

MODEL ETHNICITY AND PRODUCT CLASS INVOLVEMENT: WHITE
AMERICANS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ADVERTISEMENTS FEATURING
ASIAN-INDIAN MODELS

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**MODEL ETHNICITY AND PRODUCT CLASS INVOLVEMENT: WHITE
AMERICANS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ADVERTISEMENT FEATURING ASIAN-
INDIAN MODELS**

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models

ABSTRACT

Studies show that ethnicity of the spokespersons in advertisements play an important role in shaping attitudes and perceptions about the advertised products. Studies involving black, Hispanic and white models in ads have found race/ethnicity to impact credibility and likeability of the product and model. Factors such as product congruence and product class have also shown to impact attitudes of consumers. Although there is a lot of literature available on impact of ethnicity on attitudes of various audiences, no study has explored the effects of using Asian-Indian models in advertising on attitudes of white Americans. Also, nobody has looked at the interactive effects of ethnic advertising and product class involvement on attitudes of consumers. This study examines the impact of using Asian-Indian models in different products class ads on the attitudes of white consumers.

The experiment used three components of attitudes – cognitive, affective and behavioral. Measures for the cognitive component were product claim beliefs and product message credibility. Measures for the affective component were attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the model. The behavioral component was examined by measuring respondents' intention to buy the advertised product.

To examine product class involvement, three high-involvement products (laptop, camera and cell phone) and three low-involvement products (USB flash drive, CD, headphone) were used. The hypotheses were submitted to a between-subject repeated measures ANOVA.

The study did not find any difference in the attitudes of white consumers toward advertisements featuring Asian-Indian models compared with advertisements featuring white models. Also, the study did not find any interactive effects between ethnicity and product class.

A post hoc test on gender, however, showed that white American males had a more favorable attitude toward white models than toward Asian-Indian models. Interestingly, white American females had a more favorable attitude toward Asian-Indian models than toward white models. The post hoc test also showed that males were more likely to buy products across the two product classes than females.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of advertising and marketing, there is a great need felt in many industries to determine how best to advertise to ethnic minorities (Bernstel, 2000; Liebeskind, 2001; Schnuer, 2001). Traditionally, it has been assumed that a market with a white majority and ethnic minorities can be reached simultaneously and as effectively. This has been the reason why ads created for mass consumption have tended to use white models exclusively (Kinra, 1997).

Even though a series of advertising studies documented ethnic consumers as having a preference for spokespersons of their own ethnicity (Qualls & Moore, 1990; Whittler & Dimeo, 1991), advertising campaigns targeted at ethnic segments in the United States (Scholssberg, 1993; Tong, 1994), as well as the United Kingdom (Syedain, 1993), have, to a large extent, continued to be downplayed by advertisers.

America's 1.9 million Asian-Indian immigrants are part of an enterprising community. This group outscores most groups in education and affluence. The US Census 2000 offers interesting insights: Based on the Census study carried on data from 2000, the median household income of Asian Indians was \$70,708—far above the national median of \$50,046. The mean household income in 2000 was \$65,381, the highest of any ethnic group in the United States.

According to the Census Bureau, 63.9% of Asian Indians more than 25 years old hold at least a bachelor's degree, compared with the national average of 24.4%. Half of Asian Indians own their own homes. Less than 2 percent of Asian

Indians under 65 receive public assistance. They also tend to work in high-level positions, with nearly 77% holding managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative jobs, compared with 58% for the general population. Asian Indians are today the largest Asian American group in more than 20 states (American Community Survey, 2005).

The media plays an important role in target marketing. The Asian-Indian media has a significant presence in states like New York and New Jersey. Prominent publications include *Desi Talk*, *India Abroad*, *News India Times* and *The Indian Express*. With the launch of lifestyle magazines such as *Nirvana Woman*, which targets Asian-Indian women, it is now easier to target this ethnic group. Couple this with the low cost of advertising in ethnic media and it is clear that this is a missed opportunity for many corporations (Raju, 1995). Also, very little research has been done on this ethnic minority community. Corporations feel that since so many Asian Indians speak English, this population can be reached through mass-market advertising (Raju, 1995). The Asian-Indian population in the United States grew 38%, almost 15 times the national growth rate, between 2000 and 2005 (American Community Survey, 2005). States with the biggest Asian-Indian population are California (449,722), New York (336,423) and New Jersey (228,250).

Research examining the effectiveness of ethnic advertising lost its original momentum during the 1980s, even as Asian ethnic groups from China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Korea and Taiwan have continued to grow and become more established in the United States (Hulin-Salkin, 1987), Britain (Rex, 1973; Ward,

1987) and other European countries such as The Netherlands (Biossevien & Grotenberg, 1987).

In the United Kingdom, for instance, there is a particular opportunity for high status brands. Iconic ones like Mercedes, Sony and Nike. Asians and South Asians in Britain buy more Mercedes-Benz than the English. The success of Mercedes in Britain is due to the Chinese, Arabs and South Asians. Most of the luxury car brands target members of these affluent communities (Financial Times Information, 2006). Advertisers in the United Kingdom are increasingly looking at ethnic media to target these groups. A publication like *Gujarat Samachar*, for instance, was found to be the perfect medium to reach Gujaratis (people from the Indian state of Gujarat) in the United Kingdom, with no risk of exposing the message to non-Gujaratis. And this worked out to be far more cost effective (Financial Times Information, 2006).

Touchdown Media in the United Kingdom conducted research and found that though most of the households consume regular media, they are more conducive to making a family-oriented decision influenced by their own media (Financial Times Information, 2006). It speaks to them more at their level than a Mercedes ad on a pan-national network. This is the reason car companies in the UK are getting into the South Asian media.

In the wake of this trend in other developed countries, the importance of this ethnic minority and the untapped potential to use this ethnic minority group in main stream advertising in the United States cannot be overlooked.

Although there have been concerns about the response of mainstream

consumers toward advertising using minority models, most prior research has focused on studying how white consumers react to advertisements using African-American and Hispanic models (Whittler, 1989; Whittler & Dimeo, 1991). Studies involving Hispanic spokespersons have looked at ad schema incongruity as elicitor of ethnic self-awareness and differential advertising response (Dimofte, Forehand & Deshpande, 2004). However, few have assessed white consumers' response to advertisements using Asian models (Cohen, 1992; Lai, Tan & Tharp, 1990) and none has explored the attitude of white Americans toward the use of Asian Indians in advertising.

Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) examined the impact of prejudice toward Asians on effectiveness of advertisements with Asian models. The study sought to find out the effects of using Asian models versus white models on advertisement recall and credibility, attitudes toward the model and purchase intentions. The researchers found that the ads containing Asian models had similar effects on subjects as the ads featuring white models. The study concluded that use of Asian models in ads does not affect advertising effectiveness to a great extent.

Cohen (1992) studied the difference in white consumers' responses to advertisements using white and Asian models to promote different kinds of products. Cohen found that Asian models evoked significantly more positive responses than white models for high-tech products like stereo speakers. On the other hand, the choice of models did not affect consumer response in the case of low-involvement convenience products.

What makes for an interesting and strong case for research on Asian Indians

in the United States is that Britain has had a long colonial involvement with the Indian subcontinent; hence, the cultural perceptions and attitudes of white groups toward Asian Indians in Britain would not necessarily be the same as those in the United States (Kinra, 1997). Hence, there would have to be specific research done to understand the attitudes of white Americans towards the Asian Indian ethnic group. The overall results of the study can help advertisers take a more informed decision about use of Asian-Indian models in ads and how its use will impact purchase behavior and ad effectiveness.

With respect to the United States, almost no academic research has been carried out on the impact of using Asian-Indian models on the mainstream consumers. If research can help provide some insight into this, it will encourage advertisers to bring in more diversity and representation in advertising without alienating mainstream white consumers. This study hopes to fill in that very information void.

This study uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983) as the basis for studying product class involvement and the likely impact of ethnic advertising on consumer attitudes and responses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes

Severin and Tankard (1988) in their study said the concept of attitude, as described by psychologist Gordon Allport, was probably the most distinctive and indispensable work in contemporary American social psychology. A number of investigators agree that the concept of attitude was first used in a scientific way in 1918 in a study by Thomas and Znaniecki. They defined the concept as a process of individual consciousness which determines real or possible activity of the individual in the social world (Severin & Tankard, 1988).

Scholars such as Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) have suggested that attitude has three components: affective, cognitive and behavioral. The affective component deals with evaluation of something or feeling toward something. The cognitive component deals with perceptual responses or verbal statements of belief. The behavioral component deals with actions such as purchase intention.

Other scholars say it is best to restrict the definition of attitude to the affective component and leave the relationship between attitude and behavior open for investigation through research.

Part of the problem in defining attitude is that it is basically an internal state and, thus, not available for direct observation (Severin & Tankard, 1988). This leads to some obvious difficulties in measuring attitudes.

Attitudes in Advertising

A lot of research studies can be found that have looked at the affective responses to advertising, familiarity and feelings that advertisements evoke (Aaker, Stayman & Hagerty, 1986). In studies conducted by Batra and Ray (1986) and Holbrook and Batra (1987), these researchers found that consumers form their opinions and act upon them on the basis of elements such as liking, feelings and emotions induced by the advertisement or familiarity triggered by mere exposure to the advertisement rather than the product attribute information.

The affective response process can be explained by two phenomena – one is the formation of an attitude toward a brand and the other is the formation of attitude toward the advertisement. Gorn (1982) found a relationship between affective responses and likeability toward an advertisement.

Studies have shown that attitudes are also shaped by the number of times a consumer is exposed to a message. Advertising studies carried out by Blair (1987) and Pechmann and Stewart (1989) showed that there was a minimum number of exposure required before a message could have an effect on the consumer. In advertising, this is often referred to as the “wear-in” effect.

Researchers have used cognitive, affective and behavioral components to study attitudes of consumers to the product and the advertisement. Cohen in her study in 1992 examined white consumers’ attitudes by measuring their responses toward the ad, toward the product and toward the company. Hoy and Wong (2000) used two additional components – product claims belief and product claims credibility – to study white subjects’ cognitive responses toward ads featuring

Asian models.

In the same study, Hoy and Wong also measured attitude by studying the affective dimension of the subjects. The researchers used three seven-point semantic differential scales with polar adjectives – not likeable/likeable, interesting/uninteresting, unfavorable/favorable – to measure attitudes toward ads. Attitude toward models was measured by using three seven-point semantic differential scales with adjectives not likeable/likeable, like me/not like me, unfavorable/favorable.

Consumers, in their study, rated the claims of the products as more truthful, believable and convincing for ads featuring white models than for ads featuring Asian models.

Theoretical Framework: Routes of Persuasion

The goal of any advertiser is to promote sales, which can be achieved through a process of information and persuasion. Persuasive models have used the concept of hierarchy of effects, which proposes that consumers pass through certain steps as they move toward a purchase action. Two important factors of individual responses to advertising – involvement and attitude toward the advertisement – have been studied extensively within the persuasive hierarchy framework (Batra & Ray, 1985; Burke & Edell, 1989; Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983).

One of the most important contributions to the study of advertising has been the development of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). According to the ELM, the elaboration process in advertising can take two separate routes – the

central or the peripheral route. What route a person takes depends on the level of his/her involvement with the message. On the higher involvement level, adults elaborate data through a central route. In this state, a person is persuaded by means of a strong message that appears in the advertisement. In a low involvement situation, adults elaborate through a peripheral route. In this state, a person is persuaded by the attractiveness of the spokesperson in the advertisement (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; Cacioppo, Petty & Schumann, 1983).

A higher motivation and the ability to think about the message increase the central route and persuasion takes place through this route. On the other hand, when motivation and ability to think about the message are low, persuasion takes place through the peripheral route (Cacioppo, Petty & Stoltenberg, 1985).

Stereotypes of Asian Indians

Stereotypes are commonly considered generalized beliefs about the characteristics of groups of people. Smith and Bond (1993) suggested that stereotypes consist of pre-established expectations about members of other groups. Stereotypes allow those who hold them to reduce uncertainty about what members of other groups are likely to want, to believe and to do. Taylor and Stern (1997) found the term stereotype to be descriptive rather than derogatory – it may be positively or negatively valenced.

In one of the first studies to quantitatively measure geographic stereotypes in film made in the West, Ramasubramanian (2003) studied geographic stereotypes of India under three different areas – India: the place, India: the practices and India:

its people. India as a place was depicted as hot, rainy, polluted, rural areas, mostly unnamed and fictitious places, with locales such as bazaars, palaces, huts, jungles, caves and temples filled with animals, traditional modes of transport (like hand-rickshaws, elephant rides) with lots of riches. The practices associated with India in Western films were religious cults (such as thuggee), Hindu religious practices (such as nature worship, idol worship), superstition, magic, sorcery, death rituals (such as human sacrifice, sati), abuse of women and children (dowry, slavery, beggary etc.), leisure activities (such as henna, sword-juggling, snake-charming) and vices (such as drugs and prostitution). The people of India were portrayed as poor, diseased, non-Christians (Hindu, cult-followers, Sikhs, Muslims), having traditional occupations (such as laborers, unemployed, religious), living in stereotypical places (such as huts, temporary structures, palaces and jungles), speaking accented English and Hindi, wearing traditional Indian clothes.

Such stereotypes play an important role in shaping attitudes. Findings of Cohen's study (1992) support the argument that stereotypes influence how a person perceives product expertise and source credibility. Cohen found that a spokesperson who is viewed as having more expertise and credibility with a product would yield more favorable cognitive, affective and behavioral responses compared to one who has less expertise. The case in point is the strong association of Asians with hi-tech products. The study found that white consumers reacted more favorably to ads with Asian models selling hi-tech products such as stereos. This, she concluded, was because of the stereotype of Asians being more technologically oriented than other ethnic groups.

Owing to the existence of stereotypes involving Asian Indians, it would be interesting to see if this prejudice would influence attitudes toward ads featuring Asian Indians.

Ethnicity

Ethnic awareness is a temporary state during which a person is more sensitive to information related to his or her own ethnicity. Forehand and Deshpande (2001) propose that this ethnic awareness moderates consumer response to targeted advertising. Ethnic self-awareness occurs when a person engages in a process of self-categorization and uses ethnic criteria as the basis for this categorization. Ethnic primes -- visual or verbal cues that draw attention to ethnicity -- direct self-categorization and increase ethnic self-awareness. In a study involving 109 Asian and white participants, Forehand and Deshpande (2001) tried to assess the impact of exposure to an Asian ethnic prime on ethnic self-awareness and on response to targeted television advertising. The study found that exposure to an ethnic prime increased the rate at which participants spontaneously mentioned their ethnicity in self-descriptions (a measure of ethnic self-awareness) and caused participants to respond more favorably to same-ethnicity spokespeople and advertising that targeted their ethnicity.

Prior research has shown that consumers think of spokespersons as being like them or not like them, depending on the extent of identification with the spokesperson. Also, consumers tend to label products for them or not for them, depending on if they perceive the products to be targeted at them (Aaker, Brumbaugh & Grier, 2000).

Forehand and Deshpande (2001) argued that by drawing attention to the ethnicity of a spokesperson, ethnic primes will increase the likelihood that consumers will feel that the ad featuring same-ethnicity actors is targeted at them. Conversely, ethnic primes will also decrease the likelihood that consumers will feel the ad featuring a spokesperson from a different ethnic background is targeted at them.

Earlier it was assumed that advertisements featuring white models would be favorably and equally evaluated by black and other ethnic audiences (Barban & Cundiff, 1964; Barban, 1969). This idea of an all-white general media advertising was consistent with the melting-pot theory (Glazer & Moynihan, 1968). According to the melting-pot theory, the acculturation process ensuing through racial and cultural contacts between migrant groups and the host society would eventually lead them to become more American-like, and, thereby, melt with the larger host society (Glazer, 1964).

An alternative approach was to adopt the practice of “segregated” advertising based on the underlying construct of “equal but different,” wherein advertising using black or other ethnic models was used to target specific segments, using primarily black or other ethnic media (Muse, 1971; Schlinger & Plummer, 1972). This approach was based on the premise that ethnic audiences would be more attracted to advertisements that used models of their ethnicity.

A third approach, much touted by researchers and advertisers alike, was that of “integrated advertising”, defined as “jointly containing white and ethnic models in the same ad copy layout” (Syzbillo & Jacoby, 1974; Bush *et al.*, 1979).

Previous research on use of black models in ads suggests that white consumers do not show extremely negative reactions as a result of exposure to black models in promotional material. More importantly, when black actors were included in advertisements, black consumers were better able to recall the advertisement's content, and had more positive effect toward the advertisements and the actors (Whittler, 1991).

While several comparative studies have been carried out in the United States on attitudes and behavioral patterns of black, Hispanic and white (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Koslow *et al.*, 1994; Nwankwo & Lindridge, 1998), there has been no study in the United States, and few in other countries, that has looked attitudes of white consumers toward advertisements featuring Asian-Indian models. Also, previous research of cross-cultural student perception of advertising involving Asian-Indian models is virtually non-existent.

However, studies have looked at attitudes of white audiences towards Asian models. In her study with Asian models, Cohen (1992) found that compared with advertisements using white models, advertisements with Asian models generated more favorable evaluations for high-technology engineering products, but less favorable responses for products such as an expensive car on which society puts a high premium.

Hoy and Wong (2000) extended Cohen's work by investigating whether model ethnicity (Asian versus white) and product congruency with model ethnicity (congruent versus non-congruent) influenced white male students' cognitive, affective and behavioral responses to print advertisements. The study found that

white male subjects viewed the product claims to be more truthful, believable and convincing when a white model was used to advertise the product than when an Asian model was used. The study further found that white subjects tended to view models of similar ethnicity as one of them. In another study, Qualls and Moore (1990) found that white and black subjects gave a more favorable rating to the advertisement that featured a same-race model.

Use of Female Models

Humans, in particular females, have been used in advertising for a long time in the belief that they make the product more attractive emotionally (Kanungo & Pang, 1973), and that viewers pay more attention to advertisements. Since they are also attributed to providing more meaningful social contexts, human models are considered to have a significant effect in enhancing the persuasiveness of advertising copy, particularly, when there is a similarity with the target audiences (Baker & Churchill, 1977).

A Sexton and Haberman (1974) study showed that more than one-fourths of magazine ads contained “obviously alluring” female models. A study conducted by Smith and Engel (1968) suggested that a sexy female model could affect the perception or image of a product, even if there was very little logical connection between the model and the product. The researchers prepared a print ad for an automobile in two versions. In one version, a female model clad in black lace panties and a simple sleeveless sweater stood in front of a car. She held a spear – on the assumption that the spear might be regarded as a phallic symbol and might lead

the model to be seen as more aggressively seductive. In the other version, there was no model. When the car was pictured with the woman, subjects rated it as more appealing, more youthful, more lively, and better designed. Even objective characteristics were affected. When the car appeared with the woman, it was rated as higher in horsepower, less safe, more expensive, and able to move faster.

Also studies done in the past have shown that the use of female models did not affect the way male and female subjects responded to ads. In general, male and female subjects responded the same way to the ads Smith and Engel (1968).

Since my study aims to look at the effects of ethnicity, it is hoped that the use of a female model will get the subject to pay more attention to the model and the advertisement, and, thereby, amplify ethnic cues in the advertisement.

Model Ethnicity and Message Source Effectiveness

An important reason to study the possible impact of model ethnicity on advertising effectiveness is that other studies have spotlighted several ways a spokesperson may influence the viewer of an ad. There is little doubt that perceived source credibility affects both the evaluation of a message and the amount of attitude change by the audience (Lai, Tan & Tharp, 1990). Increasing the source's similarity to the audience in terms of attitudes, opinion, activities, background, social status, or life style can increase audience liking and identification with the source (Lai, Tan & Tharp, 1990). This, in turn, can increase the persuasive power of the advertisement.

Many factors contribute to message source effectiveness. As applied to an

advertising spokesperson or product endorser, the source should be perceived as having product expertise, likeability, trustworthiness, physical attraction, belief in the product and similarity with the audience (Mowen, 1987; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997).

Whittler (1989) examined college students' reactions to storyboard advertisements that contained actors of different races. He found that the African-American participants perceived themselves as more similar to African-American than to white actors. Based on this finding, Whittler suggested that the ethnicity of the models in an advertisement is a characteristic that may lead the consumers to perceive similarity or dissimilarity with the model. When a model is of a different ethnicity, the consumers may perceive dissimilarity and are less likely to believe in or agree with the messages delivered by the model. This makes the advertisement and the message less effective.

Whittler and Dimeo (1991) examined viewers' reactions to African-American actors in print advertising. They speculated that racially sensitive viewers would probably not want to define themselves in relation to racially dissimilar actors. In viewing an advertisement that uses models of a different race, consumers may engage in a negative identification process. Consequently, they would have unfavorable feelings towards the different race model and would probably not accept this model's testimony about a product or service.

Kai, Tan and Tharp (1990) found in a study that use of Asian models, for the most part, does not cause prejudiced respondents to evaluate a product or advertisement more negatively than when white models are used. The study sought

to test how well use of Asian versus white models affected advertisement recall and credibility, attitudes towards the model and purchase intentions. There was a very small effect on those moderately (as versus very) prejudiced on some measures when Asian models were used, but, by and large, there was little effect on respondents as a whole. The study concluded that advertisers need not fear negative reactions from use of non-white models.

Hoy and Wong (2000) and Whittler (1989) found that model ethnicity will have an impact on white subjects' response toward the model because white subjects tend to view white models as more similar to themselves than Asian-Indian models. These studies were based on the study carried out by Whittler and Dimeo (1991). However, Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) found the contrary to be true. Their study showed that advertising effectiveness -- as measured by aided recall, attitudes towards the advertisement, the product intentions to buy and ad credibility -- was not affected by varying the ethnicity of the model in the advertisement. However, this contrary finding may have been due to methodological issues. Lai, Tan and Tharp's study looked at advertising effectiveness and ethnic prejudices of subjects. Subjects might have felt uncomfortable admitting their ethnic biases so openly. This attempt to adhere to social norms may have skewed their responses.

In light of the previous body of literature that has found a relationship between attitudes and model ethnicity, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: White Americans will react more favorably to ad product claims showing a white model than to ad product claims showing an Asian-Indian model.

H2: White Americans will find the message more credible in the ad featuring a white model than the message in the ad featuring an Asian-Indian model.

H3: White Americans will react more favorably to the ad containing a white model than the ad containing an Asian-Indian model.

H4: White Americans will find a white model more attractive than an Asian-Indian model.

H5: White Americans will have a higher likelihood of buying a product sold by a white model than a product sold by an Asian-Indian model.

Product Class Involvement and Advertising Effectiveness

The concept of product involvement has been examined by a number of studies dating back to Mitchell (1979), who defined involvement as “an individual level, internal state variable whose motivational properties are evoked by a particular stimulus or situation.” Laurent and Kapferer (1985) provided a helpful review of the extant work in the field and concluded that early efforts to address product involvement date back to the work of Sherif and Cantril in 1947.

Other important work has been contributed by Rothschild (1979), Vaughn (1980), and Richins and Bloch (1986). This work has established the premise that consumers respond differently to advertising messages depending upon their level of involvement with the type of product being promoted.

Celsi and Olson (1988) further suggested that the essential characteristic of product involvement is the perceived personal relevance that a brand offers to

consumers. This relevance is enhanced when consumers make a link between the product's image or attributes and its potential helpfulness in achieving their own personal goals and values. Taking this link to its logical conclusion, product involvement would be, therefore, very strong when a consumer perceives a strong association between the product's image and attributes and the consumer's own personal goals and values (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Involvement with a product can also differ within an individual consumer depending upon situational factors. Celsi and Olson (1988) posit that a consumer's associations with a product are stored in memory until "activated" by a situation.

They suggest that this activation is highly dependent upon individual situational factors which are highly "experiential and phenomenological" in nature—but which can serve as a powerful trigger which turns the latent memory associations into active thoughts. The activation of these personally relevant thoughts has been called "felt involvement" (Celsi & Olson, 1988).

Once this activation occurs, consumers become motivated to act upon their associations with a product either through cognitive reactions such as attention or comprehension of product advertising messages, or even overt behaviors, such as searching for, or purchasing, a product.

Zaichkowsky's body of work (1985, 1986, 1994) has provided researchers with a tool to measure and compare involvement levels for different classes of products known as the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII). Although Zaichkowsky also views product involvement at an individual level ("a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests")

[Zaichkowsky, 1985: 342]), the PII suggests some products such as instant coffee, bubble baths, and breakfast cereals have the inherent potential for low levels of involvement for most individuals.

Other classes of products such as wine, facial tissues, and pain relievers have the potential for an average level of involvement, and others, such as automobiles, have the potential for a higher level of involvement for most individuals. Zaichkowsky's typology was employed in his study, with facial tissues serving as the surrogate for a low involvement product and automobiles for high involvement products.

Previous studies of the effects of product involvement on dependent measures of advertising effectiveness (i.e., attitudes, recall, etc.) have generally found that high involvement products tend to score higher than low involvement products (Gardner et al., 1985; Thorson & Page, 1988; Hitchon & Thorson, 1995). For example, in an experiment measuring the effects of product involvement and emotion, Thorson and Page (1988) found that commercials for brands with high product involvement (as determined by Zaichkowsky's PII) generated significantly higher scores for the dependent measures of brand name recall, brand attitudes, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward purchasing, and intention to purchase.

Based on the results of numerous empirical studies, researchers have concluded that advertising message involvement (AMI) – a motivational state that induces message processing – influences the manner in which individuals process advertising information (Gardner, 1985; Laczniaak & Muehling, 1993).

Laczniaak and Muehling (1993) found that highly involved consumers use

both attitudes toward the ad and brand beliefs to formulate post-exposure brand attitudes, while less involved consumers rely primarily on attitude toward the ad. Previous studies have suggested that the extent to which individuals draw inferences from ad messages (Johar, 1995) and accept environmental claims (Tucker, Reece & Rifon, 1996) depends on their level of involvement with the advertised message.

In studies investigating the effects of AMI, most researchers have used manipulations of the construct with the goal of creating high and low levels of involvement in their subject groups.

The level of involvement that receivers feel (i.e. their overall subjective feeling of personal relevance for an ad) and subsequent advertising processing tendencies are likely to be influenced by more enduring personal variables such as product class involvement and product knowledge (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter, 1990; Celsi & Olson, 1988; Laczniak & Muehling, 1993).

In fact, and in recognition of the notion that personal-level factors such as product class involvement are likely to exert a significant influence on AMI, some researchers have chosen to group subjects into high and low involvement AMI categories on the basis of these personal factors rather than trying to create differing AMI levels via experimental manipulation (Laczniak & Muehling, 1993).

Celsi and Olson (1988) and Gill, Grossbart and Laczniak (1988) also contend that highly involved and familiar receivers are more likely to find an advertised message for brands in the product class to be relevant to their lives and thus, will evaluate its contents in a critical and reasoned fashion.

Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) pointed out in their study that product category might affect the results of studies which attempt to assess white consumers' responses to minority models. Hoy and Wong (2000) tried to study product category as a predictor of consumer response to a product category. Their study found that white male subjects viewed the product claims to be more truthful, believable and convincing when a white model was used to advertise the product than when an Asian model was used. These results were consistent with the message source/spokesperson literature that indicates that the perceived similarity between the spokesperson and audience enhances message credibility (Mowen, 1987; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). The study tested two food products – rice and pizza, which are generally considered low involvement products. Findings of this study had implications for similar product categories but not for high involvement products, such as computers and audio equipment. Therefore, further research is required to examine white consumers' responses to Asian models promoting other product categories, especially for high involvement products. Based on the above literature it can be hypothesized:

H6: White Americans will have higher scores on the five measures of attitude – product claims belief, message credibility, ad likeability, model attractiveness and buying intention – for white models promoting low involvement products than for Asian-Indian models promoting the same class of products.

H7: White Americans will have higher scores on the five measures of attitude – product claims belief, message credibility, ad likeability,

model attractiveness and buying intention – for white models promoting high involvement products than for Asian-Indian models promoting the same class of products.

METHODS

Design and Independent Variable

The experiment was a 2x2 between-subject design, with ethnicity of the model (Asian Indian/white American) as a factor and product class involvement (high involvement/low involvement) as another factor. A total of 184 subjects were included in the study, which included 103 females and 81 males.

The experimental treatments consisted of twelve mock advertisements containing six different products: 1) Three different message advertisements featuring white models in high involvement ads; 2) three different message advertisements featuring white models in low involvement ads; 3) three different message advertisements featuring Asian-Indian models in high involvement ads; and 4) three different message advertisements featuring Asian-Indian models in low involvement ads.

2x2 Between-subject experimental design

	(IV) Ethnicity of the Model	
(IV) Product Class	<i>(Level 1) Asian Indian</i>	<i>(Level 2) White American</i>
<i>(Level 1) Low Involvement</i>	Asian Indian in Low Involvement Product Class	White American in Low Involvement Product Class
<i>(Level 2) High Involvement</i>	Asian Indian in High Involvement Product Class	White American in High Involvement Product Class

To manipulate ethnicity, participants were given different message advertisements featuring either white or Asian-Indian models. Responses to cognitive, affective and behavioral cues were recorded to see if the subjects responded any differently when exposed to the advertisements containing the two different ethnic models.

Product class involvement was manipulated by exposing subjects to two different classes of technological product ads: Cell phone, digital camera and laptop were the high-involvement products; and USB flash drive, headphone and writable CDs were the low-involvement products.

Two hundred students from a mid-western university campus were assigned the experiment. The students were divided into four groups, with each group containing 50 males and 50 females. The first group was assigned advertisements containing Asian-Indian models selling high involvement products (cell phone, digital camera and laptop). The second group was assigned advertisements containing Asian-Indian models selling low involvement products (USB flash drive, headphones and CD-W). The third group was shown advertisements containing white models selling high involvement products; and the fourth group was assigned advertisements containing white models selling low involvement products. Of the 200 questionnaires received, 16 questionnaires had to be discarded. The effective sample size for this study was 184.

All advertisements within each product class were consistent in terms of their layout, body copy, headline, with the exception of the ethnicity of the model.

Each ad contained either an Asian-Indian model or a white model. Skin tone

of Asian-Indian models with lighter skin was changed to reflect their ethnicity. To enhance validity, ad copy was adapted from overseas magazines to ensure that participants had not seen these ads. Likewise, fictitious brand names were used to avoid the influence of pre-existing brand inferences. All advertising copies confirmed to 10'' x 8'' magazine-size, color advertisements of glossy finish and were prepared using Adobe Photoshop and QuarkXPress.

Ten white and ten Asian-Indian female models were chosen randomly and a pretest was carried out with 20 white undergraduates. Participants were shown color photographs of models on an overhead projector. All the models were in the ages 18-25. Participants were asked to evaluate the models on a seven-point scale, where '1' was Very Unlikable and '2' was Very Likeable. To negate the effects of biases toward models, unknown faces were used in all the advertisements.

The mean score of the models ranged from 3.38 to 5.52. A total of six models – three white and three Asian Indians – were used in the final ads. The Asian-Indian and white models that were chosen for the study were not significantly different in terms of likeability. The mean score of the six models ranged from 4.29 to 4.76. This comparability in scores ensured that any difference arising in the study was not due to the differences in likeability.

Dependent Variables

Cohen (1992) looked at white consumers' affective and behavioral responses. Cohen had examined attitudes toward the advertisement, attitude toward the product and attitudes toward the company. The study supported the notion that

white Americans have stereotypes for certain product categories.

The measures were examined via seven-point semantic differential scales with bi-polar adjectives as end points. This was based on the study carried out by Cohen (1992).

The five variables used in this study were based on an earlier study carried out by Hoy and Wong (2000) where they looked at affective, cognitive and behavioral responses of white consumers to Asian and white models.

Cognitive component

Cognitive dimensions were indexed by asking the subjects to rate their beliefs about product claims and their beliefs about message credibility. In the first question, subjects were asked to rate the product on three, seven-point Likert scales with Poor Value/Good Value, Meets Expectations/Does Not Meet Expectations (reverse coded) and Inferior Technology/Superior Technology. The second question required subjects to rate credibility of the claims on three, seven-point scales with False/True, Believable/Unbelievable (reverse coded) and Unconvincing/Convincing.

Affective Components

To examine the affective response towards the advertisements, subjects were asked to rate the advertisement on three, seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives Not Likeable/Likeable, Interesting/Uninteresting (reverse coded) and Unfavorable/Favorable.

To examine the affective response towards the models, three, seven-point statements were used to measure the subject's opinion of the relative physical attractiveness of a model featured in an ad as compared to other models that one normally saw. The polarities were Much Less Noticeable/Much More Noticeable, Far Above Average/Far Below Average (reverse coded) and Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree. The scale was original to Bower (2001). An alpha of 0.80 was reported for the scale (Bower, 2001). Validity: No explicit examination of the scale's validity was described by Bower (2001).

A test of reliability carried out on this scale for my study reported an alpha of 0.70.

Behavioral Component

To measure the behavioral component of subjects, three statements were used to record their purchase intention. Subjects were asked to respond to the statements – would you like to try this product; would you buy this product if you happened to see it in a store; and would you actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it – on a seven-point Likert scale with polarities NO, DEFINITELY NOT/YES, DEFINITELY on either end of the scale.

This scale was originally used by Kilbourne, Painton and Ridely (1985) to measure the inclination of a consumer to buy a specific product. Their study involved 238 males and 186 female undergraduate students and reported an alpha of 0.91. A test of reliability carried out on this scale for my study reported an alpha of 0.83.

PARTICIPATION AND PROCEDURE

Participants were invited into a room and randomly handed over the advertisements and questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed equally between males and females, such that each group – a white model with a high-involvement product; a white model with a low-involvement product; an Asian-Indian model with a high-involvement product; and an Asian-Indian model with a low-involvement product – had an equal number of males and females. The consent form and instructions were clearly read out. They were given 15 minutes to examine the advertisements and fill out the accompanying questionnaire. Each participant was required to read three advertisements.

The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 200 subjects, who were recruited from a freshman class of a mid-western university. However, only 184 cases were useable. The sample had 103 females and 81 males.

A convenience sampling was used for the experiment. Since the study was conducted on campus, a request for participants was sent out through the university's mailing list and in-class invitations.

RESULTS

All seven hypotheses were tested by submitting the data to a between-subjects repeated measures analysis of variance. There were four different sets of advertisements. Each set contained either a white model with a high-involvement product, a white model with a low-involvement product, an Asian-Indian model with a high-involvement product, or an Asian-Indian model with a low-involvement product. While the groups showed no significant differences overall, two main effects reported an alpha of 0.08.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted that white Americans would react more favorably to product claims in the advertisement showing a white model than to product claims in the advertisement showing an Asian-Indian model.

The score on the cognitive component did not reflect any statistical significance (Table 1A) in group means. So, the hypothesis that white Americans will react more favorably to product claims based on the ethnicity of the model is rejected. However, the main effect of ethnicity reported an alpha of 0.08 ($p > .05$, $M = 4.58$ for white model, $M = 4.36$ for Asian-Indian model). While the test may not have achieved significance, one cannot discount the influence of ethnicity on consumers' response to ads featuring models of a different ethnic background.

Table 1A: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
 Repeated Measures ANOVA: Product Claims Beliefs

Source	Mean*		F	Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	W	I				
Ethnicity	4.58	4.36	2.927	1	.089	.016
Product Class			8.501	1	.004	.045
Ethnicity * Product Class			.682	1	.410	.004

($\alpha = .05$)

* W = White Model, I = Asian-Indian Model

The study, however, did find that readers were more favorable to high-involvement products (M=4.66) than low-involvement products (M=4.28), $F = 8.5$, $p < .05$ (Table 1B). This is in line with what past research has found (Gardner *et al.*, 1985; Thorson & Page, 1988; Hitchon & Thorson, 1995).

Table 1B: Product Class: Estimated Marginal Means

Class of Product	Means	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High Involvement	4.662	.095	4.475	4.849
Low Involvement	4.280	.090	4.102	4.458

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis predicted that white Americans will find the message in the ad featuring a white model to be more credible than the message in the ad featuring an Asian-Indian model. An important reason to study the impact that model ethnicity has

on advertising effectiveness is that studies have highlighted how a spokesperson can influence the reader of an ad. Perceived source credibility affects both how a message is evaluated and changes to audience attitude (Lai, Tan & Tharp, 1990).

The main effect of the ethnicity of models on product claims credibility was not significant, although it reported a significance of 0.08. Thus, one cannot dismiss the finding that white subjects perceived product claims to be more credible when the ad contained a white model (M = 4.73) than when it contained an Asian-Indian model (M = 4.45) (Table 2A). However, hypothesis 2 was not supported at $\alpha = .05$, hence, this hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2A: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Product Claims Credibility

Source	Mean*		F	Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	W	I				
Ethnicity	4.73	4.45	3.094	1	.080	.017
Product Class			7.774	1	.006	.041
Ethnicity * Product Class			.080	1	.777	.000

($\alpha = .05$)

* W = White Model, I = Asian-Indian Model

However, in line with findings of previous research studies, this study found that when it came to product claims, subjects found high-involvement products (M=4.81) more credible than low-involvement products (M=4.38), $F = 7.7$, $p < .05$ (Table 2B).

Table 2B: Product Class: Estimated Marginal Means

Class of Product	Means	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High Involvement	4.81	.113	4.59	5.04
Low Involvement	4.38	.108	4.166	4.592

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis predicted that white Americans will have a more favorably attitude toward an ad featuring a white model than towards an ad containing an Asian-Indian model. Ethnicity was found to have no effect on subjects' attitude toward the advertisement or their involvement with different product classes. The hypothesis was not supported (Table 3).

Table 3: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Attitude toward the Advertisement

Source	F	Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ethnicity	2.231	1	.137	.012
Product Class	1.650	1	.201	.009
Ethnicity * Product Class	.527	1	.469	.003

(*alpha* = .05)

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis predicted that white Americans will find a white model featured in an ad to be more attractive than an Asian-Indian model. The test failed to

support the hypothesis (Table 4).

Table 4: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Attitude toward the Model

Source	F	<i>Df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ethnicity	1.566	1	.212	.959
Product Class	10.044	1	.002	.053
Ethnicity * Product Class	9.112	1	.100	.015

(*alpha* = .05)

Hypothesis 5

White Americans will have a higher likelihood of buying the product featured in an ad with a white model than in an ad with an Asian-Indian model. The findings showed that white Americans were no more likely to buy the product featured in the white model ad than the product featured in the Asian-Indian model ad. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported (Table 5).

Table 5: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Intent to Buy

Source	F	<i>Df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ethnicity	.114	1	.736	.001
Product Class	.035	1	.853	.000
Ethnicity * Product Class	1.418	1	.235	.008

(*alpha* = .05)

Hypothesis 6

The sixth hypothesis predicted that white Americans will have a higher response level to white models promoting low-involvement class of products than to Asian-Indian

models promoting the same class of products.

Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) pointed out in their study that product category might affect the results of studies which attempt to assess white consumers' responses to minority models. Their study found that white male subjects viewed the product claims to be more truthful, believable and convincing when a white model was used to advertise the product than when an Asian model was used.

This study did not find any significant interactive effects between ethnicity and product class $p > .05$, $F = 10.04$ (Table 6). The hypothesis is rejected. Interestingly, Asian-Indian models endorsing low-involvement products such as CDs, headphones and USB flash drives had a higher attractiveness mean ($M = 5.011$) than white models selling low-involvement products ($M = 4.55$) (Table 7).

Table 6: Test of hypothesis for between-subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Attitude towards the Model

Source	F	Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ethnicity & Product Class	10.04	1	.10	.015

($\alpha = .05$)

Hypothesis 7

The Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) study had tested two food products – rice and pizza – which are generally considered low involvement products. They found that in highly prejudiced white subjects, they preferred white models over Asian models. To test if the same interaction was found with high involvement products, this study predicted that white Americans will have a higher response level to white models promoting high

involvement class products than to Asian-Indian models promoting the same class of products. No significant interactive effect was found. The hypothesis, thus, failed to support the prediction. However, out of all the measures, only one affective response – attitude toward the model – came close to achieving significance (sig = .08). Subjects found white models selling high-involvement products (M = 5.31) more attractive than Asian-Indian models selling high-involvement products (M = 5.24).

Table 7: Estimated Marginal Means
Interaction Effects: Ethnicity * Product Class

Ethnicity of Model	Product Class	Mean	Std Error
White Model	High Involvement	5.311	.151
	Low Involvement	4.558	.154
Indian Model	High Involvement	5.248	.169
	Low Involvement	5.011	.151

Post hoc Test

After the initial analysis failed to support any of the hypotheses, a post hoc test was carried out to see if there was any difference in the attitudes of males and females. The results found a difference in attitudes of males and females toward the ethnicity of models ($p < .05$, $F = 3.957$). When it came to attitude toward the model, males responded more favorably toward white female models ($p < .05$). Males recorded an overall mean score of 5.269 (Table 8). Their mean score for white models was 5.45, while their mean score for Asian-Indian models was 5.08. Females, on the other hand, found Asian-Indian

models more attractive than white models. Females had an overall mean score of 4.920. Their mean score for white model was 4.68, while their mean score for Asian-Indian model was 5.152.

Table 8: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Effects of gender on attitude toward model

Source	Mean*		F	Df	Sig.
	M	F			
Gender	5.269	4.920	3.957	1	.04

($\alpha = .05$)

* M = Male Respondents, F = Female Respondents

The test also found that when it came to intention to buy the advertised product, gender played an important role. Males were more likely to buy a product than females ($p < .05$, $F = 10.246$). Males had an overall mean score of 3.575 (Table 9) whereas females had a score of 3.044. The post hoc test on gender and intention to buy, however, did not yield any interactive effects between gender and product class, and gender and ethnicity. No differences were found on the remaining measures of attitude.

Table 9: Test of hypothesis for between subjects effects
Repeated Measures ANOVA: Effects of gender on buying intention

Source	Mean*		F	Df	Sig.
	M	F			
Gender	3.575	3.044	10.2467	1	.002

($\alpha = .05$)

* M = Male Respondents, F = Female Respondents

DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore whether ethnicity of a model appearing in an advertisement influenced the attitude of white Americans on three levels – cognitive, affective and behavioral.

The study did not find significance at $\alpha = .05$. White subjects did not view the product claims to be more credible, or find the ad to be more appealing when a white model was used to advertise the product than when an Asian-Indian model was used. Also, white subjects were not any more likely to buy the product featuring a white model than the one featuring an Asian-Indian model.

However, this study assumes significance in light of the fact that two main effects came close to achieving statistical significance. With a sample size of 184 and a repeated measures test, it is safe to assume that there was sufficient statistical power for the results.

The main effect came close to significance ($\text{sig} = .08$) for ethnicity on product claims beliefs. White subjects rated product claims of white models ($M = 4.583$) higher than those of Asian-Indian models ($M = 4.359$). Similarly, the main effect came close to significance for ethnicity on product claims credibility ($\text{sig} = .08$). White subjects found product claims in white model ads ($M = 4.735$) more believable than product claim in Asian-Indian model ads ($M = 4.459$). These results provide partial support to the message source/spokesperson literature that argues that perceived similarity between spokesperson and audience enhances message credibility (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). In a study undertaken by Whittler and Dimeo (1991), the researchers found that white subjects were less likely to buy the product that was featured in ads containing African-American

models. Similarly, they also found that the white subjects had less favorable attitudes toward the products that featured African-American models.

One of the areas that had not been explored in earlier studies was the interaction of model ethnicity and product class on attitude toward the model. While no interactive effects were found between ethnicity and product class at the computed alpha level, the test approached significance at $\alpha = .08$). Subjects found white models ($M = 5.31$) endorsing high-involvement products more attractive than Asian-Indian models ($M = 5.24$) endorsing high-involvement products. This supports the theoretical foundation that perception of one's similarity to the model influences one's evaluation of the model as a product endorser.

Interestingly, the study also found that white consumers found Asian-Indian models ($M = 5.011$, $\text{sig} = .08$) endorsing low-involvement products to be more attractive than white models ($M = 4.558$, $\text{sig} = .08$) promoting the same class of product. This incongruity in the affective component may be explained by empirical studies (Cagley & Cardozo, 1977) that have shown that audience prejudice affects ad evaluation. Lai, Tan and Tharp (1990) found that white subjects with stronger prejudice preferred white models over Asian models. A higher mean score for Asian-Indians model on the attractiveness score suggests existence of lower prejudices among white subjects.

Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (1983), in their study found that character attractiveness related to such characteristics as personal traits, external appearance and group affiliation. Based on ELM and other studies that support the message source theory, it can be said that while there is overwhelming evidence that congruence with the spokesperson does play a role in shaping attitudes; the possibility that different segments

of the population might behave differently cannot be ruled out. My study was based on an examination of attitudes of only a small segment of the entire population (freshman students), hence it would be interesting to expand the scope of study to include a more diverse population of students.

Hoy and Wong (2000) in a similar study found that white subjects rated product claims to be more truthful, convincing and believable when a white model was used in an ad compared to an Asian model. Hoy and Wong used only male subjects for the study and the study was carried out in an environment that lacked ethnic diversity. Comparing the results of my study with past literature, one can argue the need to segment the population and look at different student groups by gender and ethnic diversity.

While none of the hypotheses was supported by the findings, the cognitive component (product claims beliefs and product claims credibility) came close to achieving statistical significance at .08.

However, the findings of this study were in line with studies that explored the Elaboration Likelihood Model. When it came to subject involvement with different classes of products, the study found a higher level of involvement with products like digital cameras, cell phones and laptops (high-involvement products) than with low-involvement products like CDs, flash drives and headphones. These findings were in congruence with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986) and previous studies that looked at effects of product involvement on dependent measures of advertising effectiveness (Gardner et al., 1985; Thorson & Page, 1988; Hitchon & Thorson, 1995).

The post hoc test on gender attitude toward models showed that males responded

more favorably to white models than to Asian-Indian models. Females, on the other hand, responded more favorably to Asian-Indian models. What is likely at play here is that males see females as potential partners and, unless they are into inter-racial dating, would prefer to be with a female of their race than with somebody of a different race and culture. Females, on the other hand, likely evaluated the Asian-Indian models as something more exotic and, hence, rated them higher than white models. What this means for advertisers is that advertisers trying to reach an all-male audience through a female spokesperson should consider race and ethnicity as an important factor shaping male attitudes.

The post hoc test on intention to buy showed that males were more likely to buy than females. This can be explained by the fact that males, on an average, are more likely than females to buy electronic goods. All the products chosen in this experiment were electronic items. This means that advertisers could safely use Asian-Indians to advertise electronic items, thereby, reaching out to newer segments without upsetting their core white consumers.

The findings, on the whole, did not support what was hypothesized at the start of the study and in earlier studies. Theoretically, it is important to consider the fact that most of the earlier studies were carried out in the 80's and the 90's when the cultural and economic environment was very different from what it is today. Today, there is a greater tolerance for cultural differences and greater understanding of ethnic cultures. This may have influenced the responses of subjects.

From a methodical point of view, it should be mentioned that the effects of prejudice toward a particular ethnicity might have been less intense due to the sensitive

nature of the subject. Students used in the study might have felt a little uncomfortable admitting their ethnic biases and, as a result, might have provided a more politically correct response to the questions.

Also, validity of responses might have been affected by the fact that subjects may have paid more attention to the contents of the ad than they would have in a natural setting. The fact that the students knew that they were subject of a study might have impacted their responses to the issues of model ethnicity.

Limitations

Some of the factors that might have influenced the result of the study are the timing of the study (the study was carried out at the end of the semester) and my ethnic background (I am Asian Indian).

Also, a lot of students entering college tend to be more tuned to ethnic issues and issues of political correctness. It was hard to reckon the influence political correctness might have exerted on the result of the study. If political correctness was an influencing factor on the results, my ethnicity may have had an influence on the results. While nothing controlled for my ethnicity, enough care was taken to ensure that the Asian-Indian models used in the advertisements amply reflected their ethnic background. However, there is a possibility that the subjects might not have noticed the ethnicity of the Asian-Indian models, which might have weakened the cues for ethnicity.

The ads may also have failed to effectively carry strong cues to shape stereotypes. Also, the small presence of Asian Indians in the Mid-west may have contributed to white Americans forming weaker beliefs and attitudes toward Asian Indians.

Directions for Future Research

Significantly, more research can be carried out by integrating white and Asian-Indian models in advertisements and looking at differences in Asian-Indian subgroups such as new immigrants and naturalized Asian-Indian Americans based on the melting pot theory (Glazer & Moynihan, 1968).

Since this study was based on a homogenous group of freshman students, future research could expand the scope to include a wider segment of students and examine behaviors and attitudes of different segments of the student population. This would contribute to further understanding attitudes among students of different age groups and education levels.

Future research could also look at the differences in responses across the different regions of the United States. It would be interesting to see if participants on the coasts react similarly to those in the Mid-west.

A larger presence of Asian Indians on the coasts may contribute to white Americans forming stronger beliefs and attitudes toward Asian Indians.

5. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for BELIEVABLE and '7' stands for UNBELIEVABLE, how would you rate the product claims? ■

BELIEVABLE						UNBELIEVABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNCONVINCING and '7' stands for CONVINCING, how would you rate the product claims?

UNCONVINCING						CONVINCING
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for NOT LIKEABLE and '7' stands for LIKEABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

NOT LIKEABLE						LIKEABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for INTERESTING and '7' stands for UNINTERESTING, how would you rate the advertisement overall? ■

INTERESTING						UNINTERESTING
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNFAVORABLE and '7' stands for FAVORABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

UNFAVORABLE						FAVORABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The next three questions are statements. Please evaluate each of the statements on a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for STRONGLY DISAGREE and '7' stands for STRONGLY AGREE, and indicate your response.

10. The model in the advertisement is attractive

STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. In my opinion, the model in the advertisement is good looking

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

1

2

3

4

5

6

STRONGLY
AGREE

7

12. The model in the advertisement is pretty

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

1

2

3

4

5

6

STRONGLY
AGREE

7

13. Now that you have seen the product in the advertisement, would you like to try this product?

NO,
DEFINITELY
NOT

1

2

3

4

5

6

YES,
DEFINITELY

7

14. Would you buy this product if you happened to see it in a store?

NO,
DEFINITELY
NOT

1

2

3

4

5

6

YES,
DEFINITELY

7

15. Would you actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it?

NO,
DEFINITELY
NOT

1

2

3

4

5

6

YES,
DEFINITELY

7

Questionnaire for Advertisement 2

16. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for POOR VALUE and '7' stands for GOOD VALUE, how would you rate the advertised product in terms of its value? Please circle the relevant response.

POOR VALUE							GOOD VALUE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

17. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for MEETS MY EXPECTATIONS and '7' stands for DOESN'T MEET MY EXPECTATIONS, how would you rate the advertised product? ■

MEETS MY EXPECTATIONS						DOESN'T MEET MY EXPECTATIONS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for INFERIOR TECHNOLOGY and '7' stands for SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY, how would you rate the advertised product in terms of its technology?

INFERIOR TECHNOLOGY						SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. The following question is based on the claims that the product makes in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for FALSE and '7' stands for TRUE, how would you rate the product claims?

FALSE						TRUE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for BELIEVABLE and '7' stands for UNBELIEVABLE, how would you rate the product claims? ■

BELIEVABLE						UNBELIEVABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNCONVINCING and '7' stands for CONVINCING, how would you rate the product claims?

UNCONVINCING						CONVINCING
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for NOT LIKEABLE and '7' stands for LIKEABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

NOT LIKEABLE						LIKEABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for INTERESTING and '7' stands for UNINTERESTING, how would you rate the advertisement overall? ■

INTERESTING						UNINTERESTING
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNFAVORABLE and '7' stands for FAVORABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

UNFAVORABLE						FAVORABLE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following three questions are based on statements. Please evaluate each of the statements on a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for STRONGLY DISAGREE and '7' stands for STRONGLY AGREE, and indicate your response.

25. The model in the advertisement is attractive

STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

26. In my opinion, the model in the advertisement is good looking

STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

27. The model in the advertisement is pretty

STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

28. Now that you have seen the product in the advertisement, would you like to try this product?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

29. Would you buy this product if you happened to see it in a store?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

30. Would you actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Questionnaire for Advertisement 3

31. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for POOR VALUE and '7' stands for GOOD VALUE, how would you rate the advertised product in terms of its value? Please circle the relevant response.

POOR VALUE
1 2 3 4 5 6 GOOD VALUE
7

32. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for MEETS MY EXPECTATIONS and '7' stands for DOESN'T MEET MY EXPECTATIONS, how would you rate the advertised product? ■

MEETS MY
EXPECTATIONS
1 2 3 4 5 DOESN'T MEET MY
EXPECTATIONS
6 7

33. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for INFERIOR TECHNOLOGY and '7' stands for SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY, how would you rate the advertised product in terms of its technology?

INFERIOR
TECHNOLOGY
1 2 3 4 5 SUPERIOR
TECHNOLOGY
6 7

34. The following question is based on the claims that the product makes in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for FALSE and '7' stands for TRUE, how would you rate the product claims?

FALSE
1 2 3 4 5 6 TRUE
7

35. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for BELIEVABLE and '7' stands for UNBELIEVABLE, how would you rate the product claims? ■

BELIEVABLE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
UNBELIEVABLE

36. The following question is based on the product claims in the advertisement. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNCONVINCING and '7' stands for CONVINCING, how would you rate the product claims?

UNCONVINCING
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
CONVINCING

37. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for NOT LIKEABLE and '7' stands for LIKEABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

NOT LIKEABLE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
LIKEABLE

38. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for INTERESTING and '7' stands for UNINTERESTING, how would you rate the advertisement overall? ■

INTERESTING
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
UNINTERESTING

39. On a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for UNFAVORABLE and '7' stands for FAVORABLE, how would you rate the advertisement overall?

UNFAVORABLE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
FAVORABLE

The following three questions are based on statements. Please evaluate each of the statements on a scale from '1' to '7', where '1' stands for STRONGLY DISAGREE and '7' stands for STRONGLY AGREE, and indicate your response.

40. The model in the advertisement is attractive

STRONGLY
DISAGREE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
STRONGLY
AGREE

41. In my opinion, the model in the advertisement is good looking

STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

42. The model in the advertisement is pretty

STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

43. Now that you have seen the product in the advertisement, would you like to try this product?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

44. Would you buy this product if you happened to see it in a store?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

45. Would you actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it?

NO, DEFINITELY NOT							YES, DEFINITELY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

46. Kindly indicate your gender?

Male1
Female.....2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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