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Consumer Perception towards Skin Whitening Creams and its Advertisements

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Abstract: Skin whitening creams have increasingly gained popularity, especially because of the vast variety of products available for everyone according to their needs. The beauty of a person is directly in link with his/her skin tone. Also the advertising of skin whitening creams plays a very vital role in the decision making (65%) while purchasing a skin whitening cream. This research examines the consumer's perception towards the skin whitening creams and its advertising. Towards the end a research model frame and discussions is provided.

I. INTRODUCTION

Is wanting to be fair a personal freedom or racism? Is the fairness industry really unfair and ugly?
Contrary to the western society's wish for tanned or sun kissed skin, many parts of the world especially Asia have a growing trend or obsession for lighter skin. The obsession of the country with fair skin is complicated as it's intertwined with social fabric. Paleness is considered to be a sign of distinction or superiority.

A. Statement Of Problem

Even though the skin whitening products are a part of ever growing industry there are few problems faced by them:

1) Experts have raised concerns over the ethics of skin-lightening products, which are gaining popularity by the day
2) The unethical marketing strategies whilst promoting these products.

B. Significance

To facilitate the healthcare experts reading this with an in depth understanding of the problems faced due to unethical marketing of whitening products , problems faced by comparing in promoting such products an steps taken to resolve it. Also to learn the consumer behavior and the mentality while buying the various skin whitening products. It is important for people to understand the side effect of such skin bleaching products especially the ones with harmful chemical ingredients. This research objective is to get reliable and valid results that help A company in planning their future activities and marketing strategies

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review presented the literature relevant to the key concepts underlying the development of the model for this study. A substantial body of literature has been developed discussing consumers' attitudes toward factors influencing decision for purchasing skincare whitening cream cosmetics, marketing strategies used by companies in promoting these products as well as the side effects of such products. Skin whitening, lightening, and bleaching is the usage of various substances containing chemicals in an effort to lighten the complexion of the skin or to obtain an even skin tone which can be done by reducingthe amount of a pigment called melanin in the skin. It's mainly done to treat skin problems like wrinkles, scars, dark spots etc. Particular locations having a very high pigmentation generally called as moles and birthmarks can be depigmented to match or at least look somewhat to the skin around. But its most commonly used to lighten the skin tone.

A. Skin Care

Skin care lies in the interface of cosmetics and dermatology. The products that are intended for cleansing or beautifying are called cosmetics whereas the branch of medicine which deals with the skin, nails, hair and their diseases is called dermatology. Skin lightening products are one such branch of skin care products which are included in cosmetics as well as dermatology.

B. How The Skin Complexion Is Determined

Skin color is determined by the amount of melanin pigment present in the skin. Melanin is the pigment formed by specialized cells called melanocytes present in the bottom layer of the skin's epidermis, the middle layer of the eye, the inner ear, bones heart, etc. Through a process called melanogenesis, the cells produce melanin, which is the pigment found in the skin, eyes, and hair. There are both basal and activated levels of melanogenesis , lighter-skinned people have lower levels of melanogenesis as compared to people with dark skin who have more melanin.

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C. Skin Bleaching

Skin bleaching is a cosmetic treatment used to reduce the prominence of skin discolorations and to even out the skin color .Skin bleaches can be brought over the counter or through prescription

Some people apply skin lightener to their entire body to change the skin tone, but this can be very risky. The active ingredient in most of the skin lightening products is mercury, therefore skin whitening products' usage can lead to mercury poisoning.

D. How do skin Bleaching Products Work?

The pigment that determines the skin complexion is melanin. Areas having more concentration melanin look darker and the ones with low melanin are brighter. Areas with very high content of melanin are called moles. Some pigmentation fade away naturally with time, such as the tan due to prolonged sun exposure or the acne scars. Others such as age spots normally never diminish in a natural way. Skin whiteners reduce or inhibit melanin level in the skin. There are various methods carried out to obtain this:

1) Preventing the tyrosinase's activity reduces the production of melanin. Thus the existing skin cells, that are naturally exfoliated with low content of melanin, are eventually then brought to the surface giving the skin a lighter and more even toned complexion. Inhibiting the synthesis of melanin is the aim of most of the skin lightening products. Many combination treatments are available of topical lotions or gels with the "melanin-inhibiting" containing ingredients along with a sun block, and retinoid that has been prescribed.
2) Laser treatment is one of the most effective ways to lighten or reduce the dark spots on the skin . Laser treatment is a type of whitening technique which works by directing the concentrated beams of light energy on the dark spots to help remove the dark skin, a layer at a time. The various wavelengths' high energy light then creates heat and treats the problem by lightening or completely removing the spots. The Laser treatments for the lightening or destruction of dark spots come in two main categories: ablative or surgical and non-ablative or non surgical. laser (surgical) vaporizes the top layer of the skin to physically peel off the damaged skin that has to be treated and then slowly allow the healthy new skin to grow back.
3) Another procedure is cryosurgery using liquefied nitrogen. The skin cells renew or regenerated themselves by the process of controlled destruction. In this process the excess melanin present in the skin comes to the surface and peels off in some days. Sensitive areas like the genitals where laser can leave a mark or a scar can be treated in this way. The depth and penetration of the pigment determines the efficiency of this procedure. Freckles in any part of the body can be eradicated or treated in the similar manner

III. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer's buying behavior mainly depends on his/her attitudes. The middle aged people have positive attitude towards beauty cosmetic products compared to young aged people.

Through skin lightening products they try to keep the young even toned skin. Middle aged people almost settled in their life have the self spending power to buy beauty products or undergo bleach treatments. Hence, they have positive attitude towards such products compared to young aged people.

Monthly family income does not have much influence on the attitude towards beauty whitening products regarding occupation and marital status, housewives and married people have positive degree of attitude towards these products. Compared to privately employed people andthose doing business, house wives having time to take care of themselves. Now-a-days married woman have conscious about skin care and personal care.

Also the race and geographical dimension plays an important role. While the western countries obsess over tanned skin, major part of Asia, Africa etc wish for fairer skin.

IV. PROBLEMS /SIDE EFFECTS

1) *Allergic Reactions:* Some people get allergic reactions from certain skin whitening products. Some of areas of the body c develop swelling or even skin rashes.
2) *Cancer Causing Ingredients:* Skin whitening products contain hydroquinone and mercury which are carcinogenic.
3) *Disruption Of Normal Skin Functions:* Some skin bleaches have shown to interfere with the normal production of melanin on a person's skin. Some ingredients affect the body's hormone levels.
4) *Liver Damage:* Skin whitening pills could be harmful, no matter what type they are. The reason behind that is when a person consumes a pill; their liver could be damaged because there is a possibility of this organ overworking itself.

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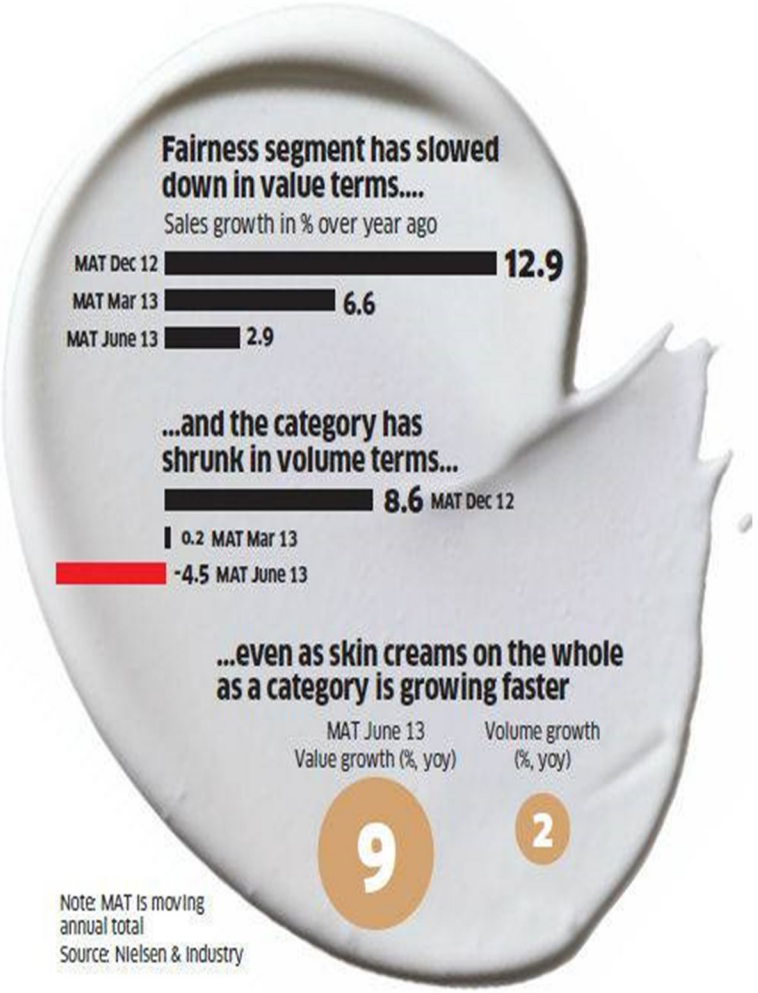
V. UNETHICAL MARKETING

Business ethics is the form of professional morals that examines the ethical codes and moral or problems that arise in a business environment. To all the aspects of business conduct it is applies and is also significant to the conduct of every individual as well as the organizations as a whole. Disciplined dealing with what is good and what is not with moral duty and obligation is business ethics.

A lot of questions have been raised on the marketing campaigns and strategies of skin whitening products. The most common being the social problem of colorism or discrimination based on color. Most of these ads address the fairer skin as the superior or more likable lot and the darker skin toned people as inferior. Also, the today's world follows the television, magazines, celebrities etc. People are constantly comparing themselves to the celebrities because they feel that is how they "should" look like or have skin like. To promote their product the companies use these factors against the consumers. Also at times companies show ads which promise fairness to the level which is almost impossible to achieve thus cheating the customers into buying their products.

VI. CURRENT MARKET SCENARIO

According to numbers from the research firm Nielsen, the fairness cream market has slowed down in value terms and has shrunk in volume over the past few quarters. Meanwhile, the entire skin creams category is registering higher growth. The Rs 2,940-crore market of fairness cream and lotion saw a negative retardation of 4.5% in sales volumes over a year ago, according to Nielsen's moving annual total (MAT) sales for the year till June 2013. Does this mean that the consumers are now aware of the side effects of these creams and are taking measureable steps? (singh, 2013)



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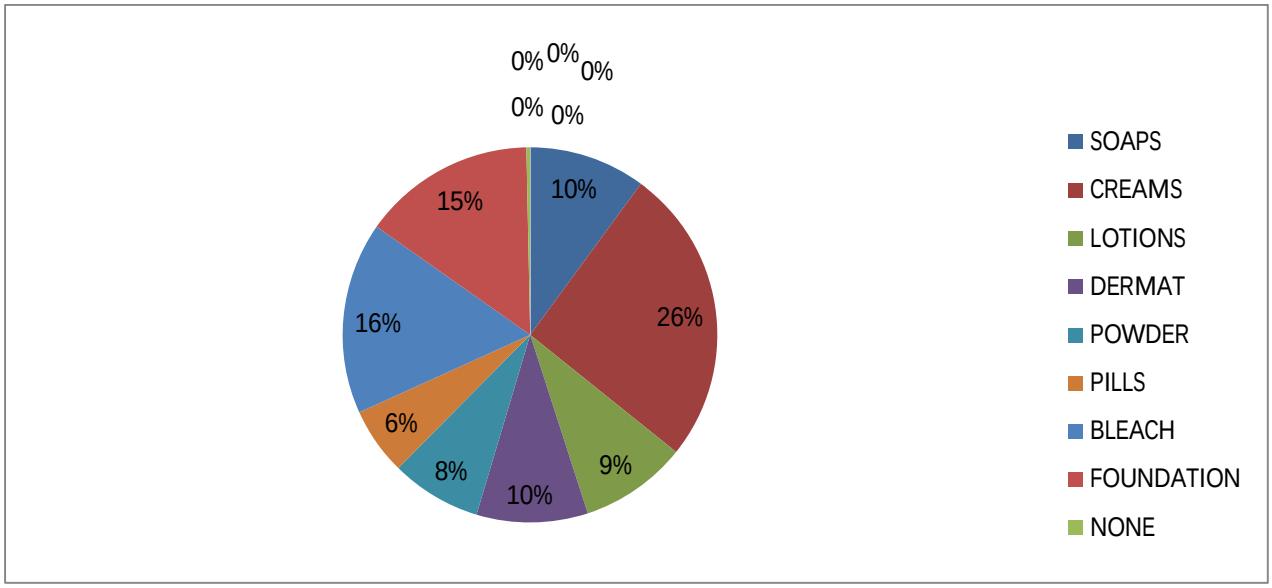
VII. GENERIC QUESTIONS OF ANALYSIS AND PEOPLES AWARENESS TO A FEW PRODUCTS

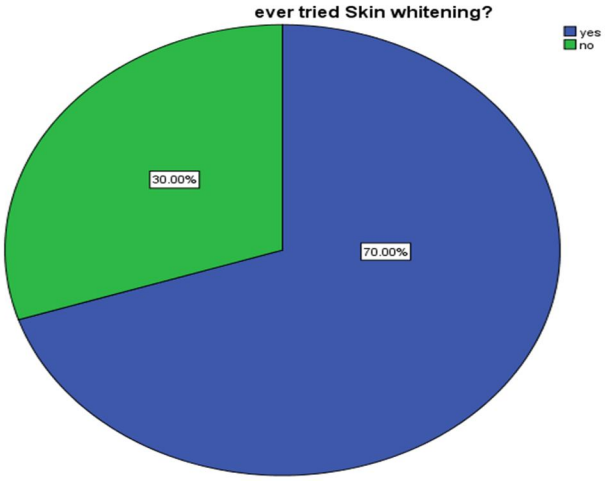
A. *Q1) Which skin whitening products are you aware of?*



- *Interpretation:* The above pie chart shows that people know about the various products available in the market

B. *Q2) how often do you apply ?*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	daily	20	10.0	10.0	10.0
	when i go out	52	25.9	26.0	36.0
	sometimes	46	22.9	23.0	59.0
	regulalry,,but sometimes forget	70	34.8	35.0	94.0
	never	12	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



- *Interpretation:* Out of all the respondents 70% of the people had tried skin whitening creams products and the remaining 30% did not

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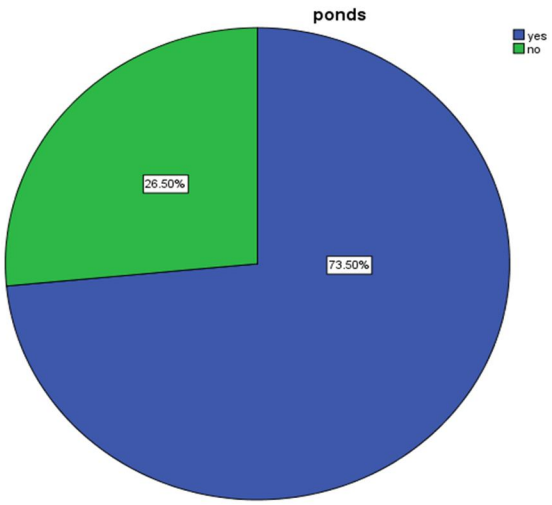
1) *Product Awareness:* (This was general data taken off from sites)

a) *Ponds*

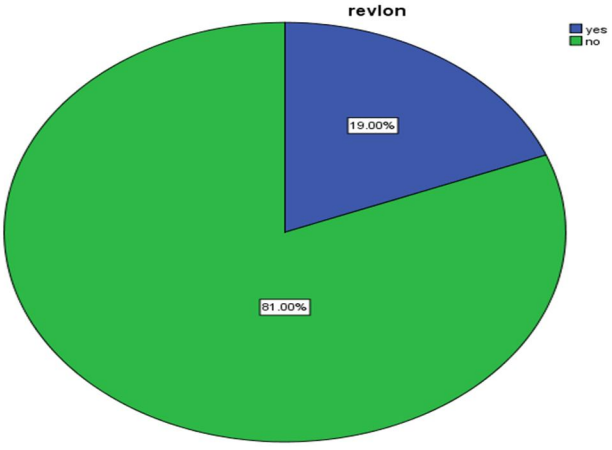
Ponds

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	147	73.1	73.5	73.5
	no	53	26.4	26.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



b) *Revlon*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	38	18.9	19.0	19.0
	no	162	80.6	81.0	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



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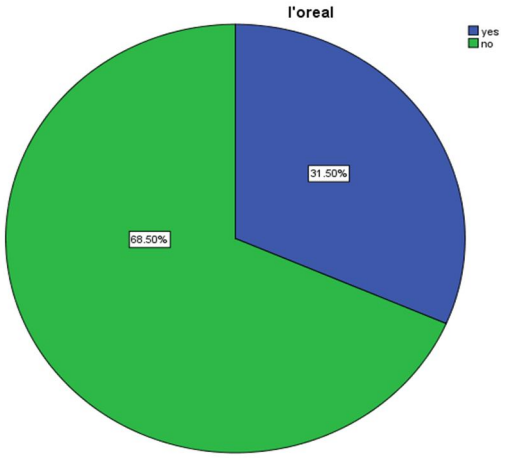
c) Loreal

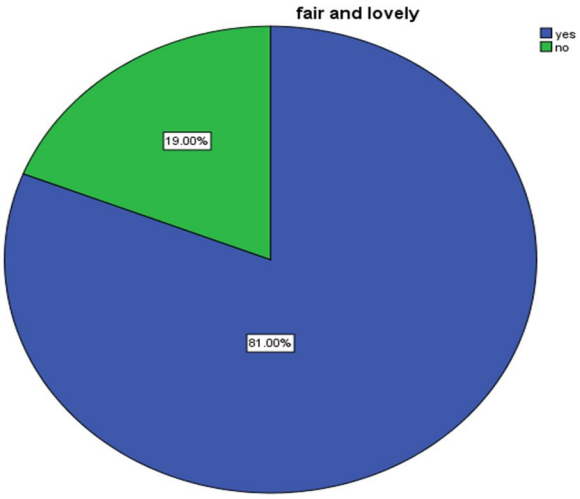
l'oreal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	63	31.3	31.5	31.5
	no	137	68.2	68.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



Fair and lovely

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	162	80.6	81.0	81.0
	no	38	18.9	19.0	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



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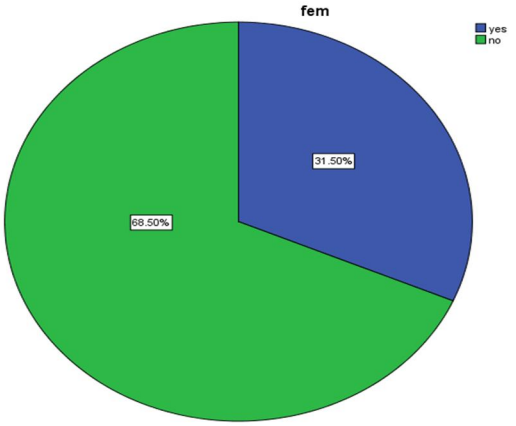
d) FEM

Fem

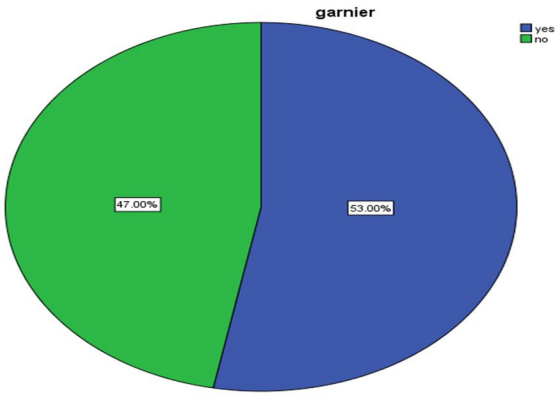
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	63	31.3	31.5	31.5
	no	137	68.2	68.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



e) Garnier

Garnier

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	106	52.7	53.0	53.0
	no	94	46.8	47.0	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



- *Interpretation:* When people were asked about brands of skin whitening cream awareness
- 43.8% of the total respondents knew about the men fairness cream fair and handsome while the rest 55.7 did not.
- Revlon garnier loreal and fem had lesser number of people aware of the brand.
- FAIR AND LOVELY was know by most of the respondents (80.6%)

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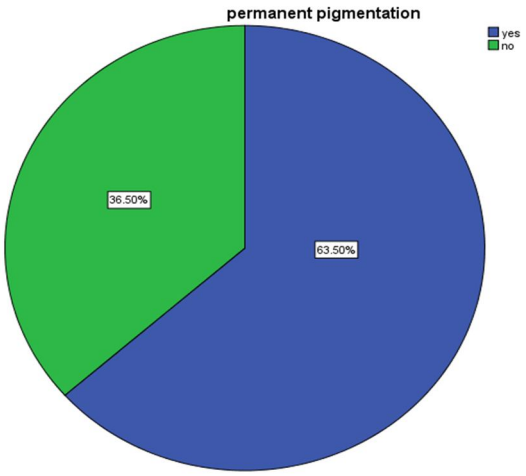
What harmful effects of skin whitening creams are the people aware of?

A)

Permanent pigmentation

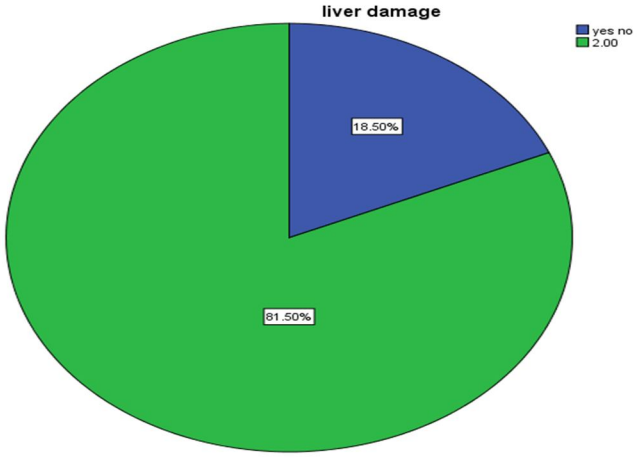
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	127	63.2	63.5	63.5
	no	73	36.3	36.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



f) Liver Damage

Liver damage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes no	37	18.4	18.5	18.5
	2.00	163	81.1	81.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



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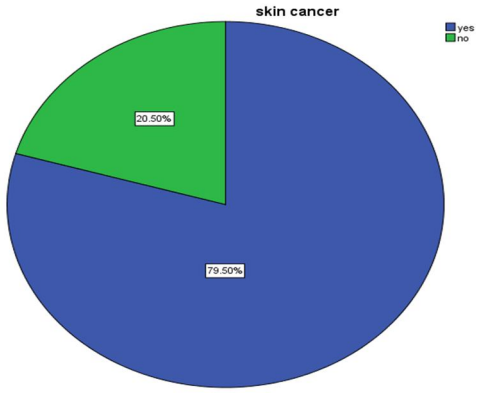
Skin Cancer

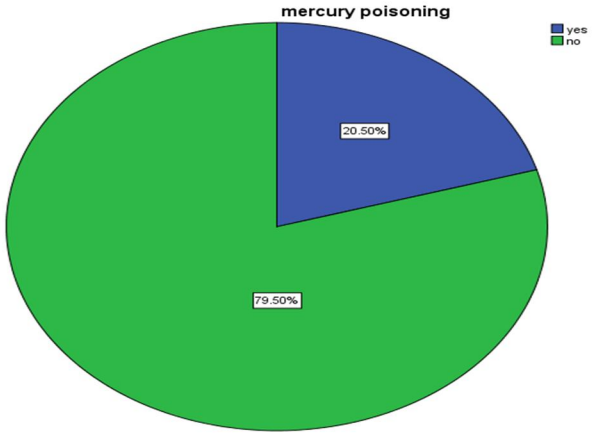
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	159	79.1	79.5	79.5
	no	41	20.4	20.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



g) Mercury Poisoning

mercury poisoning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	41	20.4	20.5	20.5
	no	159	79.1	79.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		



- *Interpretation:* Skin whitening creams have few side effects on long term use. The respondents when asked which side effects were they aware of. The pie chart shows that respondents were aware of skin cancer and permanent pigmentation problems and not many knew about other side effects.

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One-Sample Statistics – Further analysis & findings

Parameter	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Comment on Parameters based on mean values and scale used
HOW OFTEN DO YOU APPLY SKIN WHITENING CREAMS?	200	3.0100	1.1207	.07925	Respondents apply skin whitening creams ‘’sometimes”
HAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIDE EFFECTS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED USAGE OF SKIN WHITENING CREAMS?	200	2.4850	0.8143	0.5158	The respondents agree that the knowledge of side effects has negatively affected their usage
HAVE YOU PURCHASED A SKIN WHITENING CREAM BASED ON ITS ADVERTISEMENT?	200	2.5900	0.8693	.6147	Respondents are divided between “agree” and “somewhat agree” that they buy skin whitening creams based on their ads.
DO YOU NOTICE OR CLICK ON LINKS?	200	3.6550	0.84828	0.5998	Respondents either “rarely” or “sometimes” click in links of SWC on social media
REVIEW ARTICLES AND BLOGS AFFECT YOUR PURCHASE?	200	3.2500	0.84324	.5963	Respondents often buy the SWC based on reviews, articles and blogs.

(https://ncss-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/themes/ncss/pdf/Procedures/NCSS/One-Sample_T-Test.pdf)

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Skin whitening industry is the fast growing industry because of the immense response out of which the skin whitening creams is the most important one. Brands like fair and lovely and ponds rule the market. Though advertisements are the main source of awareness of these products, people don’t blindly follow them. The effectiveness and the past experience play a very important role, thus the companies should mention these factors while promoting the product.Also the market is of the people with average income so the companies should pay attention to the pricing. The skin whitening products have more female customers as compare to men but now-a-days men too. Most of these respondents are well aware of the information and have good knowledge on the side effects of the products. However, despite knowing and being aware of the danger of skin whitening creams, it does not stop them from using.

A. Limitations

While the study of this paper will be useful in many ways there are some limitations too. The sample size was just insignificant which is not even 1/3rd of the total market of skin whitening creams. Also few of the respondents must have falsified their answers.

IX. FUTURE ASPECTS

The future aspect of this paper can have multi-direction. First of all the findings of this paper can be helpful to study and get knowledge about the skin whitening market. Another possible line of future research includes factors that can be included in the promotional activities which will attract the consumers in buying the product. Other than these this study can be used to develop advertising strategies.

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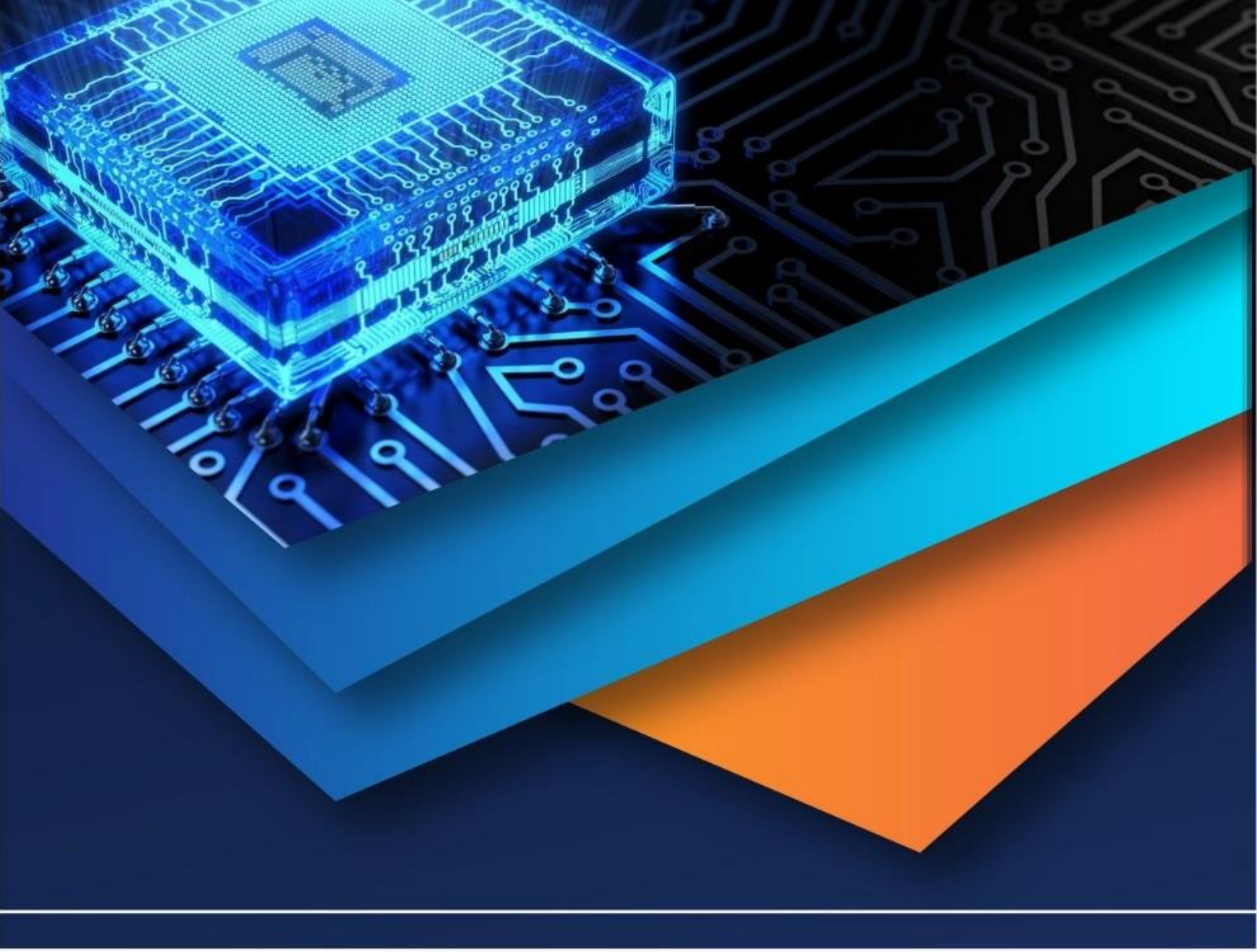

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