

# 신체수정을 위한 상품 광고의 특성과 상징적 의미에 대한 연구

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## A Study of Characteristics and Symbolic Meanings appeared in Body Modification Commodity Ads

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### ABSTRACT

패션잡지에 실린 패션 및 뷰티 관련 상품의 광고들은 현시대의 미의 이상을 제시하고, 상품소비를 통해 이를 성취할 수 있음을 제안함으로써 신체와 관련한 미적 상징성을 보여준다. 본 연구의 목적은 신체수정을 위한 상품의 특성과 상징적 의미를 확인하는 데 있으며, 이를 위해 여성잡지 Vogue와 남성잡지 GQ 광고 중 화장품과 바디케어 용품 광고를 선정하여, 이를 신체의 특성, 즉 색상, 볼륨과 비율, 형태와 구조, 텍스처, 향의 측면에서 구분하여 조사하였다.

그 결과, Vogue와 GQ 모두 다양한 종류의 신체수정을 위한 상품광고를 선보이고 있었으며, 상대적으로 Vogue가 GQ보다 더 많은 양과 종류의 상품 광고를 보이고 있었다. 신체의 특성에 따른 상품의 비중을 보면, Vogue는 신체의 색상과 관련한 시각적인 면이 높게 나타났고, 반면, GQ는 신체의 골격과 형태미, 볼륨과 비율, 그리고 향과 같은 덜 시각적인 면에서의 상품비중이 높았으며, 텍스처와 관련한 상품은 비슷한 비율로 나타났다.

이들 상품광고의 텍스트와 이미지에서 보이는 특성은 다기능성, 자연성, 개별성으로 구분할 수 있으며, 세계적 미의 추구, 젊음과 건강 이데올로기, 젠더 무경계화라는 상징적 의미를 내포하고 있다.

Key words : beauty commodities(미 상품), body modification(신체 수정), character(특성),  
symbolic meaning(상징적 의미)

## I. Introduction

The mass media pervades the everyday lives of people living in global societies. Media's main sphere of operation is the production and transformation of ideologies.

As an inherent component of modern culture, advertising has become less concerned with the communication of essential information about goods and services and more involved in the manipulation of social values and attitudes<sup>1)</sup>. Marketing strategies developed to target new consumers frequently play a complex role in creating or reinforcing cultural images of gender, sexuality, race, and class<sup>2)</sup>. In addition, advertising has become one of the great vehicles of social communication, making up the most consistent body of material in the mass media today<sup>3)</sup>. It provides a framework for society by defining a set of roles and social identities, and portraying ideals to be pursued<sup>4)</sup>.

Fashion advertisements in particular reveal issues related to body image and personal appearance, and provide ideal characteristics of body. Advertisers suggest that models' ideal bodies in fashion ads can be achieved by using the perfect commodities, and through that, ads have been implicated in establishing a typical standards of appearance as the social norm<sup>5)</sup>. Historically, women are especially influenced by the desire to reform or mould their body itself. And, nowadays, males also are interested in their appearance and grooming tips, which can be explained by the growth of men's fashion magazine and the various kinds of fashion and beauty commodity.

Commodity aesthetics organizes imaginary spaces around the commodity, and use-value and exchange value in which commodity has a symbolic meaning. They contain the identity that is shown as mediated through the use of the commodity<sup>6)</sup>. In terms of this, fashion and beauty products show

the aesthetic symbolic meaning related to the body. Now, the body plays a role as body capital in modern capitalistic society and the use of commodities has a close relationship with body in popular culture.

Many researchers have studied males' and females' image in ads related to gender issues<sup>7)</sup>. But, there is not systematic research that can prove the body aesthetics related to beauty products.

The purpose of this study is to confirm the characteristics and symbolic meanings appeared in commodity ads for body modification which help to achieve ideal beauty. To do that, the researcher investigated the advertisements of cosmetics and body care products in *Vogue* and *GQ* magazine issued in 2002, in aspects of properties for body modification such as color, volume & proportion/shape & structure, texture, and odor.

This study will contribute to the understanding of commodity aesthetics of fashion and beauty products.

## II Theoretical Background

### 1. Commodity Aesthetics in Fashion Magazine Advertisements

The development of capitalism has pushed into the forefront a complex of practices and phenomenon. It means the consciousness-shaping and behavior-directing influence of the presentation and propagation of commodities produced for mass marketing. Manipulation through the use of commodity was understood as the non-terroristic directing of the consciousness and behavior of the masses through linguistic and aesthetic means.

In the world of semblance, industries today are working to produce a representation of power which conditions people's lives and perceptions. The

economic functions of exchanges and the production of commodities form the world of manipulative semblance<sup>8)</sup>.

Commodities have various kinds of traits which have been used to satisfy people's desire. For example, clothing and beauty products are useful to groom appearances. Like this, the commodity which people need has its own use-value containing an aesthetic meaning in popular culture.

The imagery around the product becomes spaces in our imagination that will be filled through aesthetic-symbolic activity. In the observation of these imaginary spaces one must differentiate between the symbolic-aesthetic material from which they are constructed and the organization of this material. These imagery spaces organize social identity via object relations<sup>9)</sup>.

Fashion magazines are neither mere source of information, nor mere description of clothes and styles. They are a source of fascination and guided imagination in social and individual imagination<sup>10)</sup>. Various types of commodities are introduced by the model portrayed in advertising, which help to relay ideals. Advertisements used by companies to promote products are specific and contribute to the incarnation, induction and, transformation of popular culture. What appeals to potential consumers is the aesthetic representation of particular attitudes, personal beauty, and ideal situations of the models more than the dress advertised<sup>11)</sup>. Commodities presented in advertisement are not consumed as physical products but as differentiated symbols. Schudson suggests that advertising seeks to portray social ideals<sup>12)</sup> and manipulates the image of human body to serve their own economic needs<sup>13)</sup>.

Likewise, beauty commodities portrayed in fashion magazines play a role in introducing the way of method to accomplish contemporary beauty ideal and body image. This ideal body imagery offered in advertising is one of the most popular

and universal cultural sources of ideology in our society. Studies suggest that advertising and the mass media may play a part in creating and reinforcing a preoccupation with physical attractiveness<sup>14)</sup> and influence consumer perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable level of physical attractiveness<sup>15)</sup>. Many kinds of products, like cosmetics and body care products are used for management of body. Advertising has become one of through which we develop a modern sense of self, one perpetually open to change<sup>16)</sup>. Bartky (1988) has considered fashion and beauty practices as modes of the body disciplines concerned with body size and shape, gesture, posture and movement and producing the body as an ornamented surface. In this sense, commodity aesthetics come true<sup>17)</sup>.

## 2. Body Modification and Beauty Commodity

Within the culture of consumption brought on by the growth of capitalism, the body is considered to have a symbolic value. The intelligible body includes our scientific, philosophic, and aesthetic representation of the body-our cultural conceptions of the body, norms of beauty, healthy models, and so forth<sup>18)</sup>.

Now, the body is a very important thing which is a component and a definite object recognizing a self in present time. Hillestad(1980) developed a taxonomy of personal appearance in which the body is equally important to dress in the total presentation of self to others<sup>19)</sup>. Its attributes are eminently social, and are principal determinants of our lives and our social identities as well as the focal point of our self-concept and group-concepts<sup>20)</sup>.

The body is a complex unit in the structure of appearance and includes aspects of body form and body surface. Body form could be described by

characteristics of size, shape of various body parts, and composition or morphology. It is shaped primarily by genetic inheritance, and to a lesser degree by eating and exercise behaviors. Body surfaces are also dependent on genetic inheritance, but may be modified. They include skin and hair color, skin and hair texture, nail structure, amount of body hair, likelihood of tanning, and others<sup>21)</sup>. These characteristics of the body contributed significantly to the overall evaluations of appearance.

The dress as an assemblage of body modifications and supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human being. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher<sup>22)</sup> constructed the classification system for types of dress and their properties related to body modification. According to the system, the major categories of body modification, and their subcategories which show parts of the body can be modified, which include hair, skin, nails, muscular-skeletal system, teeth, and breath. Body parts can be described in regard to specific properties of color, volume and proportion, shape and structure, surface design, texture, odor, sound, and taste. Supplements to the body can be cross-classified with the same properties used to describe body modifications<sup>23)</sup>. In this system, the range in types of dress provides a method for identifying and describing types of dress.

Body modification may change or redesign the body itself either temporarily or permanently. The goal of modification is to make the body beautiful and to accomplish the ideal body image or express their own idea and ideology<sup>24)</sup>.

The dominant western technique of body decoration is achieved with beauty commodity, like cosmetics or make-up. The word in cosmetic in modern usage has come to have a very much broader meaning than its dictionary definition - any external application which improves the hair,

skin or complexion<sup>25)</sup>. As rhetoric, make-up guarantees transformations, and through this beauty transformations youth is regained, skin becomes smooth<sup>26)</sup>.

Make-up and stylish clothes demonstrate that a woman is committed to femininity. Shape of brows, style of hair, frosted lips, and lacquered nails become potent substitutes for natural sex difference, and sign instantly advertising femininity. They transform abstract notions of beauty into something tangible. As such, the reconstruction of body is part of the acquisition of a particular range of body techniques<sup>27)</sup>.

Today the state of the cosmetic industry is one of the most revealing and significant pointers of our time. Cosmetics are more than simply a decorative mask, they imprint on body and mind the traditions and philosophy of the social norms<sup>28)</sup>. The newest and the most revolutionary trend, however, is the increasing use of cosmetics by men.

Beauty Commodity organizes specific imaginary relations of the individuals to certain objective conditions of their lives<sup>29)</sup>. It influences the trend of body modification which presents the self as a physical and a social phenomenon.

### III The Method of Analysis

#### 1. The subject of analysis

For this study, the researcher selected all advertisements related to cosmetics and body care products in *Vogue* and *GQ* fashion magazines issued in 2002. The frequencies of sample advertisements were 418 in *Vogue* and 139 in *GQ*.

The researcher classified the sample advertisements based on the classification system for types of body modification and their properties, as shown in <Table 1>. It shows parts of the body can be modified, which include hair, skin, nails,

muscular-skeletal system, teeth, and breath. And, each body parts can be modified regard to specific properties of color, volume & proportion/shape & structure, texture, and odor by the use of commodities such as cosmetics and body care products. This system was based on ideas of Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher<sup>30</sup>'s 'The classification system for dress types and their traits'. However, the researcher changed the original system by merging volume & proportion and shape & structure because they share common characteristics in terms of the traits of products. For example, the product for diet and fitness modifies both volume and shape. Also, the categories of sound and taste were removed because there are no proper products which suit these categories.

properties of color, volume & proportion/shape & structure, texture, and odor.

### 1) Color

Color is one of the most visible traits of the body, and the dominant western technique of color modification is achieved with makeup. Modifications of the body color include dyed or lightened hair, powdered, painted, suntanned, or lightened skin, and lacquered nails.

### 2) Volume & proportion/Shape & structure

Body volume & proportion and shape & structure are related with height, weight, and figure proportions<sup>31</sup>. If the body does not conform to the ideal, we can modify our body's shape and

<Table 1> Classification system for types of body modification and their properties

Body Modification Transformations of		Properties			
		Color	Volume & proportion Shape & structure	Texture	Odor
a. Hair	head	· hair dye · hair bleach	· volume boost cf. hair spray	· permanent · straightened · sleek hair cf. hair gel, mousse	·
	face	·	·	· shaving	·
	body	·	·	· hair remover	·
b. Skin	face	· paint · powdered cf. eye shadow foundation	·	· hydrating, · anti-aging cf. skin lotion	· fragrance · perfume
	body	· tanning	·	· body skin care	
c. Nails		· lacquered nail cf. manicure	·	·	·
d. Muscular/ Skeletal system		·	· diet, fitness	·	·
e. Teeth		· breach	·	·	·
f. Breath		·	·	·	· deodorant · halitosis remover

## 2. The analysis category

The researcher analyzed the characteristics of commodity for body modification appeared in sample advertisements in aspects of specific

volume by losing or gaining weight, and through the plastic surgery or specific products. Modifications of body shape includes dressed hair, and reshaped legs, buttocks, breasts, and hips.

### 3) Texture

Texture is the visible and tangible structure of a surface or substance<sup>32)</sup>, and the commodity for body texture is used for skin and hair care. Modifications of body textures include curled or straightened hair and smoothed skin, etc<sup>33)</sup>.

### 4) Odor

Odors are everywhere and performing a wide variety of functions. These odors play important roles in virtually every area of social interaction<sup>34)</sup>. The commodity for body odor is a perfume or fragrance, and the aesthetics of the sense of odor became commonplace<sup>35)</sup>.

And then, the researcher confirmed symbolic meanings appeared in ads through the investigation of ad copies and model's general image.

## IV The Results of Analysis and Discussion

### 1. The results of analysis

There are many kinds of grooming products ads for body modification in fashion magazines, which help males and females achieve the ideal beauty norms.

〈Table 2〉 shows the proportion of beauty commodities, like the cosmetics and body care goods which can be used to modify a body.

#### 1) Color

The commodities which change our body color include foundation, rouge, and mascara for face skin color, hairdye products for hair color, manicure for nails, and tanning products for the change of over all body color.

The proportion of products for color modification

is 39.7% in *Vogue* and 5.8% in *GQ*. The goods for face color occupied the highest proportion, then hair, nails, and lastly teeth in *Vogue*. While, in *GQ* the highest portion of products for color modification is for teeth whitening. This means visible makeup is a technique of females grooming, while males prefer more invisible grooming methods. And, face is the main objective of body modification, because it is the source of non-verbal communication including verbal communication which indicates age, gender, and race<sup>36)</sup>.

#### 2) Volume & proportion / Shape & structure

The commodities which change our body volume & proportion/shape & structure include hair spray for hair volume and diet products, like Oxydrene which is a compound that manufactures muscle and loses body fat faster. This product is used for males' muscular body. While, for females there are several kinds of goods which increase in breast size.

According to the 〈Table 2〉, the proportion of products for volume & proportion/shape & structure modification is 6% in *Vogue* and 16.5% in *GQ*. However, there is no significant difference between *Vogue* and *GQ* in aspects of the frequency. The reason of higher portion of commodity in *GQ* than in *Vogue* can be explained by females' interests more in the modification for body color than for other properties. Models' thin ideal images appeared in advertising as female stereotypes<sup>37)</sup>, and muscled male bodies are becoming more common in fashion magazines. Explanations for the thin ideal include a desire to emulate the upper class, where thinness is equated with wealth and leisure<sup>38)</sup>. These ideal body figures portrayed in advertising cause people to modify their body into ideals by using specific products.

#### 3) Texture

The commodities which change body texture

include face skin care, body skin care, foot care, hand care, lip care, and hair remover etc. The care of the skin in general is a special branch of the cosmeticians trade. It provides the skin with hydration, cell nutrients, antioxidants, moisturization, barrier conditioning, and the ability to normalize cell renewal and exfoliation. Hair remover for face and body shows the desire for smooth skin.

The proportion of products for body texture is 32.5% in *Vogue* 35.3% in *GQ*. This similar portion between *Vogue* and *GQ* reflects males feminization or gender neutralization.

#### 4) Odor

Fragrance or perfume for body odor and deodorant or halitosis remover for fresh breath are advertised for both sexes. The frequency of females' perfume is higher than that of males' according to <Table 2>, however, the portion is

higher in *GQ*(42.4%) than in *Vogue*(21.8%). The higher portion of males fragrance means that males' grooming is invisible comparing with females'. So, modification for odor is becoming the main grooming products for males, and increasing in aspects of cosmetic industry. The global fragrance industry is a \$6 billion a year industry, according to The Fragrance Foundation, New York-based trade association<sup>39)</sup>.

## 2. Discussion

The characteristics and symbolic meaning in commodity for body modification are as follows.

### 1) The characteristics

The characteristics of commodities for body modification are multifunctionism, naturalism, and individualization.

<Table 2> The frequency of beauty commodity ads in *Vogue* and *GQ* f(%)

		Color		Volume & proportion Shape & structure		Texture		Odor	
		<i>Vogue</i>	<i>GQ</i>	<i>Vogue</i>	<i>GQ</i>	<i>Vogue</i>	<i>GQ</i>	<i>Vogue</i>	<i>GQ</i>
Hair	-head	22 (5.3)	1 (0.7)	11 (2.6)	8 (5.7)	43 (10.3)	10 (7.2)	0	0
	-face	0	0	0	0	2 (0.5)	15 (10.8)	0	0
	-body	0	0	0	0	5 (1.2)	10 (7.2)	0	0
Skin	-face	113 (27)	1 (0.7)	0	0	58 (13.8)	14 (10.1)	89 (21.3)	56 (40.3)
	-body	7 (1.7)	0	0	0	28 (6.7)	0		
Nails		15 (3.6)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Muscular/ skeletal system		0	0	14 (3.4)	15 (10.8)	0	0	0	0
Teeth		9 (2.1)	6 (4.4)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breath		0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (0.5)	3 (2.1)
Subtotal		166 (39.7)	8 (5.8)	25 (6)	23 (16.5)	136 (32.5)	49 (35.3)	91 (21.8)	59 (42.4)
Total		<i>Vogue</i> 418(100), <i>GQ</i> 139(100)							

### (1) Multifunctionism

The characteristics of multifunctionism mean that today's commodities, such as cosmetics, have their effects both on and below the skin's surface. For example, mass-marketed color cosmetics contain actives from every class of skin care anti-aging actives, which shows a merging of the color makeup line with the therapeutics of the cosm-ecutical line. Makeup was used to help conceal imperfections, while skin care was used to maintain healthy-looking skin. The new trend is that color cosmetics are starting to do more than just hide imperfections, that is, the two technologies are combined<sup>40)</sup>. The new innovations are allowing the two technologies to combine, and finally, products are now providing both immediate results and long-term benefits<sup>41)</sup>.

### (2) Naturalness

The beauty commodities show the characteristics of naturalness combined with high-technology.

Models portrayed in advertisements show more natural appearance, although they use artificial commodities. And, the texts in ads explain the pursuit of natural characteristics and the usage of natural ingredients. <Fig. 1> shows Clarins' tanning product which guarantees perfectly natural tan.

The importance of the natural trend is the result of green consumerism, and technology has repeatedly demonstrated its appeal to consumers most recently. Now, consumers are much more conscious of what they are putting into and on their bodies, and are genuinely concerned about the impact their purchases have on the environment. As a result, cosmetic companies are introducing more products with higher levels of natural ingredients. The crossovers between the two trends are represented when a high-tech product combines its formula with botanical extracts for added consumer appeal<sup>42)</sup>. Now, more natural products that have functionality are needed.

### (3) Individualization

The professionalized beauty commodities for the detailed part for the body modification show the individualization.

The grooming action is a highly specialized form of self-conduct, and the commodities for body modification have a more personal approach, head-to-toe beauty for hair care, face care, tooth care and nail care etc.

### 2) The symbolic meanings

The symbolic meanings in commodity ads for body modification are the pursuit of global beauty, youth and health ideology, and gender neutralization.

#### (1) The pursuit of global beauty

The commodities for body modification show the norms for global beauty. Cosmetic rituals create a framework for the female world while at the same time producing uniformity within it<sup>43)</sup>. The modern society needs a global marketing under the realization that the world is a global village, and the use of beauty commodity enables to accomplish global ideal beauty norms. The ads portraying various races models for beauty commodities show the pursuit of global beauty. For example, Roreal's hair dye product for various races shows the ideal hair color to achieve the global standard of beautiful hair. Like this, beauty standards are elevated by commodities.

#### (2) Youth and health ideology

The commodity advertisements in fashion magazines represents youth and health ideology. In the western world, makeup has also been used in an attempt to recover the lost bloom of youth, and now various kinds of products for the body are used to achieve youth and health.

The contents in ad copies refer the functions and benefits like healthy and youthful body which



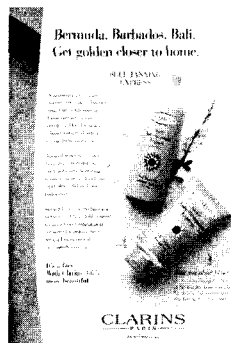
can be taken by the use of products. For example, the texts referred in anti-aging cosmetic ads show it well. <Fig. 2> suggests Neutrogena's eye cream which improves skins elasticity and takes years off the eye. What a culture defines as physical attractiveness may be fleeting with age, and a youthful look is perceived to be more desirable<sup>44)</sup>. Contemporary entertainment, marketing, and news industries also value youth.

### (3) Gender neutralization

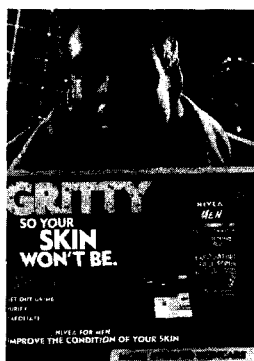
Various kinds of fashion and beauty commodities in ads for both sexes show the blurring of gender boundary or gender neutralization.



<Fig. 1> Clarins tanning cream (Vogue, '02, April, p. 235)



<Fig. 2> Neutrogena eye cream (GQ, '02, June, p. 113)



<Fig. 3> Nivea lotion for men (GQ, '02, May, p. 245)

Western techniques of body decoration are gender-specific, primarily denoting attributes of femininity<sup>45)</sup>. However, contemporary grooming products in males' fashion magazine ads show their interests on appearance, which reflects males' feminization. For example, the ad copies referring males' smooth skin and neutral imaged male models show males' feminization, which symbolizes gender neutralization. <Fig. 3> shows Nivea's lotion for men, which helps improve a condition of skin, so makes smoother skin. Deacon(2002)<sup>46)</sup> said that there are many kinds of websites for men's grooming, and the male models portrayed in men's magazines set impossible clothing and body standards, which pressures them to concern their bodies.

## V. Conclusion

Fashion and beauty commodities have been developed for body management, and the increasing concern about body has brought the development of various kinds of commodities for detail parts of male and female bodies.

Especially advertisements portraying various products as idealized images of ourselves represent the ideal characteristics of body, and this ideal body can be achieved by using commodities they advertising.

This study analyzed the characteristics of commodities for body modification which help to achieve ideal beauty, and described the symbolic meanings appeared in beauty commodities by investigating the advertisements of beauty and body care products. The results are as follows.

There are various kinds of products for the detailed part of the body, which show that body becomes one of the most interesting objectives. Comparing with gender, males adopt constructive

methods like the modification of volume & proportion/shape & structure and invisible methods like the modification of odor. While, females use visible methods like the modification of body color. For body texture, there are similar proportion of commodities for both sexes.

The characteristics of commodities for body modification are multifunctionism, naturalness, and individualization.

First, the multifunctionism means today's commodities such as cosmetics which has its effect both on and below the skin's surface. That is, they have more than two functions in one commodity. Second, the characteristics of naturalness is the increasing usage of natural ingredients and the pursuit of natural appearance. Third, the characteristics of individualism is that commodities have more personal approach--head-to-toe for each part of the bodily beauty. And, the grooming action is a highly specialized form of self-conduct

The symbolic meanings of commodities in fashion magazines are the pursuit of global beauty, youth and health ideology, and gender neutralization.

First, the commodities for body modification show the pursuit of global beauty, which means the use of beauty commodity enables to accomplish global ideal beauty norms. Second, youth and health ideology can be explained by the texts and models in advertisements which show young and healthy model's image through the use of commodity. Third, gender neutralization is confirmed by the various kinds of beauty commodities for both sexes related to body part.

Appearance is more important now than ever before, and the detailed parts of the body need physical management. These concerns about the body have brought the development of commodities which became the source to create huge capital and value.

In aspects of market, the understanding of

characteristics and symbolic meaning in commodity will help advertisers promote products effectively and forecast the trend change.

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