

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The trend in the present time in Thai society has created a new concept emphasizing more on personal appearance such as how they look and how attractive their outfit presents. People who have been most affected are the youths or young adults who have more concerns about their look. This phenomenon has resulted in the wide use of some cosmetics among young people. Many have turned to use cosmetic soap, cream or some skin care that allegedly can whiten the skin or complexion of users. In order to be in trend with this phenomenon, nowadays some youths especially those who live in Bangkok have used 'whitening' skin care.

Currently, 'Whitening' cream is one of the commercial products circulated for wide use among the Thai population. It has been well known to the public as a skin care product. The total market size of skin care products in Thailand in 2006 was about 6,100 million bath, and 51% of this was whitening product (Bangkokbiznews, 2006). Many companies such as Procter and Gamble (whose brand is Olay), Unilever (whose brand is Pond's), Beiersdorf (whose brand is Nivea), are the market leaders. These companies have developed different formulae of their products to attract and match their consumers. Moreover, they have many whitening cream products for their consumers. For example, Pond's has white beauty detox white-pinkish cream (40g.) at the price of 135 Baht. Olay has a Total Extra Fair White (40g.) at the price of 128 Baht. Nivea has a Whitening Moisturizer (for men) 5 in 1 with SPF20 (40 ml.), priced about 169 Baht. These products are believed to help skin to be whiter, reduce scars, eliminate rough patches, erase dots on skin, smooth skin color and protect skin from wrinkles and lines. However, some consumers may say that only some of these benefits are true.

Among consumers, youth are the target market of this type of product. Some of them are still studying while the others have just graduated and started working.

However, these people seem to value whitening as being essential in their lives. According to the comments in Pantip website, some said that there were many Miss Universe or Miss World who are quite dark so why don't we focus on the mind and behavior of persons? whereas others said that among two beautiful ladies, one has white skin while the other one has dark skin, most people tend to like the first one. (Pantip, 2007).

Many adolescents believe that if they use all of these kinds of whitening products, they will become a new person and look better. This in turn has boosted their self-confidence in socialization. So this information becomes their perceptions.

In marketing, perceptions are more important than reality as it is the "perceptions" that affect consumers' actual behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2006). The perceptions of consumers have played a vital role in buying commercial products. Each individual person is motivated to buy a product when the product matches his or her needs. For example, Miss A needs her face to become whiter. After she was informed by her friend about the benefits of the product B (whitening cream) and she also saw the ads on television, she decided to buy product B. This is because she had good perceptions on product B in terms of benefits and it matched her needs.

"Perceptions of Thai youth on Whitening Cream" is important to their decisions on buying or not buying the products. Among Thai youth, there have been a few people who know the real attributes or benefits of them. This is because many companies use ads as a tool to convince consumers to buy their products. Using a movie star or singer to show the differences between before using and after using the products is a persuasive way to make people believe in what they want to. According to Professor Doctor Pakdee Pothisiri, a former Secretary General of Food and Drug Association, there are no herbs that can whiten face. In the past, there were some cosmetics ads which advertised that they could whiten faces within 6-10 days. Some users might get allergies and dots on their skin after using the products. This is one of misperceptions of the youth on this that some herb's ingredients can help whiten the

skin in a few days. Some cosmetics manufacturers lacked accountability and used the quote because there was no law prohibiting it. (Tnews.teenee, 2007).

Many Thai youth value white skin more than dark skin. According to the comments in Pantip website, some said that there were many Miss Universe or Miss World who are quite dark so why don't we focus on the mind and behavior of persons? whereas others said that among two beautiful ladies, one has white skin while the other one has dark skin, most people tend to like the first one. (Pantip, 2007). This is again a misperception on white skin because the youth believe that the whiter their skin, the more beautiful they are.

So far, there has been no research which is directly related to the perceptions of Thai youth on "Whitening Cream". There are some that related to cosmetics like "Use of cosmetics among female teenagers: a case study at Samutprakarn Technical College." However, some youth who were interviewed about their perceptions on this said that they believe in the quality of the products which can whiten their skin but not totally as the ads said. They felt that whitening cream can help their feelings, make self-confidence and also help them be trendy like their friends. So they like the cream while others said that there was no need to use the cream because they don't believe in the products. They only use cream or lotion for protection purpose. As a result, this study is made and designed especially to ask Thai youth about their thoughts and views on the cream.

In this research, Siam Square will be selected as the study area. Siam Square is considered as one of the most popular shopping places for Thai youth. It is not only a place for the youth to do activities together like seeing movies, shopping, eating but also a place for many companies to launch their new products as it is a place that can represent the trend of consumer behavior. For this reason, the research on perceptions measurement can be done more accurately in order to know what Thai youth think about whitening creams.

In the study, this research will focus on perceptions of Thai youth at Siam Square on Whitening Cream and identify what the reasons are for their views. If there are some problems, some suggestions will be presented in order to educate the people about whitening products. Therefore, this study would reveal perceptions of Thai youth at Siam Square on Whitening Cream and it can be used as a guideline for the future research.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- 1.2.1 What are Thai youth perceptions on whitening cream?
- 1.2.2 How often do Thai youth use whitening cream?
- 1.2.3 What are the factors that influence Thai youth to use whitening cream?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

To study perceptions of Thai Youth at Siam Square on Whitening Cream.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

- 1. To identify the problems (if any) of misperceptions the youth have on whitening cream; and
- 2. To obtain their suggestions in order to educate youth in terms of perceptions.

1.4 VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

Variables and Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

1.4.1 Independent variables

Conceptual Definition

- Sex: Biologically identified
- Age: The duration that one has been living, starting from birth
- Education: The level of education one has received or the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university

Occupation: A job or profession that one does in order to earn a living

Income: Amount of money one earns for a living

Operational Definition

Sex: Biological sex determined at birth

Age: Complete years as of the last birth date

Education: The level in school and university a person has achieved

Occupation: The job or business a person does to earn a living

Income: Amount of money received in payment for goods or services or from other sources

Indicator

Sex: Male and Female

Age: 15-24 years of age

Education: Less than Bachelor's Degree, Bachelor's Degree

Occupation: Students as identified by the respondents

Income: 0-12,500 Baht

1.4.2 Dependent variables

Variable	Conceptual definition	Operation definition	Indicator
Perception	Feelings of a person to something	A feeling someone will have to an object or thing in this context, the facial cream	Positive or negative response to the use of the facial cream
Facial cream	Some substance that is applied to the face	Aromatic substance to apply on face to make it smooth or bright	Facial cream that has been on sale to the public such as Nivea, Pond's

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 The target population of this study is Thai youth.

1.5.2 This research covers only Thai youth aged 15-24 years old at Siam

Square

1.5.3 The sample size is 150.

1.5.4 Questionnaire is a tool for this study.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 This research is aimed to investigate perceptions of Thai youth at Siam Square on Whitening Cream which is one of popular creams they use. The result of the study could be used as feedback to companies who are in the whitening cream industry to understand more about what the youth think.

1.6.2 This study would be a sounding board to the relevant parties to help solve the problems of any misperceptions or suggestions the youth have on whitening cream.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of perceptions of Thai youth at Siam Square on Whitening Cream in this paper is divided into five chapters: Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results and Conclusions. The first chapter provides general ideas of the study, including introduction, problem statement, objectives, definitions of terms, scope of the study, and significance of the study. The second chapter states the related theories and other relevant topics. The third chapter discusses the methodology of the study with details on subjects, instruments, procedures and data analysis. The fourth chapter presents the results of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the study, the findings, discussion, conclusion and recommendations for further research.

In the appendixes, the questionnaire that was used for data collection from the sample group, is also included.