loss functions (Schoonees, Young, & Volmink, 2013; Lee, Vasquez, Wong, & Shin, 2015; & Azmi, Aljadhey, Saleem, & Khan, 2012), as well as improvement of skin conditions, i.e. youthful, clearer, radiant skin (Kaur, Arumugam and Norimah, 2013; Fowler, Reisenwitz, & Carlson, 2015). In some of these products, especially herbal supplements, the claims are often made without pre-clinical lab testing and therefore raises the question of what they were based on (Mahyuddin, Juriah, Madiyah, Fadhilah, & Sahida, 2017). While it cannot be certainly proven whether a claim is misleading only by looking at the advertisements, these past studies have shown that advertisements and commercials do contain elements of puffery and exaggeration to a certain degree as a part of their strategies to attract the target consumers (Schoonees, Young, & Volmink, 2013; Lee, Vasquez, Wong, & Shin, 2015; Mohd Azmi, Aljadhey, Saleem, & Khan, 2012).

To conclude, the past studies on advertisement claims mostly revolved around the truthfulness of the claims and thus, the safety of the products. Whereas in the Malaysian context, studies on television advertisements or programs featuring claims related to health and beauty products are still quite limited. Much needs to be understood on how health and beauty are treated.

## Methodology

This study used content analysis to examine how health and beauty ideas are constructed through the promotional segments in WHI. The first part of the process involved quantitative content analysis approach looking at the pattern of claims and themes in health and beauty on the promotional segment in WHI. Krippendorff (2004) argued that quantification does not form part of the defining criteria for content analysis, but the purpose of this quantification is to highlight the frequencies of the types of product being promoted and the number of times a certain product is promoted in the recorded segments. This quantification highlights the aspects of the data that formed 'pattern' in the promotional segments.

The second part of the analysis process in this study involves a qualitative content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis, according to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), is a method to distill texts or words and group them according to categories. The analysis in the second part aimed to understand how health and beauty messages have been constructed in propagating beauty ideals and hegemonic values in (WHI).

The sample for this research consists of recordings taken from a daytime women's talk show on TV3 Malaysia, known as (WHI) which was aired during daytime television, from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m, daily from Monday to Friday. WHI is a talk show which focuses on "empowering women of all ages" by providing "valuable information" and "inspirational stories" (Media Prima, n.d.). In each episode of WHI, there is a six-minute promotional segment where local beauty brands pitch their products. These segments are paid for by the beauty brands. A spokesperson from each brand will try to promote their products and pitch beauty ideas suitable for these products. In this study, three months recording of WHI episodes were done, from October to December 2017. In total, 65 episodes (65 hours) of WHI programs were transcribed and analyzed.

The first part of the data analysis involves using a quantitative method to capture a numerical representation of the pattern of the promotional segments. Before the coding



process was employed, the transcripts are examined to identify types of products and the number of times they were featured during the data collection period.

Later on, the data collected from the television recordings undergoes a process of open coding, where codes are extracted from the transcription and grouped under categories without any predetermined coding frames. Saldaña (2009:3) defined a code as “a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” In this research, two levels of the coding process were carried out — the first level involved in categorizing the types of products. The initial categorization of the products consists of the following categories: Health Juice, Coffee/Tea/Shake, Skin Care, Body Care, Gel/Cream, and Make-up. Following the further observation, the categorization for this stage is further refined into the following categories: Health Tonic and Juice, Powdered Drinks, Skin Care, Body Care, Hair Care, Ointments, and Make-up.

The other part of the analysis involved building coding and categorizations for types of claims used in the advertisement. These claims are identified through keywords or phrases such as “containing X and Y extracts,” “improves A and B functions,” “visible effects” and “enriched with Y and Z” are grouped according to the nature of the content of each statement. The term nature of content here refers to the content of each statement and what it refers to – for example, the ingredients of the products, the benefits of the products as well as other claims that may be made by the spokesperson.

After identifying the categories of the health and beauty claims, these categories are further coded to identify the main themes in the health and beauty promotional segments of WHI. The coded data is then arranged into a table that classifies each product based on the product types, excerpts of claims, and the categories that emerged from each group of claims.

## Findings and Discussion

This study aims to provide an understanding of the construction of beauty ideals and the hegemonic manifests in health and beauty claims, focusing on the promotional segment of the WHI television program. To investigate, this study first examined the types of health and beauty products featured in the promotional segment, followed by the categorization of the claims, the emerging themes and the hegemonic values that underscore the promotional segment.

### Types of Health and Beauty Products

In general, the health and beauty products featured in the segment can be categorized into products of internal and external uses. Internal use of health and beauty products include tonics and drinks that are intended for the enhancement of physical conditions. External use products are those in the forms of creams, lotions, and cleansers that are applied to the exterior to enhance one's physical appearance. The types of products, number of airtime, and brands that fall under each category are summed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Internal use products by brand and number of times aired

Category	Brand	Number or airtime
Internal use	Jus Hidayah Gold	6
	Jus Nusantara Gold	4
	Jus Kasih Sayang	4
	Jus Kocok	4
	Kopi Primadonna Gold	4
	Charisma Phyto Stem Cell	4
	Platinum Drink	3
	Jus Khasiat Lega	2
	Pearl White Pinky Plus	2
	Ladies' Collagen	1
	Lady White	1
	Protein Plus Weight Gainer	1
	Orange Fibre Extra	1
	Total	37

Table 2. External use products by brand and number of times aired

Category	Brand	Number of airtime
External use	Ratna Skincare	6
	Diamond Foundation Roll-on	5
	Perawan Herbal Wash	4
	Tonik Subur Rambut	4
	Pipi Pink Collagen Blusher	2
	Inai Rambut	2
	Platinum Gold 4 in 1	2
	Premium Whitening Lotion	2
	Losyen Nusantara	2
	Losyen Terapi Anggun	2
	Set 5 in 1	2
	Diamond Foundation	2
	Perfect White	1
	Segar Wangi Wash	1
	Set Solekan Ringkas	1
Total	38	

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that both internal and external use are regularly featured in the promotional segment. Health and beauty are presented as conditions that can and should be attained both through both external and internal care. As featured in the segments, the inclusion of health in the equation provided more the reason for consumers to take care of themselves holistically from the inside out, and the more the avenue to sell more products. The products were packaged as daily use items that can easily be included in daily routines and require consistent and regular use for effectiveness. The internal use of products, for example, are packaged as beverages (coffee and juices). The external use items are packaged as beauty power tools, with superlative indicators such as 'Diamond,' 'Platinum' and 'Premium, to address inadequacies or improve one's features and functions.

The product functions are varied and reflective of 6 health and beauty concerns, namely aging, sexuality, general health, weight gain, skin appearance, and hair health. The classification of health and beauty products is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Classification of products based on function and their frequencies

Function	Products	Frequency
Anti-aging	Pearl White Pinky Plus, Charisma Phyto Stem Cell, Kopi Primadona Gold, Ratna Skincare, Premium Whitening Lotion, Diamond Foundation Roll-on, Deeja Cosmetics Set 5 in 1, Platinum Gold 4 in 1	27
Sexual function	Jus Kasih Sayang, Charisma Phyto Stem Cell, Jus Kocok, Ladies' Collagen, Kopi Primadona Gold, Perawan Herbal Wash, Segar Wangi Wash	22
Overall health	Jus Hidayah Gold, Jus Khasiat Lega, Platinum Drink, Jus Nusantara Gold, Kopi Primadona Gold	19
Weight control	Orange Fibre Extra, Protein Plus Weight Gainer, Pearl White Pinky Plus, Jus Kocok, Kopi Primadona Gold	12
Skin lightening	Lady White, Charisma Phyto Stem Cell, Perfect White, Premium Whitening Lotion, Diamond Foundation Roll-on	10
Hair volumizer	Tonik Subur Rambut, Inai Rambut	6

Anti-aging and sexual enhancement products dominate the airtime, indicating to some extent, the concerns of the audience and the demand for such products. The ideal women are those who can maintain their youthfulness, exude sex appeal, and offer sexual satisfaction.

### Categorization of Health and Beauty Claims

Health and beauty claims were categorized based on the idea of hegemonic ideals. Five categories were eventually identified, which includes Desirable Traits, Undesirable Traits, Gender Roles, Emotive Claims, and Recognition.

Desirable traits relate to claims on the product functions and the consequences of its usage. Undesirable traits refer to claims that highlight the consumers' shortcomings before product usage or as a result of not using the product. Gender roles refer to claims that emphasize the roles of women in the family and society and their conduct in playing those roles. In addition to claims that address the women, there were also claims that focus on the brand's superiority. These claims were presented to either emphasize the brand's recognition by relevant authorities or appealing to the consumer's emotions. Examples of keywords from the claims and the claim categories are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of keywords by claim categories

Keywords	Translation	Claim category	
Putih	Fair (skin)	Desirable traits	
Awet muda	Youthful		
Sihat	Healthy		
Bertenaga	Energetic		
Kulit cantik	Beautiful, radiant skin		
Tidak sukar hamil	Fertile		
Tubuh badan menarik	Great figure		
Harum	Pleasant smell		
Langsing	Slim figure		
Pipi kemerahan	Rosy cheeks		
Rapat	Tight (sexual reference)		
Jerawat	Acne		Undesirable traits
Jeragat	Freckles/sun spots		
Kedutan/Penuaan	Wrinkles/Ageing		
Pipi jatuh	Saggy cheeks		
Perut buncit	Fat tummy		
Kulit gelap	Dark skin		
Bawah mata lebam	Undereye circles		
Bawah berbau	Smelly crotch		
Bau belacan	Unpleasant smell		
Muka awek tepi jalan	Ugly face		
Muka bibik	Looks like a house maid	Stereotype	
Ibu	Mother		
Stres	Stress		
Rumah berselerak	Untidy house		
Berumahtangga	Married		
Ada anak	Have kids		
Bangun pagi	Get up early		
Awet muda	Youthful		
Suami bertambah sayang	Husband's		
Nak nampak cantik	loveLook pretty		
Nak cari jodoh	Looking for a match	Recognition	
Kelulusan JAKIM	JAKIM's approval		
Penganugerahan	Asia Pacific		
Asia Pasifik	Awards	Emotional appeal	
Kehebatan			
luar biasa	Extraordinary		
Tidak menjanjikan bulan dan bintang	Not promising you the moon and stars		

In brief, the analysis indicates that although WHI, as the title suggests, often prides itself as a talk show that aims to empower the women of today (Juliana, 2011), the content of these promotional segments do not do justice in empowering the target audiences that consist of non-working women, housewives, and homemakers.

## Themes in the Promotional Segments of WHI

The five categories in the claims were then synthesized to reveal the key themes of the WHI promotional segments. These categories were clustered based on the ideas and messages that were presented to the target customers. The analysis results in three main themes identified from the categories, namely Beauty ideals, Patriarchal demands, and Persuasion to purchase.

Table 5. Emergent themes from claim categories

Claim category	Themes
Desirable traits	Beauty Ideals
Undesirable Traits	Patriarchal Demands
Gender Roles	
Recognition	Persuasion to Purchase
Emotional Appeal	

The first theme, Beauty Ideals, consists of claims highlighting the desirable traits that a woman should have. Claims in this category were identified in the messages on product functions and effects. These claims emphasize that women will only be considered perfect if they possess the ideal traits deemed desirable by the product owners. From Table 5, it can be deduced that the ideal woman according to the promotional segments of WHI possesses the following characteristics: youthful, sexually appealing, fair-and-flawless-skin, healthy, energetic, fertile, ideal body weight, lustrous and voluminous hair; and always prioritizing her spouse, children and her domestic obligations.

The second theme, Patriarchal Demands, emerged from two categories, Undesirable Traits, and Stereotype. Under this theme, the claims revolve around the do's and don'ts of being a woman under the watchful eyes of the patriarch and the patriarchal society. The claims focus on how women should tend to their health and beauty with the men and children in mind; for their role is to provide for and attend to the needs and desires of their husband and children. Women are admonished for having undesirable traits that come with aging and told that they should seek to address these issues to continue to appear desirable for men and society.

It is also noteworthy that certain brands were not hesitant in using strong languages and offensive words against women in their promotional segments. The uses of such claims were intended to incite fear among the target audience of WHI triggering their insecurities and suspending common sense. Women were made to feel inadequate about themselves and persuaded to buy the products in reaching towards becoming that ideal woman as portrayed in the promotional segment.

Meanwhile, claims that revolve around Stereotype emphasized the roles of a woman. It was distinct in these promotional segments that the only roles for women are as the obedient and desirable wives, and nurturing mothers who are obligated to carry out their duty in pleasing their spouse, nurture the children and carry out domestic chores. In particular, products that are claimed to enhance sexuality (e.g. Jus Kocok, Kopi Primadona

Gold, Perawan Herbal Wash) were promoted under the premise that if a woman “looks like a housemaid”, or if she does not look youthful and radiant, and if she loses her sexual appeal, her partner or spouse will leave her. Such claims also play on the insecurities of the target consumers by invoking fear in them that one day their spouses will leave them, should they not adhere to the health and beauty ideals presented to the audience.

Indeed, from the capitalist (business) perspective, the insecurities of these women translate positively on the sales of the products. Unsurprisingly, the health and beauty claims are geared towards persuading the consumers to purchase the products. To make the sales, the brands leverage heavily on the product recognition and accreditation from relevant authorities, highlighting the achievements, awards, and endorsements they have achieved. The show of credibility projects these brands as the major and recognized player in the industry, and thus facilitating them in perpetuating their idea of health and beauty. Additionally, the brands rely heavily on emotional appeals using various persuasive approaches such as through exaggerated claims (e.g. superiority of products), reverse psychology (e.g. “not promising the moon and the stars, but...”) and guilt trips (e.g. giving products as gifts to one’s teachers or mothers as a way of appreciating them).

### Hegemony in Health and Beauty Promotion

The findings importantly highlight evidence of hegemony in the health and beauty industry. The final analysis revealed two modes of hegemony, namely the Reinforcement of Social Order and the Domination of Mind and Market Shares. In the first category, dominant players in the industry were found to perpetuate the patriarchal ideas of health and beauty and used these to capitalize on the insecurities of women. The further grouping of the three themes; Beauty Ideals, Patriarchal Demands, and Persuasion to Purchase relates them to two interrelated hegemonic domains evident in the local health and beauty industry namely cultural hegemony and capitalist hegemony (Please refer to Table 6).

Table 6. Claims, themes, and the hegemonic values they represent

Claim Category	Themes	Hegemonic dimension
Desirable Traits	Beauty ideals	Cultural hegemony
Undesirable Traits	Patriarchal demands	• Maintenance of social order
Gender Roles		
Recognition	Purchasing of beauty	Capitalist hegemony
Emotive		• Domination of mind and market shares

The first hegemonic domain, Cultural Hegemony, relates to the maintenance of the existing social order in society. Social order in this context refers to the cultural; pigeonholed gender roles, identity, and image of women in the Malaysian society. One of its premises is that women always have to ensure that they project a certain, culturally accepted physical appearance to gain society’s approval. Also, women’s key role is to be the caretaker of the spouse, children, and the household (Please refer to Table 4.4). This construction of the ideal women is a deep-rooted social order within the Asian society that can be traced to the pre-modern era (Luna, 2013).

The cultural hegemony is strongly linked to the capitalist hegemony in which the ultimate aim of maintaining the social order is for the domination of the mindshare and market shares. In the eyes of these capitalist businesses, society is ‘in order’ when the values they promote through the products become a norm, and the brand dominates the

market. As observed in the promotional segments, the spokesperson will offer claims and reasons on why their brands should be the primary choice of consumers; regardless of whether these claims are realistic and truthful.

In a nutshell, the messages featured in these segments are manipulative of the emotions and played on the insecurities of the target consumers, therefore persuading them to believe that they are presented with the truth even when they are ridden with fallacies, exaggerations, and unverified information. When the target consumers believe in the claims presented to them, the brands or companies will end up gaining profit and dominating the industry. This cycle recurs when the beauty ideals and values that they have been promoting are deeply embedded in the minds of the target consumers.

## Conclusion

To sum up, in the context of this study, 'health' in the aspect of the health and beauty in Malaysia is indeed promoted as mutually inclusive. The health aspect of these products is promoted as part of 'being beautiful.' However, within the prevalent capitalist hegemony, health has been turned into an apparatus in selling beauty. For the product owners, it is not about promoting health in gaining beauty, but rather about capitalizing on health because it can sell beauty.

From the consumers' perspective, it looks as if being 'healthy' and thus, beautiful will enable women to cater to the needs of men as well as children. The idea of feeling beautiful and healthy is rarely promoted as something that makes women feel good about themselves, for their selves – in which case it would be empowering. Instead, it is always about impressing others. This limitation of roles is, in fact, patriarchal. While from the businesses' perspective, the concept of 'health' as a part of beauty is one of their means to improve their profit margin. By introducing health into the equation, they can expand their range of products and reach out to more consumers. As such, health in the health and beauty industry functions as a means of gaining profit in the patriarchal market system through the exploitation of women. The findings of this research could help scholars in understanding how the claims of health and beauty products construct hegemonic beauty ideals in the Malaysian context. This is important as there have not been many studies done under this theme involving promotional segments of television programs. Ironically, the beauty ideals as constructed by the promotional segments of WHI do not align with the program's aim of empowering women. Also, the findings of this research will hopefully serve as knowledge for consumers, particularly women, who form the majority of users of health and beauty products. This knowledge is expected to hopefully educate women, particularly Malaysian women regarding beauty ideals, gender roles, and how these have become commodities for trade in the health and beauty industry.

Short term gains through rapid sales, capitalizing on the shortcomings in the society, may not work well in the rise of the sophisticated market of educated consumers. Global health and beauty companies have embarked on various efforts to improve their business conducts in the knowledge that today's consumers prefer ethical brands. To stay competitive, local companies should revisit their marketing strategies to ensure long term sustainability. While the rise of these local health and beauty businesses should be applauded, as with other capitalist entities, they need to be kept under watchful eyes to ensure ethical and fair conduct.

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