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Cutting edge:

**Consumers' attitudes towards advertisements
portraying female models who have undergone
cosmetic surgery**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

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Abstract

Advertisers portray idealized female models who have gained attractiveness from cosmetic surgery in their advertisements without knowing the effects of this decision. This thesis aims to address this unknown point about the portrayal of idealized female images in advertisements. It is a controversial topic, but an important topic, given the prominent use of cosmetic surgery in contemporary society.

Two exploratory studies and five quantitative studies were conducted in Thailand to investigate: female consumer' reactions to models that underwent cosmetic surgery, male consumers' reaction to such models and the influence of cosmetic surgery on Asian beauty types. The results show that cosmetic surgery only enhances perceived attractiveness when the model underwent many cosmetic surgery changes and if female consumers do not perceive these surgery changes. However, both male and female consumers can detect surgery changes when the model has undergone many changes. In sum, cosmetic surgery only affects attractiveness if many procedures have been conducted. But then the probability of detection is high, and detection overrides the positive effect of cosmetic surgery on perceived model attractiveness.

This dark side does not occur amongst male participants in the reported experiments. We found that males believe in the negative news of claiming that the model has undergone cosmetic surgery, but such claims do not affect perceived model attractiveness. However, a claim of no surgery on model's face provides benefit, as it increases perceived model attractiveness amongst male experiment participants, and consequently increases advertising effectiveness.

Concerning the third topic, previous classifications of female models' beauty types are based on a Western perspective. However, we have shown that Asian model beauty types are classified differently from Western perspectives. From an Asian

perspective female model beauty types are classified into three main groups: Natural Cuteness (cute, natural, sweet, and local beauty), Non-Local/Surgery (Western look, Korean style, and surgery beauty), and Sexy Beauty (sexy, cool, and sharp beauty). Our results indicate that cosmetic surgery enhances Non-Local/Surgery beauty and Sexy beauty. However, the most effective beauty type in terms of advertising effectiveness is Natural Cuteness, which cosmetic surgery cannot enhance.

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I started my PhD with a dream to be a lecturer. After I graduated in the UK, I had to complete two papers with good grades to be able to study for my PhD in New Zealand. Moving to New Zealand was challenging for me. I faced many problems, the toughest of which being that after completing the two papers, I could not find a supervisor. But one person, Aunty Jo (Josephine Wong), told me that “God is good, and he has a plan.” That is true as I found the best supervisor for me.

I still remember, in July 2014, I was supposed to enroll in the PhD program as I had completed the required papers, but I still did not have a supervisor. Dr. Andrew Murphy, Prof. Valentyna Melnyk and Prof. Harald van Heerde recommended that I should meet a new professor from the Netherlands who would arrive in the same month. Then, I got the email from Dr. Andrew to have a meeting with Prof. Leo Paas, who became my supervisor. At first, I had not thought about conducting research on models who underwent cosmetic surgery, but I read Prof. Paas’s research and found that he investigated thin models. Then, it occurred to me that Thailand also has many models who have undergone cosmetic surgery, so this might be an area in which we shared an interest.

Definitely, the first person I would like to thank is Prof. Leo Paas. For me, he is more than a supervisor. He is my motivator and my inspiration. Many times when I felt like I had no energy to do my research, I just thought that I could not let my supervisor down. I am grateful to my co-supervisor, Dr. Angela McNaught. She always advised and guided me in the development of psychological theories on consumer behavior. I also would like to thank her for giving me good advice, support and flexibility. She shared with me many insightful ideas regarding research and how to process my work. Her patience and strict guidelines about writing helped me to improve my writing a lot.

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List of Abbreviations

CS	Cosmetic Surgery
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CS Change	Number of facial parts that are underwent cosmetic surgery
FAM	Female Advertising Model who has not undergone Cosmetic Surgery
FAMUCS	Female Advertising Model who has Undergone Cosmetic Surgery

