

The “Failed” Campaign Against Skin Bleaching: Ghana

by

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Dedication

This Senior Capstone is dedicated to my mom.

Without her I would not be the person

I am today.

“I Can Do All Things Through

Christ

Who Strengthens Me”

-Philippians 4:13

Introduction

Many people grow up seeing billboards, posters, signs, commercials and other forms of mass communication that spread messages and take in that information as fact. It is not until a certain level of maturity or education that their perception of the media changes. They do not know nor understand the abstract of a lot of the information they are consuming. They do not ask questions like “Does the media have my best interest in mind?” or “Do I know the truth from propaganda?” There is no debate on what is right or wrong, and the creators of these media campaigns are just seen as right. It gets to the point where these abstract views are seen as a truth to multitudes of people who see the same type of messages their entire life. So, the question then becomes how society and the government can reverse these bad ideologies and show people the truth.

Mass media campaigns are propagated messages to a specific demographic that intend to bring awareness or change behavior. In other words mass media campaigns are exercises in information control (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004). Companies and organizations control the narrative of information by spreading propagated messages on channels which include but are not limited to television, magazines, billboards, and social media. These types of campaigns are known to be an effective form of communication (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010). However, the use of these campaigns by certain industries such as the beauty industry and the tobacco industry whose sole intention is profit (Lindorff, Jonson, & Mcguire, 2012) have caused ethical debates and concerns from health organizations. These industries main goals are profit and they do not care about the social and health ramifications that it can cause to its consumers.

To further examine this claim, this paper will take a look into the social and health ramifications caused by the corporate beauty industry. The beauty industry is repeatedly under

fire because of the stereotypical images used in marketing to promote their skin lightening products. The marketing for skin lightening products in parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have develop a pattern, where their advertisements throw subtle hints that light skin is more attractive through pictures and messages. These stereotypical messages and images reinforce discriminatory and racist stereotypes (Dahl, Eagle, & Low,2014). With the remaining effects of white supremacy and colonialism prominent in many of the countries where these skin lightening products are marketed, and beauty companies promoting and reinforcing harmful ideologies through their marketing techniques, it is safe to assume that the beauty industry is cultivating an environment of white supremacy and self-hatred. Along with the questionable marketing practices of skin lightening products, there is a growing public health concern of the usage of dangerous chemicals associated with skin bleaching and it has raised concern from the United Nations and World Health Organization.

Many times, when something harmful, such as skin bleaching becomes a trend, the government and various organizations use mass media campaigns to “produce positive changes or prevent negative changes in health-related behaviours across large populations.” (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010). These mass media campaigns are otherwise known as public communication campaigns. The main distinction between a general mass media campaign and a public communication campaign (PCC) is that the PCC’s purpose is to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society. Public communication campaigns are known to have massive success if done correctly. An example of a successful public communication campaign is the Truth campaign against the use of tobacco.

A notable effort was found in response to the effects of the beauty industry promoting skin lightening products and the growing public health concerns of skin bleaching in Ghana.

Ghana banned the sale of cosmetic products containing the skin lightening chemical hydroquinone and sent out a public service announcement on skin lightening products that are illegal and should be avoided or reported. In addition to this, a campaign called “Say No To Skin Bleaching” was created by the Ama K. Abebrese Foundation. With the use of social media, and campaign videos and pictures, the campaign managed to get the attention of over a hundred thousand people. However, despite Ghana’s efforts to bring awareness to the dangers of skin bleaching and teaching people to love the skin they are in, the skin lightening industry is still prospering, and people are still engaging in the practice of skin bleaching.

This capstone project serves to understand why Ghana’s campaign against skin bleaching is not seeing the results that are usually associated with successful campaigns and what other approaches can be used in the future.

To conduct this research, the use of rhetorical analysis will be used. Rhetoric analysis “seeks to recognize how people understand and respond to symbols, and how the use of symbols can shape our perception of reality.” (Zechowoski, personal communication, 2019). This approach was chosen because mass media campaign materials encompass most , if not all forms of communication , such as pictures, videos, and texts. The effectiveness of these types of campaigns will be analyzed. The questions that will be posed are “what type of emotional approaches are they going in with?” “Fear approach?” “Shock approach?” “Are they doing small scale campaigns or large scale campaigns?” Answering these, among other questions will give the researcher room for an analysis of these campaigns and also give the researcher a chance to offer ways to improve future campaigns. Researching and analyzing current and past campaign material offers great contribution to existing literature because it can offer new insight and strategic developments that can be implemented in future campaign efforts.

Literature Review

Skin Bleaching

Although different doctors differentiate between skin lightening and skin bleaching, the United Kingdom National Health Service considers them the same and thus they will be used interchangeably throughout this review.

Skin lightening is defined as the use of chemicals and cosmetic products to attempt to lighten the skin. Skin lightening has typically been used to help people with hyperpigmentation such as freckles and age spots. They work by inhibiting the production of melanin in the skin. They should only be used on the affected area and be used short term or until the problem is fixed. Skin lightening products can be bought over the counter or obtained with a prescription from a doctor. Skin lightening products can come in the form of creams, pills, soaps, and lotion (Department of Health and Social Care 2019).

Skin bleaching products that are obtained with a prescription are usually very strong and contain the chemicals hydroquinone and mercury. They have very serious side effects and should only be used under a doctor's medical advice. Mercury is toxic, and repeated exposure can lead to neurological damage and kidney disease. Hydroquinone is effective in suppressing melanin production, but exposure to the sun, damages the skin that has been treated by it (Glenn, 2008).

Skin bleaching has now been defined and there is a clear understanding of how it is supposed to be used and its effects. So the question now is, why is the use of these products so controversial? Why is there so much backlash from health professionals and the communities where skin lightening products are used the most?

The controversy is that sellers and consumers in Ghana are not following the medical guidelines for skin bleaching and lightening products. Skin lightening products that are being

sold over the counter have been found to contain the chemicals hydroquinone and mercury in doses that are well over the medical guideline. Sellers are usually able to get away with this by not listing the ingredients on the container or by selling it illegally on the black market. This means that there is no regulation on these dangerous chemicals, and it puts the consumers life at risk. (Dahl, Eagle, & Low,2014). In addition to skin bleaching products being unregulated, people tend to use them in multiple regions on the body to give them an overall lightened appearance, instead of only the affected area. Secondly, the skin lightening products marketed in Ghana are unaffordable to the poor and working class, so many resort to the black market for cheap, illegal products or decide to use household products to achieve lighter skin. These household products include bleach, shampoos, and ground bits of glass (Pierre, 2008). Even for the users in Ghana that can afford the marketed skin lightening products, they tend not to follow their doctors orders. They get doctors to prescribe them imported lighteners containing mercury and use them beyond the recommended prescribed duration, increasing their risk for side effects (Glenn, 2008).

Both the poor and the affluent who use these products go through the same labor intensive process to obtain the results they desire. A Ghanaian woman described her “daily ritual, with baths with bleaching soaps followed by the application of a number of creams multiple times throughout the day” (Pierre, 2008). To maintain the results they desire, the bleaching process needs to be done consistently and over long periods over time. Unfortunately, the long term use of the products containing hydroquinone and mercury can lead to ochronosis, a disfiguring condition involving gray and blue-black discoloration of the skin (Glenn, 2008).



The side effects of misusing skin bleaching products

(Plummer, 2018)

In addition to the medical consequences of skin bleaching there is also a social faux pas of skin bleaching. Those who bleach are able to be easily spotted in Ghana because they “wear wide brimmed hats, long skirts or pants, with leggings of thick, often woollen socks, and long sleeve shirts underneath their dresses,” in the hot sun. They have to do this because once the skin has been bleached its more susceptible to skin damage. Those who bleach are often associated with those who are illiterate and brainwashed or are prostitutes (Pierre, 2008). With the awful side effects and the social ostracization of skin bleaching, the question remains why do people continue to skin lighten?

Why Do People Skin Bleach?

After reading a multitude of research articles on why people skin bleach in Africa and the African diaspora, they all come to the same conclusion, that people skin bleach as a result of colonialism and the colonial racist ideologies. The history of colonialism is quite complex so there will be no recap, but how it continues to impact Africa and the diaspora will be addressed.

After the colonization of Ghana, and the racial hierarchies set up by Europeans, the Europeans decided that was not enough and Ghanaians could be exploited more. The Europeans

decided that they would continue to instill in the Ghanaians that they were inferior because of their dark skin even after they had left Ghana themselves. They made them believe that dark skin was dirty and filthy, and that white skin was pure and ideal (Blay, 2011). With these reinforced harmful ideologies, the rise of colorism within the colonized community became prevalent, as having light skin was closer to the desired white skin. Colorism is defined as “the process of discrimination that privileges light skin people of color over their dark skin counterparts. Colorism is concerned with actual skin tone, as opposed to racial and ethnic identity” (Charles, 2011 p. 3).

Some historians and anthropologists argued that before colonialism, Africans favored women with lighter skin. However it can still be argued that due to the racial hierarchies that the Europeans established in Africa, Europeans “cemented and generalized the privilege attached to light skin” (Glenn, 2008).

By continuing to promote light skin is better, Europeans were able to exploit Ghanaians by importing and promoting skin lightening products. They marketed soap, cosmetics, skin bleaching agents, that promised it would transform a Ghanaians skin “from dirty to clean, from dark to light” and make them civilized. (Blay, 2011).

As Ghana progressed as a country, European cosmetic companies would simply change their marketing strategies all while reinforcing the same ideas from colonialism. In 1957, when Ghana gained its independence, advertisements started marketing modernity instead of civilization, with the same ideology at its foundation that light skin is better and that it was the way to achieve modernity. The new advertisements marketed that through the purchase of skin lightening products, Africans could change their less civilized ways and attain modernity and whiteness. (Blay, 2011).



(Illustration 8) Advertisement for Venus™
(*The Mirror*, 1971, no. 917)

An advertisement promoting
skin lightening products

The effects of colonialism and harmful advertisements are still prevalent in contemporary Africa and the African diaspora. Many people believe that with lighter skin they are more attractive and have a better chance of marriage and success. In Jamaica, researchers Henriques and Ellis found that many educated black women were stuck in spinsterhood. Spinsterhood refers to older women who are unmarried. This occurred because black men were more likely to marry a light skin woman because they were more attracted to them or because of the socio-economic advantages of marrying them. This left a lot of educated Black women available with no one available except uneducated black men, which they refuse to settle for (Charles, 2011). The 1984 Mobility Survey also done in Jamaica revealed that light skinned people were more likely to acquire middle class status and remain in that class compared with dark skin people. The 1984 Mobility Survey suggested that social mobility, social status and prestige in Jamaica are influenced by skin color (Charles, 2011).

Although these studies were not done in Ghana, because of colonialism, these results probably ring true for countries in Africa and the African Diaspora. In the feminist review there are quotes from Ghanaian women speaking on their relationship with light skin and you can see the same ideologies remain true. One Ghanaian woman said her husband likes her when she is light skinned. Another prominent lawyer said, “I don't know why, but people with lighter skin seem prettier to me especially those mixed-race ones” (Pierre, 2008).

Colonialism and its harmful ideologies has made its way to contemporary times and affects people's outlook on life. The question now is why skin care companies continue to advertise harmful ideologies to Africa and the African diaspora, although the harmful effects are prevalent.

Ethical Issues in The Beauty Industry

Many popular skin care companies like Nivea and Neutrogena use stereotypical images and phrases to market their skin lightening products. They market sunscreen lotions and toners as skin lighteners in parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Koul, 2017). They do this because they know that light skin is the most sought after beauty in those countries and it is the perfect opportunity to market to people's insecurities and vulnerabilities. Their use of stereotypical images to promote their products has stirred controversy because these images reinforce discrimination and negative racial stereotypes (Dahl, Eagle, & Low, 2014). These images “acts as a socialization agent, mirroring current social trends... [and] has negative consequences... to

potential restriction of life opportunities” (Dahl, Eagle, & Low,2014).



An advertisement by Nivea promoting skin lightening in Accra, Ghana



Billboard promoting skin lightening products in Tetteh Quarshie Circle, Accra, Ghana

BuzzFeed News reached out to the various companies in the beauty industry for comment on their questionable marketing practices. A Unilever spokesperson responded and provided BuzzFeed News with a statement via email, saying “We recognise that the marketing of these products has sometimes insinuated the notion that dark skin is undesirable,” “We have strict marketing principles that explicitly state that we will not make any association between skin tone and a person’s achievement, potential or worth.” “Our portfolio of brands is designed to respond to the diverse wishes of consumers around the world,” “Even-toned and lighter skin remains the most sought-after beauty desire across Asia and parts of Africa and Latin America” (Koul, 2017). Essentially, they are saying that because there is a demand for these products, they supply it, however they did not address why they use stereotypical marketing practices, despite their harmful effects.

The social responsibility framework of Carroll argues that business institutions have a primary responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants and to gain profit from

them. It argues that any company that does not put their profits first, could be said to be neglecting its duty to act in the best interest of its shareholders and may risk a lawsuit (Lindorff, Jonson, & Mcguire, 2012).

The beauty industry continues to promote these ideas despite the consequences of the actions of the people indulging in it. Skin lightening has become a lucrative business for beauty companies. In 2017, the global skin-lightening industry was worth 4.8 billion dollars and it is projected to grow to \$8.9 billion dollars by 2027 (Koul, 2017). Skin care companies marketing strategies are working, and profit comes first, so despite the social and health ramifications of their marketing , it only makes sense for these skin care companies to continue their questionable unethical marketing practices.

Ghana's Response to Skin Bleaching

In 2014, a notable campaign was found in response to the beauty industries harmful ads and the increase concern for public health with regards to skin bleaching . The campaign was called “Say No To Skin Bleaching” and it was founded by the Ama K. Abebrese Foundation in Ghana. The campaign featured a self-love campaign video, and pictures saying no to skin bleaching and toning. It now keeps its followers regularly updated on the climate of skin lightening and skin bleaching, while also posting various pictures of people loving the skin, they are in. The founder of the campaign also does groundwork, like speaking at schools and speaking out against beauty company marketing practices. The campaign itself is quite successful, with over a hundred thousand followers on their Facebook page.



A picture from the “Say No To Skin Bleaching” Campaign
by Ama K. Abebrese Foundation

In August 2016, Ghana’s Food and Drugs Authority banned the import and sale of cosmetic products that contain the skin-bleaching ingredient hydroquinone. In 2017 Ghana signed The Minamata Convention on Mercury, which was a global treaty “to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds” (UN, 2018).

It is important to note though that after 2020, parties to the Convention are required to have banned the manufacture, import and export of Cosmetics with mercury content above 1 ppm, including skin lightening soaps and creams. However, Ghana signed a five year exemption, exempting them from the mercury rule, specifically the manufacturing and the ban of mercury added products. They say that they lacked the required data, information, technical and financial capacities to comply with the phase-out dates of the Minamata Convention” (Mercury in skin lightening products, 2019).

As recent as January 2019, The Food and Drugs Authority in Ghana released a public service announcement (PSA) that warned the public against using forty one cosmetic products that are illegal and dangerous to use.

FOOD & DRUGS AUTHORITY

PRESS RELEASE

**PUBLIC ALERT:
COSMETIC PRODUCTS CONTAINING SUBSTANCES THAT COULD POSE
POTENTIAL HEALTH RISK**

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), as part of its routine market surveillance activities, is investigating the health advisability of mercury, hydroquinone or steroids in certain cosmetic products on the Ghanaian market. The FDA's investigations have revealed that some cosmetic products on the market contain these substances. This is a serious violation of the Standards Authority Act, 2017 (S.A.A. 2017) as well as sections 11(4) and 23(3) of the Public Health Act, 2012, (A.H. 2012) which prohibit that:

"A person commits an offence if that person sells a drug, herbal medicinal product, cosmetic, medical device or household chemical substance which is adulterated."

"A person commits an offence if that person labels, packages, sells or advertises a drug, herbal medicinal product, cosmetic, medical device or household chemical substance as a medicine, or in a form, packaging or description or misbranded or regarding its character, constitution, value, potency, quality, composition, merit or safety."

These substances are not permitted in cosmetic products due to their adverse health effects over prolonged use.

The adverse health effects associated with these substances include but not limited to the following:

- Permanent neurological damage in children (eye and non-eye) exposed to mercury during pregnancy and/or lactation.
- Kidney toxicity
- Fertility problems
- Birth defects
- Gastrointestinal toxicity
- Liver toxicity
- Skin infections
- Skin cancer
- Hypopigmentation/Chromidosis ("No more skin")
- Skin infections

The FDA is advising the general public:

1. Not to purchase any of these cosmetic products as indicated
2. Immediately discontinue use and return all such products to the retail shops from where they were purchased or to the FDA
3. Report to the FDA any adverse effects arising from the use of any cosmetic product through the FDA's safety monitoring system

The FDA wishes to emphasize that the protection of the general public is its primary objective and all activities are designed to provide continuous assurance of safety of all food, medicines, cosmetics, household chemicals and medical devices.

The Authority continues to monitor the market and all unauthorised products will be safely disposed of in accordance to Section 112 of the Public Health Act.

The list of companies and products that contain the substances that are not permitted in cosmetic products are:

DND Limited

1. One A Day Skin Perfect Body Lotion (Betamethasone)

Banare Limited

1. Rhofit Foundation Body Cream (Mercury, Hydroquinone)

France Mod Limited

1. Fair & White So White Skin Perfecting Brightening and Moisturizing Body Lotion (Hydroquinone)

IYO Ghana Limited

1. Zea Plus Sublime Beauty Lotion (BN:AF10.0400002.09.13) (Mercury, Betamethasone, Hydroquinone)
2. Zea Plus Sublime Beauty Lotion (BN: not stated) (Mercury, Betamethasone, Hydroquinone)
3. Body Clear -Lightening Lotion (BN: not stated) (Mercury, Hydroquinone)

4. Zea Plus Sublime Face Corrective Cream (BN: not stated) (Mercury, Chlorbutol, Betamethasone)
5. Body Radiance Body Milk (BN: not stated) (Mercury, Hydroquinone)
6. MT7 Hydrate Body Lotion (BN: not stated) (Betamethasone)
7. Sensitive Skin Whitening Lotion (BN: 4033-0005-0011) (Mercury, Hydroquinone)

Magic Dodo Ltd

1. Daily Beauty Lightening Lotion (BN: 200114) (Mercury, Hydroquinone)
2. Sensitive Skin Care (BN: 000645) (Mercury, Betamethasone, Hydroquinone)

Novelle Parfums Gandoor Ghana Limited

1. Fruit Concentrated Serum (Betamethasone, Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
2. Brava Lightening Body Cream (BN: 100410) (Hydroquinone)
3. Brava Tone Cocoa Butter and Honey Extract (Hydroquinone)
4. Rosewater Complexion Lightening Serum (Hydroquinone)
5. Rosewater Brightening Cream (BN:24104)
6. (Hydroquinone)
7. Fluo Rosewater & Fluo de Rose (Betamethasone)
8. Brava Lotion (Mercury, Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
9. Pure Skin Whitening Care Body Cream (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
10. Sensitive Skin Care (Chlorbutol)
11. Brava Facial Cream (Mercury, Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
12. Sensitive Skin Tone Cocoa Butter & Honey Scented Lotion (Hydroquinone)
13. Sensitive Skin Whitening & Purifying Body Lotion (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
14. S&S Body Cream (Mercury, Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)

Paradise Cosmetics Limited

1. Sensitive Lightening Body Lotion (BN: 752) (Hydroquinone, Chlorbutol)
2. Sensitive Lightening Body Lotion (BN: 847) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
3. Clear Skin Care/Lightening Body Cream (BN: 80834) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
4. Clear Skin Care/Lightening Body Cream (9816) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
5. Sensitive Lightening Body Lotion (BN:396) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
6. Sensitive Lightening Body Lotion with Argan Oil (BN: 740) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
7. Sensitive Face Lightening Cream with Argan Oil (BN: 007023) (Chlorbutol)
8. Deep Skin Lightening Body Cream (BN: 3064) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)
9. Sensitive Lightening Body Lotion (BN: 187) (Chlorbutol, Hydroquinone)

Stopover J&A Enterprise

1. AA Foundation Body Cream (Mercury, Hydroquinone)

Universal Basic Company Limited

1. Sensitive Sensitive Hand and Body Complexion Lotion (BN: 130) (Betamethasone)
2. Sensitive Complexion Cream (BN: C1-4033) (Betamethasone)
3. Sensitive Hand and Body Complexion Lotion (BN: not legible) (Betamethasone)
4. TC 35 Clear Complexion Milk (BN: 14312) (Betamethasone)

Please contact the FDA through the following contacts for any information and enquiry related to the FDA's mandate.

039982932 or 029982933 030677065 4615 (On Vodafone, MTN and AirtelTigo) www.fda.gov.gh

Food and Drugs Authority Ghana @fda_ghana @foodanddrugsofghana

Report an adverse reaction on 024410297

JAMES LAFAYETTE
REGULATORY AFFAIRS
REGISTRATION DIVISION
FOOD AND DRUGS AUTHORITY

The 2019 PSA released by Ghana's

Food and Drugs Authority

The Ghanaian government is actively taking the steps to let people know about the harmful effects of the chemicals in skin bleaching products and there is a campaign that has a large reach and actively uses their Facebook page to speak out against the practice of skin bleaching but they are not seeing the results of a successful campaign. So now the question is what makes a campaign effective?

Campaigns

Mass media campaigns, specifically public health communication campaigns are designed to promote healthy behaviors and discourage unhealthy behaviors. They are a common method used by health professionals to improve the health of the public. A successful campaign

is one that influences and changes the information environment. This is done by creative marketing and maximizing exposure to the message. It is also thought that having a supportive environment is necessary. When creating campaigns, campaign planners usually focus on individuals and how their attitudes and behaviors can change with the right message (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004).

When campaign creators plan campaigns, especially public communication campaigns, the use of input variables and output variables are kept in mind. Input variables “refer to the strategic approach taken by campaign creators to communicate the campaign objectives to the public” (Davies, personal communication, 2019). This includes source variables, message variables, audience and scale. The output variables are the campaign objectives. Campaign objectives are detailed goals of the campaign. Campaign objectives use the SMART acronym (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely) and can be used as a guide to track the campaigns progress (Davies, personal communication, 2019). This approach is well respected among the communication field.

After the media is created, the most common way public health communication campaigns attempt to influence and change the information environment is by buying or asking for donated time in the media. Media can include tv and radio, among other channels. However, because public health communication campaigns do not have unlimited cash and have to rely on donated time, they are not given prime advertisement space. Another approach commonly used by communication campaigns are entertainment communication campaigns. It embeds important messages in primetime and daytime entertainment (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010).

Unfortunately there are a lot of messages being spewed by the media, sometimes contradicting public communication campaigns. So, in addition to getting media time they rely

on printed media, such as billboards, posters, and brochures, as well as planning campaign events. These combined efforts can result in successful campaigns. However, it is hard for communication campaigns to know which outlet contributed most to its success, so it is often recommended to do both large scale communication activities, like TV and small scale communication activities, like billboards to get the best possible outcome (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004).

As many successful campaigns there are, there are also many campaigns that fail. Campaigns can fail because they have a lack of funding, have boring factual messages, age-inappropriate content, or lack of exposure and sustainability. A great point brought by researcher Robert C. Hornik, said that campaigns fail because they are solely aimed at changing individuals rather than changing a larger social system (Abroms & Maibach 2008). He argues that to have a successful campaign, it depends on the environment. This can mean mobilizing entire communities by involving community leadership, civic and voluntary groups, and organizations. This helps and allow campaigns to modify social attitudes in their community. Helping to create a supportive environment for change is a key feature in having successful behavior change in both the short and long term (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004).

Lastly, mass media campaigns do not only have to market to the affected population. Campaigns can also be used for outside factors contributing to the public health concern. It can advocate to policy makers and target manufacturers and so on.

The cultivation of this useful information through this literature review has answered many of the questions in the introduction and leads to the analysis.

Annotated Bibliography

Abroms, L. C., & Maibach, E. W. (2008). The Effectiveness of Mass Communication to Change Public Behavior. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29(1), 219–234. doi: 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.020907.090824

This article uses an ecological perspective to examine how mass communication can influence public behavior. It touches on problems with mass communications such as how hard it is to evaluate mass media programs because there are so many different communication tactics or how it is harder for public health organizations to reach “mass” audiences through the media because there are more media outlets than before requiring more resources from public health organizers, that they simply do not have. It also touches on a great point, coined by Researcher Robert C. Hornik that campaigns fail because they are solely aimed at changing individuals rather than changing a larger social system. This article touched on a lot of reasons why mass communications may not be effective and can help in my research as to why public communication campaigns against skin bleaching are not working and different ways to approach the same topic.

Blay, Y. A. (2011). Skin Bleaching and White Supremacy - A: JPAS. Retrieved from [http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no4/Skin Bleaching and White Supremacy.pdf](http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no4/Skin%20Bleaching%20and%20White%20Supremacy.pdf)

Professor Blay examines the history of white supremacy and the relationship it has to skin bleaching. She provides a thorough history of the political and ideological atmosphere of white supremacy in Africa. She also provides and describes a plethora of skin lightening advertisements dating back to the late 19th century. This is relevant to my paper because it gives

me the researcher the root of how skin bleaching started and it provides content for me to analyze, since my focus is on campaigns and advertisements.

Charles, C. A. D. (2011). Skin Bleaching and the Prestige Complexion of Sexual Attraction.

Sexuality & Culture, 15(4), 375–390. doi: 10.1007/s12119-011-9107-0

Psychologist Charles focuses on the sexual attraction motive on why Jamaicans bleach their skin. He defines and gives background on colorism and skin bleaching to provide a foundation. This helps the researcher Charles to examine the narrative of skin bleachers, providing examples like spinsterhood and lack of work. He also provides a great summary of the 1984 social mobility survey by Derek Gordon that described the difference in social mobility between dark skin and light skin people in Jamaica. This research is relevant to my paper because in order to improve a campaign on skin lightening it is important to understand why people skin bleach, and this provides direct evidence of the privilege of having lighter skin.

Dahl, Stephan & Eagle, Lynne & Low, David. (2014). Ethical issues in the marketing of skin lightening products.

This article examines product safety and ethical issues within the market for skin bleaching. It discusses the inconcinnity of product safety across nations. It also discusses how marketing activity done by these beauty companies act as a socialization agent and reinforces negative stereotypes, despite current social trends. This article is relevant to my paper because it gives anecdotal evidence of the effects of media influence on individuals and how it can enforce bad ideologies.

Glenn, E. N. (2008). Yearning for Lightness. *Gender & Society*, 22(3), 281–302. doi:

10.1177/0891243208316089

In this article Professor Glenn, provides research on the roots of how skin lightening began and how the practice of skin lightening has progressed throughout history, including the marketing and role of multinational pharmaceutical and cosmetic corporations who participate in the skin lightening industry. Professor Glenn examines the trend in multiple societies including but not limited to Africa, the African Diaspora, India and East Asia. This article is relevant to my paper because it provides the history of skin bleaching and the history of media advertising and manufacturing adjacent in Africa and the African diaspora, allowing me to find and explore contributing factors to the epidemic of skin lightening.

Lindorff, M., Jonson, E. P., & Mcguire, L. (2012). Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility in Controversial Industry Sectors: The Social Value of Harm Minimisation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(4), 457–467. doi: 10.1007/s10551-012-1493-1

This article examines how it is possible for businesses in controversial sectors to act in socially responsible ways, and whether a business can be socially responsible if it produces products harmful to society or individuals. It argues that businesses in the controversial sector can find ways to contribute to social good by finding shared values among the business and its constituents and being strategic on how to build on those share values and enact strategic corporate social responsibility. This research allows for me to no longer give beauty businesses the basic excuse that they cater to what the market wants, and profit comes first and there can in fact be a medium.

Koul, S. (2017, October 10). Some Of Your Fave Skin Care Companies Sell Skin Lightening Products. Retrieved from <http://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/scaachikoul/doves-gaffe-is-part-of-a-history-of-racist-beauty-marketing>

The article addresses how many popular skin care companies like Nivea and Neutrogena, market the same beauty products differently, depending on the region of the world. It speaks about how skin care products in North America, like lotions and toners that are targeted towards brightening the skin are marketed with a focus on health. While these same products are marketed to other regions such as parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America with an emphasis on skin lightening.

Pierre, J. (2008). 'I Like Your Colour!' skin bleaching and geographies of race in urban Ghana.

Feminist Review, 90(1), 9–29. doi: 10.1057/fr.2008.36

Sociocultural anthropologist Pierre explores chemical skin bleaching practices in urban Ghana, which opens a wider conversation to the racialized understanding of a contemporary postcolonial African society. They give the reader a peek into urban Ghana and how skin bleaching truly affects the community, as a result of the side effects of skin bleaching. Along with a description of how skin bleaching affects Ghanaians, it also give first-hand account of a women who skin bleaches, her process and why she does it. It also shares various conversations and encounters about skin bleaching and the racialized complexities behind skin bleaching. This will aid in my research on why the campaign against skin bleaching is not working.

Randolph, W., & Viswanath, K. (2004). Lessons Learned from Public Health Mass Media

Campaigns: Marketing Health in a Crowded Media World. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 25(1), 419–437. doi: 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.25.101802.123046

This research article takes a look at past communication campaigns and looks at the strategies and results of those campaigns. Through that, the researchers, identify key factors that remain important, as well as find new factors that are important in the effectiveness and planning of modern campaigns. The research found that campaigns need to have a more holistic approach rather than just the straight- forward approach of health promotion and disease prevention. My

research hopes to find new ways to campaign against skin bleaching and how to effectively end harmful traditional ideologies through campaigns and public service announcements and this article gives me the tools to move forward.

Wakefield, M. A., Loken, B., & Hornik, R. C. (2010). Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *The Lancet*, 376(9748), 1261–1271. doi: 10.1016/s0140-6736(10)60809-4

In this review article, it discusses the outcomes of various mass media campaigns that deal with health-risk behaviors. This includes but is not limited to tobacco and alcohol use. Some campaigns are successful, and some are not so successful, sometimes in fact encouraging the use of these behaviors. It assesses what causes these outcomes, such as government policy and the availability of community based programs and proposes a few solutions. This review article aids in my research to better campaigns against skin bleaching.

Methodology

To analyze and make recommendations on the public health crisis of skin bleaching, the use of rhetorical analysis will be used. Rhetorical analysis “seeks to understand how people understand and respond to symbols and how the use of symbols can change our perception of reality” (Zechowoski, personal communication, 2019). As mentioned in the campaign section of the literature review, the use of input and output variables are used when creating campaigns. The analysis will focus on the input variables and how effective the respective organizations use them for their communication campaign material. Input variables include source variables, message variables, audience and scale. Source variable can include credibility, attractiveness and likability. Message variables can include message appeal, linguistic message and visual message. The audience includes demographics and the channel is how the campaign material

was communicated (Davies personal communication, 2019). This approach is commonly used when creating campaigns and it only makes sense to use it when analyzing campaign media for its success. Output variables will not be used because the information is not available to the researcher or it has not been created.

Analysis

Ghana is currently the home of unethical marketing practices by beauty companies. They put up billboards, like the Nivea advertisement, (as seen under the Ethical Issues section of the paper) blatantly promoting having lighter skin. They emulate the racist European model of exploiting Ghanaians by promoting products that seem like they make your skin lighter but are usually just mild toners and sunscreens and it offers no such result. They are doing this in the name of profit.

The beauty industry and Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) are on opposing sides of the skin bleaching debate. The beauty industry promotes the use of skin lighteners, as they believe people have a choice to use what products they want to use and have strong marketing efforts to ensure their products get sold. The FDA notices that there is a public health concern surrounding these products and discourages the use of skin lighteners but their marketing efforts to inform the public are weak. This analysis will compare the marketing efforts of beauty companies and the marketing efforts of Ghana's FDA around the topic of skin lightening and bleaching.

The first communication activity that will be analyzed is the Nivea advertisement. The ad is located in the Ethical Issues section of the literature review and will be analyzed in relation with the beauty companies marketing efforts. Nivea's advertisement is located on a billboard in Ghana, which makes it a small scale communication activity. Small scale communication

activities rely on community based communication. The ad shows a woman in her 30s looking over her shoulder smiling back at the camera. The target demographic based on this information seems to be black women who are of the age to be married. The source variable used here is attractiveness. The ad is attractive because of the pretty woman who is the focal ad of the billboard. The message variable for the visual component is the color and image composition. The body language of the women is positive. She is wearing a nice dress, jewelry, and is smiling. She looks as if she is her prime and is going somewhere important. The woman is large relative to everything else in the picture which puts her at center of attention. There is a lot of negative space around the women's head, so the focus is on her face. The ad also follows the rules of thirds which allows for no part of the advertisement to be missed, which include the logo and word placement. The most prominent colors used in the ad are blue and white. Different colors are known to invoke different emotions. Blue is associated with professionalism and confidence. White is associated with hope and pureness (Davies, personal communication, 2019). The message variable for the text component is the conative function. The phrase "For Visibly Fairer Skin," engages viewers of that advertisement.

The ad uses ambiguity in its message for the sale of skin lightening products. Although the ad does not say outright that light skin will increase the value of your life, it subtly does. The ad tells the viewers by using this skin lightening cream, you too can be a well-dressed professional woman in their prime. You will be more confident and refined. The ambiguity of this ad allows the consumers to read into the ad and imagine themselves in the position. It can be argued that this ad uses pathos. It feeds into women's insecurities and creates a false sense of hope that with this skin lightening product, you will have "visibly lighter skin" and there is a chance you can climb the socioeconomic ladder and be like the woman in the ad. Based on the

analysis, this ad did a good job of reaching its consumers. A lot of women at that age want to be married and thriving and this ad sells them that dream.

The next communication activity that will be looked at is Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority Public Service Announcement (PSA) on illegal skin bleaching products on the market. The PSA is located in the Ghana's Response section of the literature review and will be analyzed in relation with Ghana's FDA marketing efforts. The PSA is printed media, so it is a small scale communication activity. The intended demographic is Ghanaian citizens. The intended demographic is very broad and there seems to be no real target audience. The source variable used was credibility. Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority is a recognized government agency and thus makes people more inclined to believe the information. The PSA did not make good use of visual message variables. Although the PSA was solely text, it could have used some adjustments. The text was dense and not attractive, there was not a lot of negative space and the scaling of the words could have been better. The message variable for the text was the referral function. The use of logos. It provided facts and information. The feminist review, which was referred to in the literature review, makes it safe to assume that Ghanaians are familiar with the known side effects of skin bleaching and none of the information presented was new or alarming. The use of solely a press release was not a good idea and should have been used in addition to another communication activity. Without pictures present, the information presented could easily be looked over. The use of fear appeal would have been a good tactic, because the images of people who suffer from the bad effects of skin bleaching is not pretty or easy to stomach. A person who skin bleaches would most likely not look at this PSA twice but may give a picture of someone with ochronosis a double take. The FDA is commended for finding these illegal skin bleaching products on the market, but the delivery of the information to the public

was an extremely lazy attempt. It did not influence nor change the environment around skin bleaching. It just lets sellers on the black market know which products are in the eye of the government.

The Nivea ad checked off a lot of components associated with a successful campaign. It was very hard to find something wrong with the visual components of the campaign other than the ethics behind it. The visuals were appealing, the messages were clear, and it had great exposure, even for a small communication activity. Ghana's public service announcement against skin bleaching was not effective and needs a lot of work. The message was clear, but it had no appeal or incentive for someone to read it. The Ghanaian public service announcement was a complete flop and a better effort of reaching its Ghanaian citizens needs to be done in the future.

A recommendation that can be effective for Ghana based on the analysis is a campaign centered around redefining what a Ghanaian citizen is through the use of images and slogans that center around the concept of patriotism. A slogan like "I Am Ghana" would be effective. It will start to reverse the ideologies of what a Ghanaian is supposed to look like and instead show what their people actually look like. The primary target audience for this would be Ghanaian women above eighteen and the secondary target audience would be Ghanaian citizens. It will focus on normal people talking about why they are proud to be Ghanaian on billboards, posters, and commercials. It will be similar to how colleges put pictures of their students engaging in campus activities on billboards and posters but instead it will be Ghanaians engaging in their daily lives. An emphasis on the person will be effective because they will see themselves in the communication activity, making it emotional but also a more credible variable in their environment.

The use of entertainment education campaigns should also be implemented. A reality tv show called *Soul City* brought awareness to HIV and AIDS to communities in sub-Saharan Africa. People who watched the show were more likely to get tested and were four times more likely to use protection. It was truly a great success (Campaign against HIV/AIDS scores stunning results, 2013). Ghana should look at *Soul City*' approach and try to emulate the techniques. These entertainment videos could play in schools, hospitals and other public spaces. It would educate Ghanaians on the topic of skin bleaching, while being entertained.

In addition to this, supplemental materials, like pamphlets, posters, and other printed media should be available for people to access. For these campaign activities, it should use the fear approach. The printed materials would show the images of people with damaged skin caused by skin bleaching and deter people from using skin bleaching products. Printed materials for the fear approach would be better than a commercial on tv as it would not be so abrasive.

The use of different approaches in Ghana's campaign against skin bleaching would be effective because different people respond to different approaches. If Ghana is successful with this campaign, other countries in West Africa will be able to look at Ghana as a place to emulate. It would be a celebratory effort. The African Union and the United Nations would also be able to recognize Ghana's efforts. The campaign against skin bleaching does not need to be bleak or daunting, it can be the start of a new Ghana, one that loves and accepts all its people.

It would also be in the best interest of the Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority to ban advertisements that use stereotyping in their marketing. All money is not good money, especially ones that hurt its citizens. According to the Public Health Act, 2012, Act 851 Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority has the power to regulate food, herbal medicines, cosmetics, drugs, medical devices and household chemical substances. In addition, the Public Health Act also grants the

FDA “the authority to issue guidelines and codes of practice in connection to any product regulated by the FDA” (Public Health Act, 2012). The FDA needs to be more active in its regulations for the advertisements for skin bleaching. The ads from beauty companies have a lot of influence on the way people perceive skin complexion and success, and the lengths people will go to attain that image. If the FDA has the power to prevent beauty companies from their harmful ads, they should use their power. While people may not stop skin bleach as soon as those advertisements are no longer present, that is one less influence to continue skin bleaching. That five year old girl walking down the street in urban Accra, Ghana would not ever see the Nivea advertisement and ask her mom what that means , and the cycle starts breaking once and for all.

Conclusions And Recommendations For Further Research

The practice of skin bleaching has been around for centuries. It is not a fad or a trend. It is something that has been established and has a foothold in Africa and the African diaspora. It is rooted in the effects of colonialism, and the now ever present problem of colorism (Glenn, 2008). In a society where light skin is treated better than dark skin, it distorts how people see the world and it will make people do anything to fit the status quo. That is why people are taking bleach baths every day, wearing long sleeves, and wool amid a hot summer day. While there may be some self-hate involved, it is not so much about how the person views themselves but how other people view them (Charles, 2003). It is about society accepting them. Skin bleaching is not so much an insecurity problem but more so a socioeconomic problem. Having dark skin have led many women in a cycle of spinsterhood, because having light skin is a more desired trait in women. Having dark skin has made people question if they will get a job or have as many clients

as a competitor not necessarily because they are not qualified but because they are not the ideal, the status quo. This is all a result of colonialism, white supremacy, colorism and unethical marketing advertisements from beauty companies.

The unethical and blatant marketing practices of beauty companies over the years have reinforced the harmful stereotypes, that light skin is better. As a result people are continuing to skin bleach despite the harmful side effects. The advantages of skin bleaching in their eyes far outweigh the disadvantages of remaining dark and having no husband and a bad job. Because the unfortunate reality for them is, no matter how many times a self-love campaign tells them they are beautiful, they still have to live in a harsh reality, where society treats those that are light skin better. This research is important because it gets to the bottom of why skin bleaching is prevalent and why countries like Ghana have not been able to put a dent in how many people participate in the skin bleaching process.

Despite how complex the situation is, Ghana should not give up, and should focus their efforts on trying to revamp their campaign efforts on discouraging the practice of skin bleaching. With a more visually appealing and heart touching campaign approach and a less boring factual one, Ghana can make a change .

A recommendation for further research is to take a look into the Public Health Act, 2012 Act 851 with regards to the FDA and a look into the Advertising Association of Ghana. A look into the political climate of Ghana and its laws on advertising regulations will give better insight on how to legally ban the stereotypical advertisements that beauty companies are promoting in the country, and the best way to move forward surrounding the public health concern of skin bleaching.

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