



**A Semiotic Analysis of Women Hair Images in Print
Advertisements in Addis Ababa**

Yodit Belay



**A Thesis Submitted to
the School of Journalism and Communication**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in
Journalism and Communication**

**Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
June, 2014**

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School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Yodit Belay, entitled *A Semiotic Analysis of Women Hair Images on Print Advertisements in Addis Ababa* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

A Semiotic Analysis of Women Hair Images on Print Advertisements in Addis Ababa

Yodit Belay

Addis Ababa University, June 2014

The purpose of this study was to analyze the women hair images of print advertisements in Addis Ababa. The objective of the study was thus, to show whether media and their products reflect the reality of the world or not. For this, the research questions were posed to identify the denotative signifiers, connotative values and the hidden myth of women hair beauty definitions. In order to address these, the analysis is based on the Semiotic theory of Roland Barthes, objectification theory and analysis from feminists' perspective. Accordingly, qualitative methodological approach and critical paradigm is employed. The analysis is conducted on six advertisements collected from billboard advertisements in Addis Ababa and selected from different contexts.

The study reveals that women hair beauty portrayed in print advertisements in Addis Ababa are not natural, or 'just there' and so they can be reconstructed. It shows that the relationship of sign and its meaning is unnatural and they are related to meet a certain goal. The hair beauty myth is then at one time historical and intentional and it is the motivation which causes this myth to be 'unconditional' or 'fixed'.

The myth and connoted hair beauty values reflected in the advertisements are what they are because of the belief in white supremacy which is related to the history of slavery. From this it can be understood that reality was once objective or exists externally, but overtime it is shaped and reshaped by different factors such as political, economic, social or gender. This process of naturalization then put this reality into structures which then is inappropriately framed to be the universal truth.

The existing advertisements in Addis Ababa are then worded to play on stereotypes and promoted a negative association with natural blackness. And thus it can be said that the objectification of women in advertisements pressured women to evaluate their physical appearance every day and in turn this hinders them from advancement. The ideal served a political end.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Kotler and Armstrong (1999) defined advertising as any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999, p.450). Although advertising is used mostly by commercial firms, it is also used by a wide range of nonprofit organizations, professionals, and social agencies that advertise their causes to various target publics (Ibid). So in order to have a successful advertising campaign, those commercials should get attention and communicate well to their targeted groups.

Since people are exposed to different advertisements in our day to day lives, it can be said that advertisements play an important role in shaping our mind by communicating different issues in line with advertising their product, service or idea. Therefore, those advertising messages can be presented in different styles such as showing how a product fits with a particular lifestyle, building a mood or image around the product such as beauty, love and others. If, for example, a woman promotes a vehicle then it may connote it is a beautiful women preference or if the advertisement is about an alcoholic beverage by couples in recreational areas then the product is linked to love or romance.

In marketing thus, before producing and selling a product there is a need to make awareness about the benefits of those products through idealizing the concepts by that specific society. If a woman in any advertisement appears with straight, wavy and long hair, then it means that this kind of hair is considered beautiful or presentable. Thus, this encourages women living in that

area to buy products that could make their hair like those advertisements promote. So the purpose of reflecting different concepts in different advertisements continuously is to make those concepts to be considered as the 'obvious meanings' or as 'the reality of the world.' If a society accepts a theme or concept as 'natural', then it is very much obvious that they strive to meet those standards.

Therefore, advertisement is one form of marketing communication used to encourage, persuade, or manipulate an audience (viewers, readers or listeners, sometimes a specific group) to take some action (Kotler & Keller, 2007, p.527). Therefore this research focuses on the type of communication that is considered as the production and exchange of meaning. It is considered with how messages, or texts, interact with people in order to produce meanings; that is, it is concerned with the role of texts in our culture (Fiske, 1990, p.2).

Thus in line with this is semiology which attempts to explain how things mean what they mean and the various ways in which things mean what they do ("Media Texts," n.d, p.37). Semiotics in short is the study of signs (Triwahyudi, 2012, p.10).

The basis of semiology is found in the concepts of two visionary yet very different thinkers working at the start of the twentieth century. These are Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce ("Media Texts," n.d, p.38) but it was Roland Barthes who first set up a systematic model to analyze interactive idea of meaning between writer/reader and text (Fiske, 1990, p.85).

Accordingly, the denotative and connotative meanings of advertisements based on Roland Barthes theory will be analyzed. Barthes claimed that the seemingly innocent poster, advertisements and even all mass cultural materials were not really innocent for they were

intended to shape and reshape readers' ideology (Zhang, 2011, p.1). Thus, his semiotic analysis is a tool to find out the hidden meanings or myth of those advertisements.

On the other hand, the critiques of women beauty practices from feminist's point of view will also be presented. For this, the book of Jeffrey, *Beauty and Misogyny* and Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* is reviewed. Jeffrey indicated that women beauty practices are the most important aspect of women's oppression and should be examined (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 2/3). And according to Wolf, images of female beauty are used as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth (Wolf, 2002, p.10)

Therefore, the semiotic analysis of different print ads in Addis Ababa enables women to waken up and critically examine those 'obvious meanings' before selecting any beauty products. This teaches, in turn, that a woman should choose what she wants to look like and what she wants to be, rather than obeying what market forces and a multibillion-dollar advertising industry dictates (Ibid, p.2) by critically examining 'the world reality' that advertisements promote.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Advertisements play a great role in naturalizing different concepts in the world. Concepts that have common meanings in the society appear in different advertisements so that the society understands the promoted product, service or idea accordingly.

Thus, concepts appearing with the same meanings in advertisements develop a belief that the concept meaning is 'obvious' or 'natural'. In line with this, the advertisements in Addis Ababa present women hair images which are believed to have an 'obvious' meaning of hair beauty. But this process of naturalizing themes by advertisements results in silencing the difference.

This can be manifested by women living in Addis who appear almost with similar hair texture, color and length which result in having homogeneous definition of hair beauty that in turn erases the hair diversity image.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to show whether media and their products reflect the reality of the world or not. This, in turn, enables professionals/researchers to have informed consciousness that the seemingly immutable themes in the world can be criticized and changed and thereby develop understanding of the actions required to effect change.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

The specific objectives of this study are:-

- ✓ To analyze women hair beauty images in billboard advertisements in Addis Ababa
- ✓ To deconstruct the hair images and explore the meanings that are inferred from the advertisements
- ✓ To examine the 'universal' women hair beauty concept and uncover if they represent the reality of the world.

1.4 Research Questions

According to Roland Barthes Theory, on the print ads in Addis Ababa that include women:-

- Which are the denotative signifiers and the connotative values of women hair beauty that are reflected in the selected ads?
- What are the hidden myths of women hair beauty definitions?
- What do the advertisements reflect about the reality of the world?
- What does the hidden myth fail to reveal about ways to live in the world?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to show people how to examine the world reality reflected by media and their products. Thus, the outcome will enable professionals/researchers to examine the 'common sense' or 'obvious' meaning of any theme in media. Consequently, informed consciousness develops rather than accepting historically mediated structures as immutable.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study covers print advertisements in Addis Ababa specifically from billboards located in Bole Road, Megenagna, Meskel Square, Piassa, Kasanchis and Mexico roundabouts. The research addresses only six billboard advertisements in place from January 2014 up to March 2014. The study monitors ads that include women with uncovered hair.

1.7 Limitation

Methods of data collection and interpretation are more subjective because the selected samples cover those ads that show women with their hair uncovered and which go in line with the selected theoretical analysis. Plus to this, since the research is based on interpretation, the outcome is more subjective and if the same study is conducted by another researcher the result may differ. But it is believed that it will enrich our understanding of the advertisements. Thus, the findings are limited to the study area.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The research paper has five chapters. Chapter one consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, research questions, scope and limitations. Chapter two contains the review of related literature. In Chapter three, methodological aspects of the study

have been discussed. Chapter Four embraces description and analysis of the selected advertisements. Chapter Five presents conclusion and forwards implications.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Semiotics defined

Semiotics, narrowly defined, is the *study of signs* (“Media Texts,” n.d, p.37). These signs convey the information that is communicative, and signs able to replace something that can be thought or imagined (Triwahyudi, 2012, p.10). Semiotics tried to explain the fabric of the sign or the science of signs; systematically describe the essence, characteristics, and form a sign, and the significance attached to them (Ibid).

Semiology is the attempt to explain how things mean what they mean and the various ways in which things mean what they do. It is therefore the study of meaning and the different systems that make meaning possible. These ‘systems’ include images, colour, bodily gestures and music, as well as the various fields of mass communication, i.e. media forms in all their variety (“Media Texts,” n.d, p.37).

Semiotics is defined as the “social production of meaning through sign systems; the analysis of anything that can stand for something else” (Griffin 2012, p. 323). Semiotics considers *why* specific things such as colored hair, white skin, and language mean what they do.

Semiotics has been applied, with interesting results, to film, theater, medicine, architecture, zoology, and a host of other areas that involve or are concerned with communication and the transfer of information.....some semioticians see semiotics as the queen of the interpretive

sciences, the key that unlocks the meanings of all things, great and small (“Semiotic Analysis,” n.d, p.3).

Semiotics originated in the work of two thinkers. In the late 19th century, the Swiss Linguistic Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and the American Philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce(1839-1914) developed their semiotic theories independently, an ocean apart (“Semiotics,” n.d, p.4). They provided a basic set of templates for the work done by later thinkers in semiology, such as Roland Barthes (“Media Texts,” n.d, p.38).

Ferdinand de Saussure defined semiology as "a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life" (Saussure, 1959, p.68). De Saussure’s foundational work concentrated on written and spoken language and, for the purposes of explaining how words work as signs, he suggested that signs could be thought of as consisting of two, indivisible aspects: signifier and signified (“Media Texts,” n.d, p.40).

The signifier is the material or physical form a sign takes something that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted. The signified is the object or concept to which the signifier refers. The signifier and the signified relate to each other through the process of signification. Saussure considered the signifier and the signified as inseparable with each triggering the other. (“Semiotics,” n.d, p.4)

As it is indicated in *Course in General Linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure*, the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name but a concept and a sound –image (Saussure, 1959, p.66). The two

elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other; and is called a sign (Ibid). His division of the sign into two components, the signifier (or “sound-image”) and the signified or (“concept”), and his suggestion that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary of crucial importance for the development of semiotics (Triwahyudi, 2012, p.2).

“I propose to retain the word sign (signe) to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound–image respectively by signified (signifie) and signifier (significant); the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts” (Saussure, 1959, p.67).

The relationship between the signifier and signified—and this is crucial—is *arbitrary*, unmotivated, unnatural. There is no logical connection between a word and a concept or a signifier and signified, a point that makes finding meaning in texts interesting and problematic (“Semiotic Analysis,” n.d, p.6).

“The signifier though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it. The masses have no voice in the matter, and the signifier chosen by language could be replaced by no other” (Saussure,1959, p.71).

A sign is something physical, perceivable by our senses; it refers to something other than itself; and it depends upon recognition by its users that it is a sign (Fiske, 1990, p.41).

Saussure was interested primarily in the linguistic system, secondarily in how that system related to the reality to which it referred, and hardly at all in how it related to the reader and his or her socio-cultural position (Ibid, p.85). In other words, he did not really envisage meaning as being a

process of negotiation between writer/reader and text. He emphasized the text, not the way in which the signs in the text interact with the cultural and personal experience of the user, nor the way that the conventions in the text interact with the conventions experienced and expected by the user. It was Saussure's follower Roland Barthes, who first set up a systematic model by which this negotiating, interactive idea of meaning could be analyzed. At the heart of Barthes's theory is the idea of *two orders of signification* (Ibid).

2.2 Roland Barthes Semiotic Theory

When we perceive signs, we do not usually think about one idea but potentially a whole range of ideas generated by the sign. This aspect of signification was most profitably explored by the French theorist Roland Barthes ("Media Texts," n.d, p.44). Barthes took up terms developed by de Saussure and Peirce and deployed them in productive ways to think about the social context and role of the media. Barthes suggests that any sign will be associated with an initial aspect of signification but that this aspect will trigger further associations (Ibid).

In semiotics, denotation and connotation are terms describing the relationship between the signifier and its' signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signifieds: a *denotative* signified and a *connotative* signified. Meaning includes both denotation and connotation (Chandler, 1994, p.89).

2.2.1 Denotation, Connotation and Myth

The first order of signification is the one on which Saussure worked. It describes the relationship between the signifier and the signified within the sign, and of the sign with its referent in external reality. Barthes refers to this order as denotation (Fiske, 1990, p.86).

'Denotation' tends to be described as the definitional, 'literal', 'obvious' or 'commonsense' meaning of a sign. In the case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide (Chandler, 1994, p.89). A woman in an advertisement denotes that particular woman, the word woman denotes a female human. But that woman can be presented in different ways in many advertisements by changing her skin color, body shape, and all her appearances. The denotative meanings of that woman would be the same but their connotation differs.

Connotation is the term that Barthes uses to describe one of the three ways in which sign work in the second order of signification (Fiske, 1990, p.86). The term 'connotation' is used to refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on (Chandler, 1994, p.89). For Barthes, the critical factor in connotation is the signifier in the first order. The first order signifier is the sign of the connotation (Fiske, 1990, p.86).

Denotation is what is presented and connotation is how it is presented. Because connotation works on the subjective level, we are frequently not made consciously aware of it (Ibid, p.87).

For example women with her hair made or with her make-up can appear in different advertisements and this can be read as denotative meaning: that *women* are like this.

“Thus denotation is just another connotation. From such a perspective denotation can be seen as no more of a 'natural' meaning than is connotation but rather as a process of *naturalization*. Such a process leads to the powerful illusion that denotation is a purely literal and universal meaning which is not at all ideological, and indeed that those connotations which seem most obvious to individual interpreters are just as 'natural'.

(Chandler, 1994, p.90)

When advertisements are saying women 'are' like this, then it is very much easy to read connotative values as denotative facts (Fiske, 1990, p.87). Such as the type of women hair, body and all appearances are read as the obvious facts or reality of women beauty.

One of the main aims of semiotic analysis is to provide us with the analytical method and the frame of mind to guard against this sort of misreading (Ibid).

“In ancient Greece myth came to mean a fiction. Nowadays usually associated with fictions which include the gods or supernatural forces, myth also has the general meaning of the major fictional stories that have abided since ancient times. Thus myth, while denoting what is fictional, also tends to refer to stories that have an apparently timeless and universal appeal and truth. Barthes's use of the word myth is therefore particularly telling in that what he designates by the term presents itself as natural and

even timeless but is, in fact, an expression of a historically specific ideological vision of the world” (Allen, 2004, p.34).

There are many things that seem they have universal or natural definition and are accepted and followed by many people to lead their day to day activities. These common concepts are considered as if they are unquestionable or are the reality of the world, like standards of women beauty. The images of women are used in advertising of different products, ideas or others which at the same time try to preach frequently how a woman should look like in order to be considered beautiful. The women beauty theme has almost the same concept or assumption in most advertisements.

Thus, “... culture generally, Barthes argues, constantly presents artificial, manufactured and, above all, ideological objects and values as if they were indisputable, unquestionable and natural” (Ibid).

“A myth is a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature. A myth, for Barthes, is a culture’s way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing or understanding it. Barthes thinks of a myth as a chain of related concepts” (Fiske,1990, p.88). These common concepts have historical roots. Like how we Ethiopians living in Addis Ababa give value to white skin rather than the black or brown one. When women give birth to a baby girl, the society wish she got a white skin or looks like ‘ferenj’ but if it is a boy, skin color doesn’t matter. These and all other issues have historical link that pressure us to believe that it is the truth or reality of the world.

But what is beauty? Or to be specific for example what is women hair beauty? Are the concepts manufactured or not? We are accustomed to consider white color as beauty and thus preferred to buy skin whitening products. Who defined this? This process (presenting cultural phenomenon as if they were natural) is, for many theorists, what we mean by the word ideology which at least in this sense is the process whereby what is historical and created by specific cultures is presented as if it were timeless, universal and thus natural (Ibid, p35) Their function is to naturalize the cultural - in other words, to make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely 'natural', 'normal', self-evident, timeless, obvious 'common-sense' - and thus objective and 'true' reflections of 'the way things are' (Chandler, 1994, p.94).

“Ideology here is a term used to describe the social production of meanings. This is how Barthes uses it when he speaks of the connotators, that is the signifiers of connotation, as ‘the rhetoric of ideology’. Ideology, used in this way, is the source of the second-order meanings. Myths and connoted values are what they are because of the ideology of which they are the usable manifestations” (Fiske, 1990, p.166).

All advertisements surrounding us that include women nowadays generate the idea of ‘Women Beauty’. Therefore, as Barthes indicates, it is necessary to analyze the manner in which certain substances are given specific ideological meanings within culture (Allen, 2004, p.35). These days in Addis Ababa being a fluent speaker of English language is given a great value by considering that person “knowledgeable”. And in line with this looking like ‘ferenj’ on the way we dress, act or talk is a privilege by itself and a manifestation of being ‘civilized’ person. We

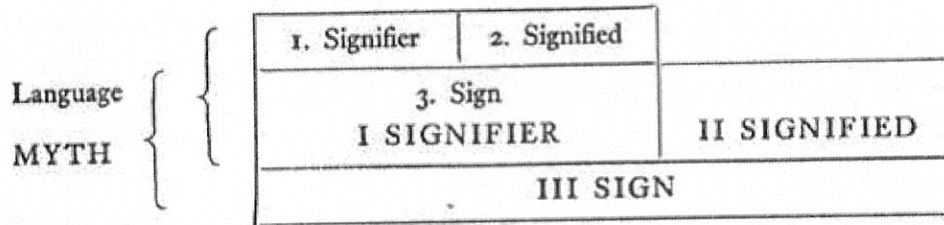
accept and implement the imported ideas, concepts and issues easily because our mind is already full of themes that are considered as 'universal truth' and are believed they reflect the 'reality' of the world. Even sometimes what we have at hand, such as some of our cultural values, is seen as being 'awkward'. 'Nikisat' (tattoo) is a very good example for this. 'Nikisat' is practiced in many rural areas of Ethiopia. A person with that mark on her face or on his hand signifies from where they came from and thus it is a shame to have it in urban areas of Ethiopia (nowadays even in Gondar or Bahirdar). But at the same time in these urban areas, many youngsters are wearing those kinds of tattoos on their bodies because the idea is imported from abroad and for them it is a manifestation of being 'modernized'.

When signs make myths and values public, they enable them to perform their function of cultural identification: that is, they enable members of a culture to identify their membership of that culture through their acceptance of common, shared myths and values (Fiske, 1990, p.171). "Myth takes a purely cultural and historical object.....and transforms it into the sign of universal value...."(Allen, 2004, p.36). Taking very common images and ideas of modern cultural life, Barthes does not simply expose the mythology behind them, but perhaps more importantly exposes the fact that we were somehow aware of the mythological character of such images and ideas all along (Ibid, p.37).

Myth acts on already existent signs, whether they be written statements or texts, photographs, films, music, buildings or garments (Ibid, p.42). Mythology takes this sign and turns it into a signifier for a new signified, a new concept. As Barthes puts it: 'myth is a peculiar system, in

that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*' (Ibid, p.43).

Figure 1: Signification of Myth



(Barthes, 1972, p.113)

A New Year card with a picture of a woman wearing Ethiopian traditional cloth and holding 'Adey Abeba' in her hands is a first-order sign: signifier: image of a woman holding 'Adey Abeba', signified: the coming Ethiopian holiday, sign: welcoming of the new Ethiopian Year. Mythology turns this sign into a signifier for a new signified and thus a new sign: all Ethiopians accept the Ethiopian calendar and celebrate the New Year with happiness. But still there are Ethiopians that say the Ethiopian New Year doesn't belong to them.

"Myth, as it were, hijacks meaning and turns it into a second order meaning or what Barthes calls *signification*. Myth is a *metalanguage*: a second-order language which acts on a first-order language, a language which generates meaning out of already existent meaning. However, as Barthes also reminds us, the original, first-order meaning is not completely forgotten" (Allen, 2004, p. 44).

Barthes claimed that the seemingly innocent poster, ads and even all mass cultural materials were not really innocent for they were intended to shape and reshape readers' ideology.... Barthes' demystification on mass culture and their manipulating process are to find out the

hidden meaning or myth implied in mass media so as to remind people from following myth and myth-effect blindly (Zhang, 2011, p.1).

2.3 Feminism

Davis, Wolf and Bordo stated that feminists have a long tradition of situating ideals of beauty and the involvement of women in beauty practices in a political context. They argue that beauty is integral to the construction of femininity in a gendered social order. The female sex is idealized as the incarnation of beauty, while the bodies of most ordinary women tend to be treated as inferior and in constant need of improvement (as cited in Davis, 2003, p.80).

Dworkin also stated that:-

“In the 1970’s a feminist critique of makeup and other beauty practices emerged from consciousness-raising groups.... In these groups women discussed how they felt about themselves and their bodies. They identified the pressures within male dominance that caused them to feel they should diet, depilate and makeup. Feminist writers rejected a masculine aesthetics that caused women to feel their bodies were inadequate and to engage in expensive, time consuming practices that left them feeling that they were inauthentic and unacceptable when barefaced.” (as cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p.1).

Jeffreyst, in her book *Beauty and Misogyny* suggests that beauty practices are not about women’s individual choice or a “discursive space” for women’s creative expression but a most important aspect of women’s oppression (Ibid, 2005, p.2).

As indicated in United Nations (UN) documents such as the Fact Sheet on “Harmful Traditional Practices” (UN, 1995), harmful cultural/traditional practices are understood to be damaging to the health of women and girls, to be performed for men’s benefit, to create stereotyped roles for the sexes and to be justified by tradition, then this concept provides a good lens to examine also beauty practices (as cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p.3).

The growth of pornography and prostitution industries had a considerable effect on the beauty practices that are required of women. The stigmata of sexual objectification for sale have become de rigeur in the beauty industry. Pressures from pornography have created new fashion norms for women in general (Ibid, p.4).

“In the west women are supposed to be empowered, possessed of opportunities and choices unimaginable only a generation ago, yet these same women are hobbled by clothing and shoes, maimed by surgery in the ways that the feminist generation of the 1970s could not have imagined. Women may have the right to walk in public, and the right to work outside the home, but they must show their deference through their discomfort and pain. The cost is high”
(Ibid, p.173).

There are good reasons why even some feminists seek to justify beauty practices or downplay their significance. They may have, like most women, routinely watched what they ate, removed hair from their bodies and faces, worn “feminine” clothing as if it were natural, applied lipstick for 30 or more years (Ibid, p.174).

The feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky (1990) shows a sensitive awareness of why it can be difficult for women in general to criticize western beauty practices. She explains that women become locked into dependence on what she calls “the fashion beauty complex” because it instills in them a sense of their own deficiencies,...and then “presents itself as the only instrument able, through expiation, to take away the very guilt and shame it has itself produced”(as cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p.174). Thus, “the production of femininity” can seem “either entirely voluntary or natural” (Ibid).

As Susan Burdo expressed it in 1997: “Freedom, Choice, Autonomy, Self, Agency. These are powerful words in our culture, fighting words. But they are also words that are increasingly empty in many people’s experience” (as cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p.175)

“At last, after a long silence, women took to the streets. In the two decades of radical action that followed the rebirth of feminism in the early 1970s, Western women gained legal and reproductive rights, pursued higher education, entered the trades and the professions, and overturned ancient and revered beliefs about their social role. A generation on, do women feel free?” (Wolf, 2002, p.9).

Naomi Wolf said in her book *The Beauty Myth* that “The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us. We are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that

uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth" (Ibid, p.10).

Women who complained about the beauty myth were assumed to have a personal shortcoming themselves: they must be fat, ugly, in capable of satisfying a man "feminazis" or horrors-lesbians (Ibid, p.2).

It was not commonly understood at that time that ideals didn't simply descend from heaven, that they actually came from somewhere and that they served a purpose. That purpose was often a financial one, namely to increase the profits of those advertisers whose ad dollars actually drove the media that, in turn, created the ideals (Ibid, p.3) ... the ideal was someone tall, thin, white , and blond, a face without pores asymmetry, or flaws, someone wholly "perfect" and someone whom they felt, in one way or another, they were not (Ibid, p.1). The ideal also served a political end. The stronger women were becoming politically, the heavier the ideals of beauty would bear down upon them, mostly in order to distract their energy and undermine their progress (Ibid, p.3).

Do women feel free? The affluent, educated, liberated women of the first world, who can enjoy freedoms unavailable to any women ever before, do not feel as free as they want to (Ibid, p.9). As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it wanted to carry on its work of social control (Ibid, p.10).

“Beauty” is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the

west it is the last best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning values to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.”

(Ibid, p.12)

The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men’s institutions and institutional power (Ibid, p.13). The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behavior and not appearance (Ibid, p.14).

2.4 Objectification Theory

Objectification Theory, first presented by Frederickson and Roberts (1997), is a relatively new body of research focusing on the effects of living in a society where objectification of women and, increasingly, girls, is the norm. According to objective theory, girls and women internalize the male gaze and tend to view themselves through this lens as a result of pervasive sexual objectification (Heldman, 2007, p.13).

According to Joshi (2001), advertisements are strongly decried for portraying women as beautiful objects, sexual being and exchangeable with objects. Young girls are shown beautifying themselves or trying to catch men’s attention (as cited in Kenaw, 2006, p.18). There are also adverts with women holding roles that do not demand body portrayal but still we see an emphasis on physical body. This is still depicting women as sex objects (Ibid, p.19).

McKinnon (1987) & Dworkin (1989) indicated that “Women are typically portrayed as mere objects or bodies in popular culture, and the implied subject –the consumer is typically male” (as cited in Heldman, 2007, p.3). Slater and Tiggermann (2002) also said that “Sexual objectification occurs when a woman’s body is treated as an object (especially as an object that exists for the pleasure and use of others) and is illustrated interpersonally through gaze or ‘checking out,’ and in the representation of women in the media” (Ibid).

Professor Susie Orbach (1993) argues that “women are taught from an early age to view their bodies as commodities” (as cited in Nielsen, 2008, p.10). Professor Wendy Chapkis (1986) of women and gender studies, also argues that” women are oppressed by a ‘global culture machine’ (made up of the advertising industry, communications media, and the cosmetic industry), which promotes a narrow, Westernized ideal of beauty to women all over the world” (Ibid).

Lee & Johnson (2009) indicated that self-objectification arises when a person or society emphasizes focus on physical appearance, beliefs about importance of appearance, and internalization of appearance ideals (as cited in Davis, 2013, p.25).

Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) indicated that one reason why female bodies are constantly looked at, evaluated, and potentially objectified is through gaze, or visual inspection. The objectifying gaze occurs in three main ways: actual interpersonal and social encounters, visual media that depicts interpersonal and social encounters, and in encounters with visual media which implicitly spotlights bodies and body parts (as cited in “Self Objectification,” n.d, p. 5).

Anxiety about appearance is often manifested by concerns for checking and adjusting one’s appearance. The anxiety resulting from being made an object can be overwhelming to the

female, and when men are able to realize the strategies women have to deal with in such daily experiences, it can be a startling experience (Ibid, p.7)

Thus, by internalizing observer's perspectives as a primary view of the physical self, women may lose access to their own physical experiences (Ibid, p.8). Objectification theory also states that habitual attentiveness to one's own visual image may consume energy that could otherwise be spent on other activities (Ibid, p.9).

Objectification theory predicts that how aging influences a woman's mental health depends on the extent to which she continues to internalize the ideals of the culture and encounters contexts that objectify her own body (Ibid, p.11). Growing old is an extremely difficult experience for a woman to endure, as societal constructs tell her the ideal female is young, beautiful, and attractive.

As a result, there are not only the aspects of personal consequences (shame, anxiety..) but also the long-term health complications (depression, eating disorders..) resulting from self-objectification.

2.5 Advertising

Advertising is used for communicating business information to the present and prospective customers. It is any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999, p.2). Advertising is not meant for anyone individual but for all. It is believed that advertising facilitates consumer choice to purchase goods and makes them happy and satisfied (Lasune, 2011, p.3).

In message planning of advertising, it should be getting attention, holding interest, arousing desire, and obtaining action in order to generate the desired result (Wong, et al., 2004, p.468). If an ad doesn't get attention, it doesn't matter how many people see or hear it. And it should also lead to holding interest. To hold interest, the tone and language of the ad must fit with the experiences and attitudes of the target customers and their reference groups. As a result many advertisers develop ads that relate to specific emotions (Ibid, p.469).

Advertisers use different techniques to present their goods, services and ideas. If for example they want to advertise an office product, they know what an employee in an office looks like in the minds of that specific society. So, a person in that advertisement will dress with the society expectation or the obvious meanings of office manner. From this, we can understand that advertisements not only try to sell their products but also present the common sense believes of the society. These obvious meanings of different issues are usually believed to be 'natural' rather than culturally constructed.

It is considered that advertisements help people in adopting new ways of life and giving up old habits and contributed a lot towards the betterment of the standard of living of the society (Lasune, 2011, p.5). Accordingly then if for example beauty products 'help' woman to 'beautify' themselves with those products, then examining critically the word beauty leads us to raise so many questions. Like do those advertisements make women lose their identity and make them believe their natural skin color, hair texture, body shape is not 'good'? If that is so, then defining beauty is not through the consensus of all the masses or society (Saussure, 1959, p.71).

According to the sociologist Jean Baudrillard, the post modern society has become a dream society where we, to a higher extent, consume “signs and images rather than real things” (as cited in Cemalovic , 2009, p.8). As a result, it becomes difficult to distinguish between real and unreal (Ibid).

The post modern individual changes identity according to the lifestyle he/she wishes to acquire. It can thus be through the product that the consumer can express his or her identity and position in society. Large range of products force the advertisements to link the product to other values in order to communicate on attitude or opinion towards life and the world. Advertisement is therefore promoting those values that make sense to its target groups (Ibid, p.9). Thus it can be said that advertisements have the power to control our lives and our behavior.

“In her book Advertising as Communication, Gillian Dyer points out that most advertisements “present what appears to be the only ideal and the desirable way of living”. Dyer holds that ads as a means of representation and meaning construct ideology within themselves through the intervention of external codes which are located in society. He believes that the ideology of advertisements is so powerful; it is naturalized by the image, the neutral realm of signifier. Ideological powers, as Eagleton (1991, p.195) puts it, is not just a matter of meaning, but of making a meaning *stick*.” (as cited in Cemalovic , 2009, p.10).

Saren argues that the semiotic analysis of ads assumes that the meanings of ads are designed to move out from the page or screen on which they are carried, to shape and lend significance to our experience of reality. We are encouraged to see ourselves, the products or services which are advertised, and aspects of our social worlds, in terms of the mythic meanings which ads draw on and help to promote (Ibid).

Therefore, since people living in different areas have different experiences of reality, then they perceive the same event or image differently. The information can be received by each individual through his/her five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste). However, each of us receives, organizes, and interprets this sensory information in an individual way. This is what is called perception which is the process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999, p.147).

Therefore Semiotics is a tool that enables us to deconstruct the meanings advertising images carry and thus flow through us every day. Thus this tool is essential to become critical interpreters of signs.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research

This study used qualitative method which seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspective of the local population it involves. It is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack et al., 2005, p.1). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the “human” side of an issue—that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals (Ibid). Most of the recoverable information about human thought and behavior in complex societies is naturally occurring texts: artifacts, images, behaviors, events are all texts (Bernard 2006, p.463).

The research uses the critical paradigm which assumes reality to be apprehend able that was once plastic, but that was overtime shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors, and then crystallized (refined) into a series of structures that are now (inappropriately) taken as “real”, that is, natural and immutable. For all practical purposes the structures are “real” a virtual or historical reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110).

Epistemologically, the investigator and the investigated object are assumed to be interactively linked with the values of the investigator (and of situated “others”) inevitably influencing the inquiry. Findings are therefore value mediated (Ibid).

Methodologically, the transformational nature of inquiry requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of the inquiry; that dialogue must be dialectical in nature to transform ignorance and misapprehensions (accepting historically mediated structures as immutable into more informed consciousness). It is seeing how the structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect change (Ibid), or, as Giroux (1988) (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110) puts it, “as transformative intellectuals,to uncover and excavate those forms of historical and subjugated knowledge that point to experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle.....to link the notion of historical understanding to elements of critique and hope”. The methodology is aimed at the reconstruction of previously held constructions (Ibid, p.112).

Accordingly therefore, qualitative research method (interpretative) is used which is focused on the signs of women hair images in different print advertisements in Addis Ababa as a research object. Then it describes the most commonly seen hair image signs, analyzes their denotative and connotative meaning based on Roland Barthes’ theory, and identifies its myth.

3.2 Semiotic Analysis

Advertisements are constructed by different kinds of signs that enable viewers to pay attention to the denotative elements of the advertisement. “Denotation” tends to be described as the definitional, ‘literal’, ‘obvious’ or ‘commonsense’ meaning of a sign. (Chandler, 1994, p.89) However, the interpretations of the advertisement differ in the cultural perspective of a society. Thus, the process of interpretation is a way to analyze the connotative meanings of an advertisement. According to Chandler, the term ‘connotation’ is used to refer to the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ associations (ideological, emotional etc) of the sign (Ibid).

The semiotic approach can be used to discuss image based media. Advertisements are made with different signs that are targeted to inform the readers/viewers. But this is just the denotative side of an advertisement. At the same time those advertisements purposely are made to carry some meanings based on societal experience/value. It is not just an image of static object. The aim of advertisements is to bring the signs and their connotations together to construct a particular myth. "For Roland Barthes, myth was the dominant ideologies in our time"(Chandler, 1994, p. 144). Myth is above the connotation level. "Myth takes a purely cultural and historical objects ...and transforms it into the signs of universal value..."(Allen, 2004, p36). The function of myth is to "naturalize the cultural- in other words, to make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely natural, normal, self-evident, timeless, obvious, common sense-and thus objective and true reflections of 'the way things are' " (Chandler, 1994, p.145).

Semiotics is considered as one of the strategies of textual analysis. "The goal of textual analysis is not finding the 'correct meaning' of the text but 'finding out likely interpretations' (McKee,2003)" (as cited Devereux 2007, p255). A text brings together different signs that can be either word based or image based. "Semiotics seeks to study the relationship of one element in a system to another. All elements in a text function as 'signs' and signs produce potential meanings, not through their relationship to the 'real world' (the referent) but to other signs" (Devereux, 2007, p.258).

Thus, women hair images in print advertisements are analyzed in perspective of semiotics. Accordingly, women hair images are described from the selected advertisements. Specifically, the type of hair color, length and texture are described first. Then their connotation is interpreted. And through the deconstruction of the hair image, the mythic meaning of the feminine hair

beauty is analyzed so that it enables to understand how women hair beauty is positioned by the advertisements.

3.2.1 Selecting and Describing Images

First, different print advertising images which include women are collected. And more specifically, women images with uncovered hair are selected. Based on the frequently seen hair types in Addis Ababa then, a few representational images are chosen. Advertisements are collected by the researcher herself by taking pictures from different print advertisements which are displayed on the central or more publicly visible areas of the city. The pictures clips in colored copy are also presented to have easily visible and identifiable women hair images for analysis.

The most commonly preferred and used women hair styles in print advertisements in Addis Ababa are described based on their:-

- Hair Textures:- Straight, Wavy & Curly
- Colors:- black, light brown and dark brown
- Length:- long and shoulder-length hair

3.2.2 Steps in Semiotic Analysis:-

The women hair image signs, goals and their meanings are studied carefully from different advertisements. This is done through the following steps:-

- a) **Defining the unit of analysis:** what the advertisement is trying to sell concerning women hair images is studied carefully by identifying its signs, its goals and its meanings

- b) **Deconstructing the hair image:** Three significant signs (hair texture, color and length) are identified.
- c) **First order of Signification:** For each hair sign, the signifier and signified are identified.
- d) **Second orders of Signification:** The relationship between the signifier and its signified are described in terms of denotation and connotation.
- e) **Identifying the hair beauty theme:** The common hair beauty concept is presented from the identified signs.
- f) **Hidden meaning or myth of the images:** The hair beauty definition that seems to have the universal concept or common sense meaning or the hidden myth that the advertisements are trying to sell or the way of living in the world that they are trying to promote are identified.
- g) **Critical analysis of the hidden myth:** What does the hidden myth fail to reveal about ways to live in the world are analyzed and summarized critically. This is to examine the kind of reality promoted and excluded by those hair beauty themes in the ads.

3.3 Analysis from Feminists' Perspective

The outcome of the semiotic analysis will be reviewed from the feminism perspective. The research outcome is related with the points indicated in the literature by the feminists. Such as does women hair beauty theme promoted by the advertisements play a role in making women dependent on men? Do the hair beauty practices show women's oppression? Is the hair beauty theme a political weapon against women's advancement? Do the hair beauty ideals show somehow the power relationships?

3.4 Sample Size and Time Frame

The study covers print advertisements in Addis Ababa specifically from billboards located in Bole Road, Megenagna, Meskel Square, piassa, kasanchis and Mexico roundabouts. The research addresses only billboard advertisements in place from January 2014 up to March 2014. The study monitors six advertisements that include women with uncovered hair. The five advertisements are selected from different contexts such as family planning, domestic work, recreation, office work, technology usage and public issue. The women are from different age groups and have different roles to play in the city of Addis Ababa.

Chapter Four

Description and Analysis

The selected advertisements are described and presented in line with the Semiotic Theory of Ferdinand de Saussure first order signification and Roland Barthes second order of Signification. Then the analysis is made based on semiotics, feminists' point of view and objectification theory.

4.1 Description

Advertisement 1



Ad 1: A woman advertising a contraceptive

The above advertisement posted at Meskel Square by Ministry of Health (MOH) is about one of the family planning methods: especially a contraceptive called Loop for women. It says it will enable a woman to lead a happy life. The woman on the advertisement appears half-naked with sexy smile and long hair. The advertisement reflects that women living in Addis Ababa are engaged in different activities other than a mere confinement to raising children, the tradition

which has been keeping women in house chores. As time has changed the tradition so enormously and their other activities become so demanding they opt to follow family planning methods. It, to a large extent, means to convey a message that a woman who plans to have a healthy and manageable life is a modern woman. The content of this outdoor advertisement is thus meant to convey a message that using a contraceptive is one way of expressing a modern way of life. Even it shows that women are not shy about discussing issues like pregnancy publicly and her confidence in deciding on family issues. The appearance of the woman on the ad also manifests what modern look is. Wearing make-ups, lipstick, bracelet, earrings and showing hands, chest is all expressions of modernity. In the same way, changing hair texture and color signifies modernity.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 1 is presented as follows:-

<p><i>A woman advertising a contraceptive appears with long, dark brown and wavy hair.</i></p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p><i>A woman that bases her life on planning makes her hair Ironed, colored and wavy hair to make it beautiful and be attractive woman.</i></p> <p>(Signified)</p>	
<p><i>A woman with her hair ironed and colored is a civilized woman.</i></p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>		<p><i>The civilized woman is expected to make her hair ironed, colored and long to be considered beautiful by her husband, kids, families or colleagues and the society at large.</i></p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p><i>Wavy, long and colored hair makes a woman young and beautiful.</i></p> <p>(Myth)</p>		

Advertisement 2



Ad 2: A woman advertising food product

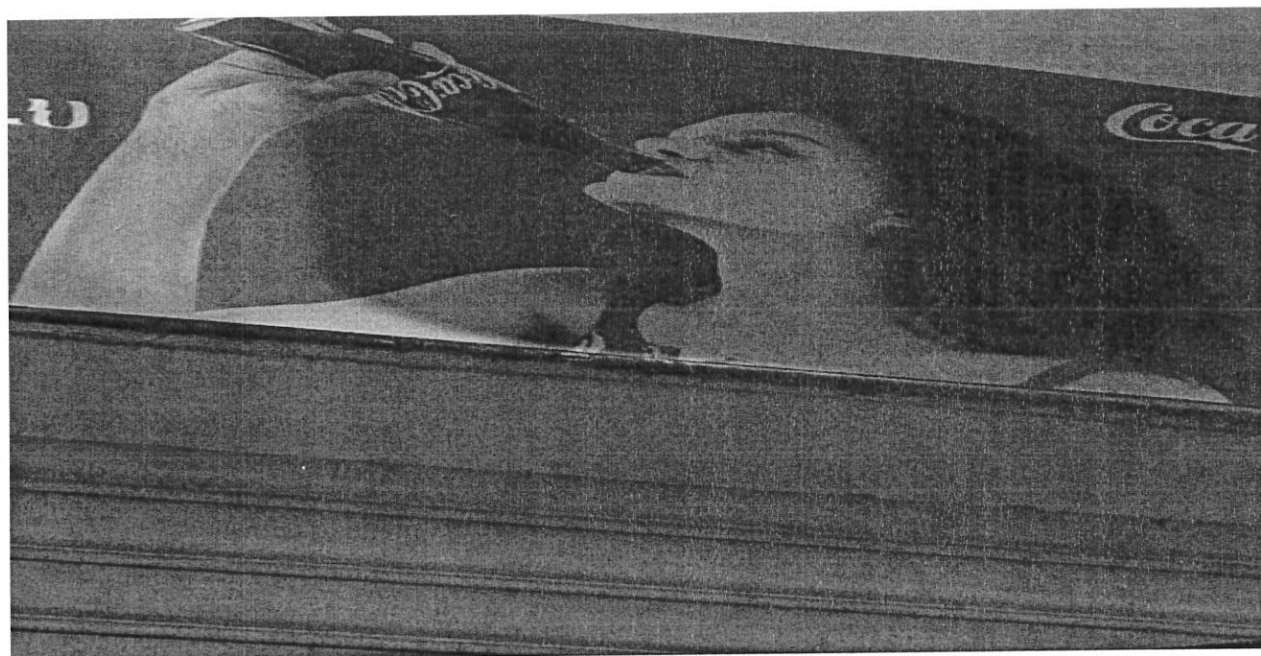
The advertisement posted at Mexico roundabouts by Pramukh Agro Industries PLC is dwelling on and is meant to create a grand picture of the manufactured food products which can be used at all times including fasting days in Ethiopia. As it can be seen the advertisement has its own incepted goal to shoot. The advertisement seems to inculcate a message that a woman, who uses manufactured foods, of course for consumption, is a modern one. It indicates that women living in Addis Ababa buy manufactured products that are easy to cook. Plus, the ad says it is 100% vegetarian. This indicates that being vegetarian is preferable to have a healthy life and have modern appearance which saves a person from gaining weight. Modernity is also signified by the woman on the advertisement. This in effect is a means of winning the minds of consumers by asserting that modernity is exhibited in women wearing half naked cloth, make-up, lipstick, necklace, polished and colored finger nails and eye shadow. She is also advising all men and

women to use the product because it is healthy. So since all the elements signify modernity, then smooth and colored hair can also be one of the ways of expressing modern look.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 2 is presented as follows:-

<p><i>A woman advertising a food product appears with long, dark brown and wavy hair.</i></p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p><i>A woman who buys manufactured food products have ironed, colored and wavy hair rather than covering it like their mothers' do before.</i></p> <p>(Signified)</p>
<p><i>A woman with uncovered hair which is ironed and colored is a modernized woman.</i></p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>	<p><i>A woman living in urban areas work in the kitchen with uncovered hair which is ironed and colored one.</i></p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p><i>Long, ironed and colored hair makes a woman beautiful and modern.</i></p> <p>(Myth)</p>	

Advertisement 3



Ad 3: A woman advertising soft drink

The advertisement posted at Piassa by East Africa Bottling Company is about one of the soft drinks it produces and make available in Addis Ababa. It shows how a woman drinking coca cola is getting relaxed. The advertisement seems to reflect a message that a woman who wants to relax and have fun is a modern woman. In addition, this woman is drinking coca cola with confidence at the public area. She is also half naked wearing make-up and lipstick. This shows that it is no more a shame to drink and relax openly for a woman. So coming to her hair style, it is long and made to be curly. And thus, those women living in Addis Ababa who involve in different recreational activities change their hair texture to be manageable so that they could relax freely. For instance if they need to swim or travel to different places, then they need manageable hair styles. Thus, the concept of spending time for enjoyment by adjusting appearances is associated with modernity.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 3 is presented as follows:-

<p><i>A woman advertizing soft drink appears with long, black and loose curls type of hair.</i></p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p><i>A woman in recreational areas or activities tends to make her hair frizzy to relax freely.</i></p> <p>(Signified)</p>
<p><i>A woman hair is made with different textures to be comfortable and manageable during relaxing.</i></p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>	<p><i>A woman who needs to relax and have fun should beautify her hair by changing its texture to flexible types</i></p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p><i>Long and curly hair makes a woman beautiful and relaxed.</i></p> <p>(Myth)</p>	

Advertisement 4



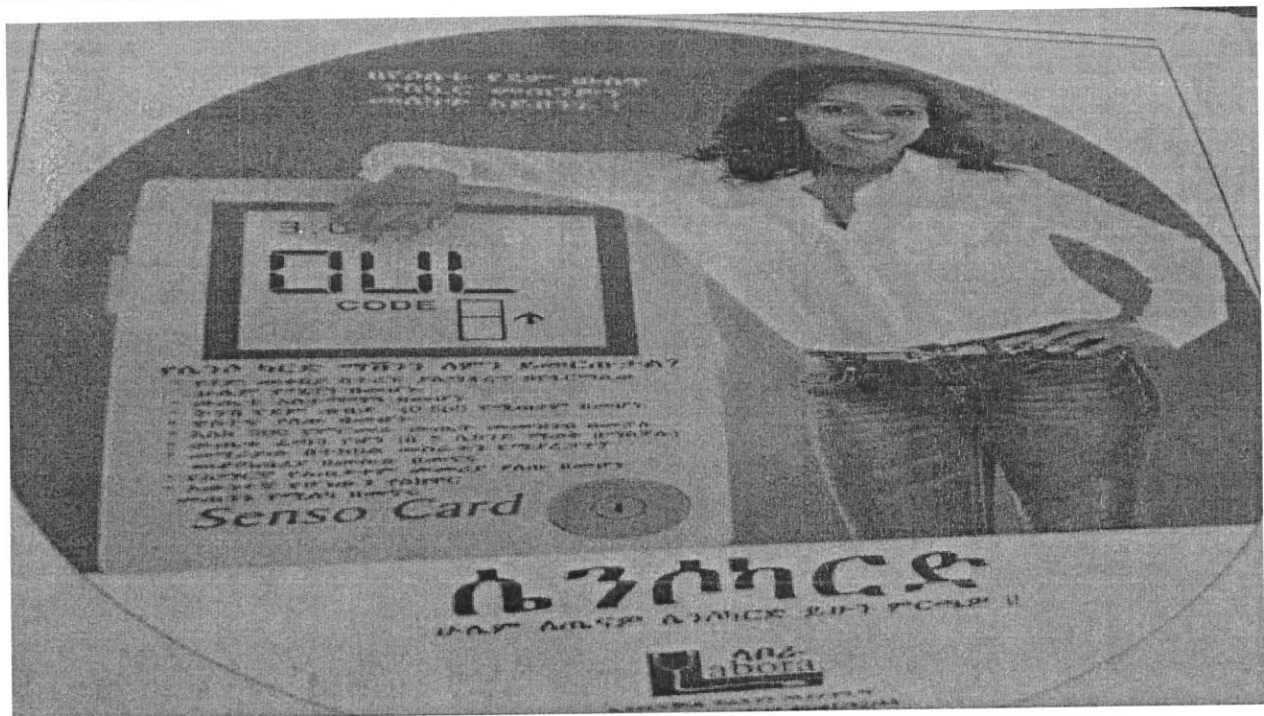
Ad 4: A woman advertising service giving company

The advertisement posted at Kasanchis by Bunna International Bank S.C is about one of the banks in Addis Ababa. It says it belongs for those who are visionaries. A woman on the advertisement seems to be the customer of the bank who is happy and satisfied with their services. She wears half naked cloth, make-up, lipstick, earrings, necklace and the like. The man on the other hand appears with formal suit, cravat and chemise. His body parts are all covered and his appearance is natural. But the woman is objectified. The advertisement seems to reflect a message that a woman who prefers to use a bank for her financial transactions is a modern and professional woman. It reflects that women living in Addis Ababa who use this kind of services make their hair to have different hair textures so that it looks professional and modern. Therefore, a professional woman is believed to take care of her appearances to have presentable and professional look.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 4 is presented as follows:-

<p>A woman advertizing a Bank appears with curly, colored and shoulder length hair.</p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p>Women employed in different organizations make their hair ironed and colored to have a presentable and acceptable look in the working environment</p> <p>(Signified)</p>
<p>An employed woman hair is made to be straight, wavy or colored to have professional look in the working environment.</p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>	<p>A woman should change her hair texture when becoming an employee.</p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p>Straight, wavy and colored hair makes a woman professional and beautiful.</p> <p>(Myth)</p>	

Advertisement 5



Ad 5: A woman advertising a new technology

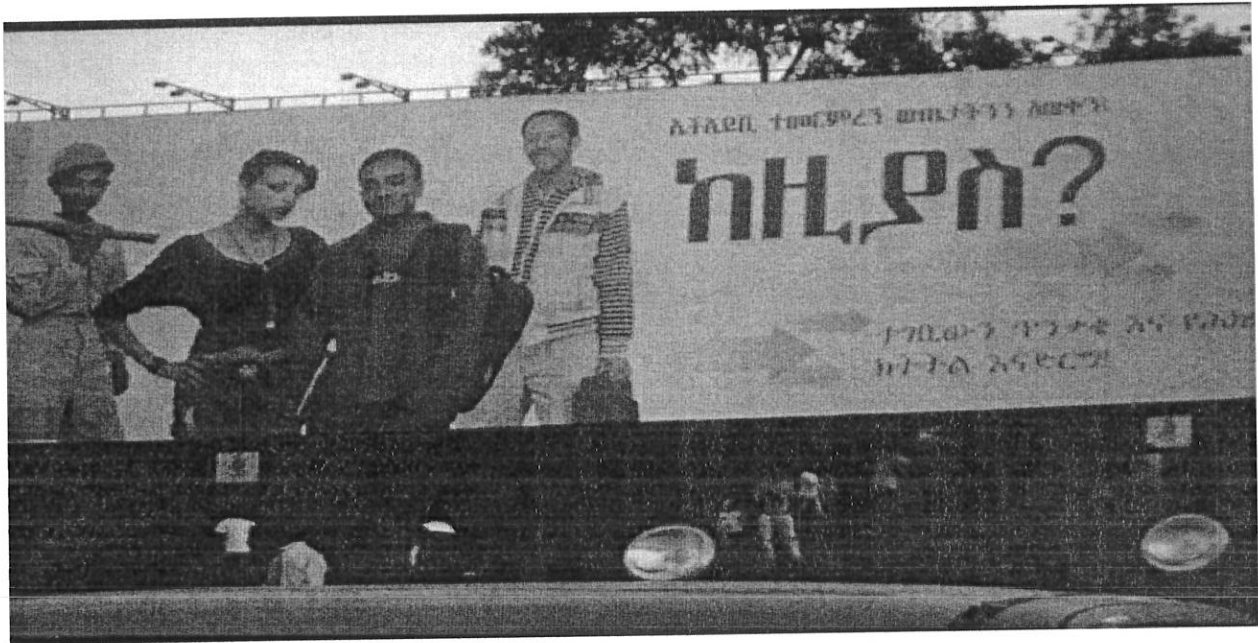
The advertisement posted at Megenagna by Labora is about one of the technologies that is used to check a health status of an individual. A woman on the advertisement promotes the machine

by reflecting the idea that every person could check his/her health status and get relaxed. The advertisement seems to reflect a message that a woman who prefers to use this kind of machine is a modern woman. Plus to this, the lady seems to promote herself than the machine. The way she stands has no real connection with the purpose of the product. She wears a jeans and a chemise which is half opened. Her hand is on her hip. She is not even taking insulin test and is not giving a message that is related with the text written on the advertisement. The ad more focuses on that particular woman look than the machine. So she is objectified with the considered modern look like having facial make-ups. The way she looks at the audience also diverts their attention to her than the product. The woman also has a shoulder length hair that is made to be smooth and curly. Thus, the ad connotes that women living in Addis Ababa who use this kind of new technologies are those who have got a modern look such as making their hairs with different styles.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 5 is presented as follows:-

<p><i>A woman who advertize a machine appears with curly, colored and shoulder length hair.</i></p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p><i>Women who use new technologies make their hair ironed and colored to have a modern person look</i></p> <p>(Signified)</p>
<p><i>A woman hair is made to be ironed, curly or colored to have a modern appearance.</i></p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>	<p><i>A woman should change her hair texture to be considered modern.</i></p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p><i>Curly, colored and shoulder length hair makes a woman modern and beautiful.</i></p> <p>(Myth)</p>	

Advertisement 6



Ad 6: A woman and men advertising a public issue

The advertisement posted at Bole road is about how to care for oneself and for others from HIV/AIDS. It is all about HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counseling and Testing. A woman and men on the advertisement promote the idea of how to prevent the disease and how to take action accordingly. The ad tried to incorporate students, a construction worker, an employee and a commercial sex worker. The men appear with normal dress and look. They are active in their own lines as a student or worker. But the lady wears a cloth which exposes her body and wears facial make-ups. The way she poses at the audience shows that she is sexually attractive to all and so everyone should always be alert about HIV/AIDS. Thus, her overall look signifies what a modern woman look and behavior is. As a result, the woman with her hair smoothed and fashioned with style connotes the modern woman who is conscious about the HIV disease. This also could connote that a woman who is exposed to HIV is mostly young female who change

their appearances and consider themselves modern. Therefore, modernity for a woman is very much linked with changing appearance in Addis Ababa.

Thus the signification of myth based on ad 6 is presented as follows:-

<p><i>A woman who advertize a social issue appears with smoothed and styled hair.</i></p> <p>(Signifier)</p>	<p><i>Women who is aware of diseases and who takes care of herself make her hair ironed and styled to have a modern person look.</i></p> <p>(Signified)</p>
<p><i>A woman hair is made to be ironed and styled to have a modern appearance.</i></p> <p>(Sign) (Denotation)</p>	<p><i>A woman should change her hair texture and appearance to be considered modern and smart in taking care of her health.</i></p> <p>(Connotation)</p>
<p><i>Smooth and styled hair makes a woman modern and smart.</i></p> <p>(Myth)</p>	

Based on the above description of the selected advertisements then, how those concepts are constructed and how they shape and reshape the readers ideology is discussed as follows.

4.2 Semiotic Analysis

While relation between sign and its meaning is arbitrary, the possibility to the meaning imposition depends on the existing ideology (Fiske, 1990, p166). Message in the selected advertisements for example have a source and a goal, a social context and purpose. Furthermore, the advertisements which reflect the common understanding of a society such as women hair beauty carry a purpose. According to Saussure, a sign consists of a signifier and signified which has no internal or natural relationship (Triwahyudi, 2012, p.6). This is to say that a signifier can

represent a number of signifier, and vice versa, one signifier can be represented by a number of signified (Saussure, 1959, p.67). Because of the unnatural relationship, sign and its meaning are related to meet a certain goal such as changing hair texture, color and length.

According to Barthes, the first order of signification where a sign has its literal meaning is referred as denotation, while the second order is mythical level where a sign has its particular or cultural meanings (Chandler, 1994, p.89). Thus in the selected advertisements, product or service is not only introduced literally but it is related with cultural meaning such as femininity, modernity, beauty, professionalism and the like.

Moreover, the myth that the advertisements carry show the obvious meaning of women beauty in Addis Ababa. The myth appearing in different advertisements make it to be taken as natural and thus people save it in their minds without comprehending the hidden message it carries. Thus the problem in myth is how the hair beauty concept such as *a mother with smooth and colored hair is a civilized woman* is implanted to the signifier in the second order of signification as indicated in advertisement 1. This in language level represents a signified but in mythical level, it is implanted with a new concept. This is like the *mommy is expected to make her hair ironed, colored to be considered modern and beautiful* as indicated in the same advertisement.

Thus it can be argued that this hair beauty theme is not something universal because it doesn't include the hair type of those people who have got kinky, black and short hair. "The signifier though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it. The masses have no voice in the

matter, and the signifier chosen by language could be replaced by no other..." (Saussure, 1959, p.71). The concept of hair beauty is then at one time historical and intentional and it is the motivation which causes this myth to be 'obvious', 'absolute', 'unconditional' or 'fixed'. Thus, to know how this hair beauty myth came into view, interpretation based on history and culture is needed.

According to Barthes:

"What is invested in the concept is less reality than certain knowledge of reality; in passing from the meaning to the form, the image loses some knowledge. In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless association" (Barthes, 1972, p.119).

The signification of straight, wavy, colored and long hair as beautiful can be correlated to the hair beauty understanding of women in Addis Ababa. This signification is influenced by the existing culture in Addis Ababa. The form which considers a mother, a professional woman, a bride having a straight, wavy, colored and long hair beautiful, is related to the belief and perception of women in Addis Ababa. On the opposite, the concept *straight, wavy, long and colored hair make a woman modern, professional and beautiful* seems to hold a global fashion or universal truth.

In those advertisements, the meaning of hair beauty is distorted by the concept of modern, professional and beautiful look. In the first order of signification, the meaning of beautiful hair is distorted by the signifier with intentional concept which is much related to the existing practice.

Therefore, one way to become aware of myths is thus to consider how they would seem, from the standpoint of whatever they represent. Myth is always clear when seen from the standpoint of the signifier which has been robbed. For instance, the mythical nature of the use of the image of the women hair is apparent if the women's actual/natural hair texture is known or considered.

Accordingly, the function of hair beauty myth is to empty reality of the appearance of history and of social construction. The straight, blond, colored and wavy hair sign is 'rich' in history. Myth functions by depriving it of history and turning it into an empty form to carry a different meaning. This is analyzed and interpreted as follows.

4.2.1 Slavery and White Supremacy

The myth and connoted hair beauty values reflected in the advertisements are what they are because of the belief in white supremacy. Ross stated that, "As an historical process and global power structure, White supremacy stands on the shoulders of European nationalism and White nationalism and now operates in tandem with American nationalism" (as cited in Blay, 2011, p.7).

"As a system, many people participate in it and as an ideology, many people think, feel, behave, and operate according to it, and in many ways defend and uphold it -- White and "non-White" alike. The institution of colorism exemplifies how "non-Whites" serve to uphold White supremacy (Blay, 2011, p.7).....any true understanding of White supremacy must transcend focus on White people and physical White power alone. It must address White supremacy as an ideology and confront the psychological power of Whiteness" (Ibid, p.8).

This can be manifested in many ways of how we Ethiopians live. Because Ethiopia is a developing nation, we want to reach on those developed countries stage. There is a belief that those people in developed countries are also considered as having everything developed such as their physical appearance, traditions, values and cultures. Everything they possess are considered as developmental issues. These made us to have inferiority complex in our mind and blame our natural appearance as non-beauty. The only way out to be beautiful is thus to be like the developed people. So changing appearances seems obvious to make ourselves modern, civilized, developed people. But the hidden myth to believe kinky, thick and short hair as ugly and the smooth, shiny, soft hair types as beautiful have historical roots.

Around 1850, Martin H. Freeman wrote in *Anglo-African* magazine,

“ . . . kinky hair must be subjected to a straightening process-oiled, and pulled, twisted up, tied down, sleeked over and pressed under, or cut off so short that it can't curl, sometimes the natural hair is shaved off and its place supplied by a straight wig . . . Now all this is very foolish perhaps wicked, but under the circumstances it is very natural.” (as cited in Byrd, 2001, p.20)

Byrd also explains, “To gain access to the American Dream one of the first things Black had to do was make White people more comfortable with their very presence” (Ibid, p.26). Thus, African Americans had to subject their Negroid hair and skin to straightening and bleaching to minimize the difference between themselves and whites.

From this point, Blackness began and continues to be juxtaposed to Whiteness, and each is defined by what the other is not.

“Establishing its superiority over Blackness, Whiteness is therefore associated with that which is civilized, virtuous, and beautiful, while blackness is associated with that which is uncivilized, sinful, and ugly. Physical feature such as skin color, hair texture, eye color, and nose and lip shape become symbols of one’s beauty, social status, and distinction. To a great extent, physical appearance is a more important characteristic for women than it is men in our society. In a context such as this, many Black women are excluded from the definition of beauty, and must negotiate their own beauty identities. This could mean redefining beauty within their own communities, internalizing the normative white standard of beauty, or an integration of the two” (Swain, 2012, p. 7)

Long styles that imitated their white counterparts on Black women were considered “well-adjusted by white society” (Byrd, 2001, p.22). Additionally, post emancipation African Americans had more time to devote to appearance and time was spent on “obsession with straightening the hair and lightening the skin” (Ibid).

In early 1900’s, straight hair became the preferred look to signal middle-class status” (Ibid, p.30). This was a generation that had heard stories of or personally experienced enslavement, and they were eager to dissociate themselves from the slave class.

However, the average Black person was subjected to a beauty ideal “advertising throughout the first half of the century, as well as popular culture figures and images, did not offer an alternative to Black beauty ideal (Ibid). This lack of imagery of natural hair contributed to the lack thereof.

Then as Byrd describes, the 1960’s phenomenon, “black hair underwent its biggest change since Africans arrived in America” (Ibid,p.51). In 1962, Harold Cruse stated that African Americans “...will undoubtedly make a lot of noise in militant demonstrations, cultivate beards and sport their hair in various degrees of *la mode au naturel* (Ibid, p49).

So, a “new way of defining beauty” (Ibid, p.52) became the basis for an African American cultural revolution. The “Black is beautiful” phrase arose as a statement of pride instead of using “Black” as an insult. Afro centric dress and the Afro hairstyle defined the person that held these new ideologies (Ibid, p.53). But there was a capitalist backlash against the 1960’s changes. Thus, the black aesthetic was confronted with the American dollar a powerful adversary (Ibid).

Once slavery was abolished these ideals continued to survive within black society. In Addis Ababa, a girl that is born with white skin is said that she doesn’t require so much to be considered beautiful (“melk atfejim”) but if she is black she must possess a beautiful eye, nose, teeth to fall into the beauty category. By watching their parents, teachers, elder sisters, actresses, children internalize the beauty ideals like hair beauty. This makes them believe that they have to alter their hair sometime in the future in order to be considered smart and beautiful.

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, also exposes the results of white presence in society on African-Americans and how this presence imposes difficulty on the individual to form an identity. The death of self-esteem can occur quickly, easily in children, before their ego has "legs," so to speak. Couple the vulnerability of youth with indifferent parents, dismissive adults, and a world, which, in its language, laws, and images, re-enforces despair, and the journey to destruction is sealed. Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could *do* (Morrison, 2007, p. xi).

The hair beauty ideals, for example, are for some people of the world hold at birth while for others it is something that could be achieved. This connotes that some people are created beautiful and others not. But this will lead people to dismiss their identity as much as possible and have universally accepted appearances. Those personal identities can be covered artificially but the generation will continue to exist because it is natural.

"Personal identity refers to the enduring aspects of person's definition of her or himself, the conception of who one is and what one is over time and across situations. It is what the individuals bring to the many situations and social interactions in which they become involved as they go through the life cycle and, at any given period of time, as they enact their various social roles.....More typically, however, personal identity is a cumulative product built up over a person's lifetime experiences". (Medding, 1998, p.3)

Believing white supremacy then leads to believe those cultures, ways of living, fashion, language, knowledge are all needed by the developing countries like Ethiopia to be considered a

developed nation. These can be easily noticed in the adoption and juxtaposition of western styles of clothing to the Ethiopian traditional clothes to make the later look exactly like western ones. This is usually called fitting the local product with the international market so that it can be sold in different continents of the world. Youngsters nowadays prefer to wear the national dress which is made by the modernized styles.

As Simpson (2008) puts it “the color-blind ideology allows the idea that whiteness or white ways of being, knowing, and experiencing are what is normative and ideal to perpetuate. This devalues and delegitimizes the lived experiences of minorities, and leaves little room for alternative perspectives. As a result this limits the space in which one will experience racial encounter with otherness” (as cited in Swain, 2012, p.14). If White values and experiences are the normative ideal and those of this privileged group expect everyone else to follow suit with the same beliefs and ways of being, then other racial groups who cannot or choose not to live up to these ideals are excluded and penalized. However, it is not recognized that the devalued lived experiences of minorities is the result of white privilege in society; it is explained away as a result of their laziness and lack of hard work (Ibid). With this being the case, it is likely that women in Addis, who work in different organizations, choose to make their hair with the ideal beauty standards. If they fail to live up to these standards, then they may find themselves struggling to be integrated into societal expectations.

Furthermore, the manufactured hair products in the world promote the concept of hair beauty. These can also be seen in the description of hair products. The names even indicate thick, black, short, kinky hair have to be made relaxed treated and ironed or coiled and colored to be “beautiful”. Because we already believe the beauty theme as natural, they have manufactured the

products that could make us to be 'equal', 'developed' like others. But the hidden myth in reality makes women to be dependent on those products and to lose their confidence on their natural appearance. Even men as viewers of these hair images promote it by appreciating the ideal hair beauty concept in their music, books, poems and scripts in Addis Ababa.

4.2.2 The Hair styles in Addis Ababa

In Ethiopia there are different women hair styles and these styles differ from one ethnic group to the other. One of these hair styles is 'Shuruba' which women living in rural areas make it with their own natural hairs. But when we come to Addis Ababa let alone smoothing of hair but also the 'Shuruba' is not made usually with only their natural hair. They prefer to make this style by using different types of wigs because it is believed that this style is only beautiful if made with the artificial one. *Shuruba* with natural hair is also becoming very rare in the elementary and high school students. The increasing number of hair salons and imported beauty products is a good example to show how the concept of the ideal women hair beauty is accepted as natural or obvious fact. Spending time and money on hair is nowadays mandatory and expected at work place and at different occasions. The society considers a woman who doesn't make her hair as careless, awkward and uncivilized. It is believed that it is natural for women to beautify her hair.

Thus, the myth of these hair images promotes and serves the interests of the few. The colored hairs such as golden brown or dark brown does not belong to Ethiopians naturally. They seem to believe that black hair is no more beautiful. The reality shows that all women are using hair colors to beautify themselves, to look like 'ferenj' or to look young and beautiful. They may well

be conscious of these beauty meanings, but not of its mythic character which presents its meanings as being natural and unquestionable.

From this we can understand that reality was once objective or exists externally, but overtime it is shaped and reshaped by different factors such as political, economical, social or gender based. This process of naturalization then put this reality into structures which then is inappropriately framed to be the universal truth. Accordingly, since the women hair images promoted by different advertisements present only a few women hair types then the reality that it carries is not objective but rather is a historical reality.

Even if the interpretation of one from the other differs and is subjective, this may enrich our understanding of women hair beauty and enable us to be informed and become aware of the historically mediated structures rather than believing those structures as unquestionable. The women beauty concepts can then be uncovered and deconstructed because they are humanly made and are subjective.

The hair beauty ideas that are reflected in different advertisements in Addis Ababa are those that are believed to have a universal reality. But since these concepts are constructed through time and are much related to the historical events, it means they can be reconstructed again. But because of mental slavery, many Ethiopian cultures are considered "backward or impractical".

People prefer to be associated with what they perceive to be more "successful", "beautiful" and the like. The perception of backwardness like having the natural kinky hair as it is were replaced often with other cultures by making hair straight, wavy and colored one in Addis Ababa. Women of Addis absorbed new cultures, technologies, etc, and made them their own.

Therefore, it can be analyzed that when advertisements (either print or broadcast) promote the ideal hair beauty concept and lack the natural hair or the local hair styles, then this will give a great contribution for naturalization of the ideal beauty theme. This also could pave the way to analyze different issues. Such as in Addis Ababa names given to schools, hotels, companies, and the like are mostly in English. As a result, when the culture of speaking/writing Amharic is made to fail by an external foreign language, then the new generation will absorb the new culture and give value to it accordingly. Plus to this, the new adopted cultures like wearing Ethiopian cultural dresses with the modernized designs may have a contribution for the people to lose a memory of their culture and they might unconsciously adopt a "new identity" modeled on the others way of living.

It can also be analyzed that when media give a great value to the imported cultures, then it will devalue the local one. When children in Ethiopia see Beyonce in her short skirt they could relate it to the wealth and status and see themselves through her expressions. And they may no longer prefer to wear their *habesha qemis*, *neTela* or make shuruba and the like. Then if modern means what Beyonce, Rihanna and the like are doing, then the more we use their language, dress, hair style, the richer we make it.

As a result it can be said that mass media plays a great role in promoting dominant cultures of the world. Thus, this has an impact such as under-development, loss of identity; language and destruction of markets such as traditional Ethiopian clothes are replaced with Western styles.

Thus, the more the imported cultures are promoted by different media outlets, the more it becomes the norm for everyone. Eating with a knife and fork or wearing a tie is all part of a specific ethnic culture which through time becomes "normal" for everyone else. This normal

culture seems to be oppressive. When a woman has a hair which is too kinky or curly, then straightening it is very normal or obvious as manifested by women of Addis. Making hair denote a stage of development from childhood to maturity, or indicate modernity or status accordingly.

The implication is that the natural hair could be made proper, modern by purchasing and using the proper products on the hair. Thus these products produce and reproduced whiteness. The existing advertisements in Addis Ababa are then worded to play on stereotypes and promoted a negative association with natural blackness. It is then clear that straight and colored hair became such a part of the culture that made women of Addis to unconsciously respond to the social norms and expectations (This may not include all women though). But the legacy of all this conditioning is so severe and still exploring the natural beauty of blackness to be not an option for many.

4.3 Analysis from Feminism Perspective

Davis, Wolf and Bordo argue that beauty is integral to the construction of femininity in a gendered social order. The female sex is idealized as the incarnation of beauty, while the bodies of most ordinary women tend to be treated as inferior and in constant need of improvement (as cited in Davis, 2003, p.80). Analysis of the portrayal of women in Amharic secular songs undertaken by Tsion (2007) found out that women are highlighted as beauties in men's world in such a way that the highest value is assigned to her physical attributes (as cited in Gubae, 2009, p.35).

The hair beauty myth is not limited to a specific age group in Addis Ababa. Younger girls as well as older women believe the myth. The ideal is imported from abroad via the mass media and

promoted by the products sold in the local markets. Women in Addis appear almost with similar hair texture, color and length which result in having homogeneous definition of hair beauty which in turn erases the hair diversity image.

Though educating and empowering women has begun to flourish in Ethiopia, at the same time they have begun to be bombarded by increasing images of female beauty through different mass media like advertisement. As a result, the ideal hair beauty began to be internalized by women of Addis. So, through time this hair beauty seems to be categorized as a norm for women and they are valued according to that ideal beauty but not men.

Kenaw (2006) puts forward that the advertisements that are broadcasted by the Ethiopian Television emphasize women's physical pulchritude, making one think that a woman's outward appearance carries more weight than her intellectual self (as cited in Gubae, 2009, p.35).

As stated by Dworkin in the 1970's feminists discussed and identified the pressures within male dominance that caused them to feel they should diet, depilate and makeup. Feminist writers rejected a masculine aesthetics that caused women to feel their bodies were inadequate and to engage in expensive, time consuming practices that left them feeling that they were inauthentic and unacceptable when barefaced (as cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p.1).

In line with this, the women of Addis are expected to spend time and money for caring for their beauty to be considered attractive, beautiful and modern. Then we can say it is not a choice to make hair according to the standard but rather became a tradition or norm of the society. When a woman "chooses" hair extensions, relaxers, perms, treatments, hair colors, how much choice

does she have in a culture that promotes the ideal hair beauty as modernity, beauty and professional?

Jeffreyst, in her book *Beauty and Misogyny* suggests that beauty practices are not about women's individual choice or a "discursive space" for women's creative expression but a most important aspect of women's oppression (Jeffreys, 2005, p.2). This can be shown in the selected advertisements in Addis Ababa. Women in order to be considered modern, beautiful and professional, then they are obliged to change their natural hair texture and color. So, it can be said that the existing hair beauty belief promoted by the ads made them to choose the ideal hair beauty theme to be considered beautiful, modern and the like.

The hair beauty myth is also unhealthy in a sense women lose their confidence on their natural hair appearance/texture which forced them to be dependent on different hair products and artificial hair. Therefore we can say women are oppressed because they have to adjust their physical appearance in order to have acceptable look or to fit in the societal standard but not men. They have to present themselves as young, attractive and civilized person as much as possible. For example, for women it is not so easy to join gymnasium and do sports for 3 or 4 days in a week for their own health because they will lose their hair styles and have to go back to hair salons for adjustment which cannot be realistic and affordable.

Since beauty practices are harmful to the health of women then they should be examined accordingly (Ibid, p.3). The advertisements which portray women as an object of desire make women to strive to fit into it. Girls from early age suffer from dissatisfaction of their physical appearance like their hair texture. They will develop a belief that they should strive to fit into

some sort of category and not appreciating diversity and uniqueness that truly makes someone beautiful.

Graydon argues, “Women’s bodies are sexualized in advertisements in order to grab the viewer’s attention. Women become sexual objects when their bodies and their sexuality are linked to products that are bought and sold. This is mere portrayal of women as sex objects”(as cited in Kenaw, 2006, p.18).

Nowadays, in Ethiopia women began to join universities, get employed in different organizations, became entrepreneurs in different sectors. These kinds of engagements are believed to empower them economically, socially and politically. But struggling to have their physical appearance in line with professional, modern, acceptable look, they need to spend their time and money accordingly. It can be argued that men for example go to their hair salons to make their hair. But women after making their hair smooth, then they need to treat it daily but not men. Women are much obsessed with their body image, skin color, hair image and the like. This may hinder the way they are striving to become economically strong and in turn not to be as fruitful as expected to be the bread makers as men do. This is because the expectation of physical appearance of a woman and a man is not equal. Employers in Addis Ababa usually prefer to hire women as a sales person than men because it is believed that they attract more customers and can be remembered easily by men. As a result, women are selective in which profession they should join which fits with the local market. Their high heel shoes, their hair style and other facial cosmetics they use, make them believe that they can’t do hardship jobs like being a geologist, an engineer, etc. They need proper care for moving around but not men. But nowadays even if we

see some improvements in those fields of studies, women usually take the office work or the supporting staff job.

As Naomi Wolf in her book *The Beauty Myth* indicated, “Where women escaped from the sale of their sexuality in a marriage market to which they had been confined by economic dependence, their new bid for economic independence was met with a nearly identical barter system. And the higher women climbed during this period up the rungs of professional hierarchies, the harder the beauty myth has worked to undermine each step” (wolf, 2002, p.21).

Even if they are educated, gained access to businesses, still they are considered as objects of men. The beauty myth still hinders them from advancement. The more they become a public figure the more they are expected to take care of their beauty like making and styling their hair. Thus, the beauty myth shows the power relation between men and women. In Addis Ababa, in different work places women beauty is given more value such as in cabin crews. And hence, this forced employed women to budget their salary to their beauty and clothing. That is why we usually hear men saying their wife’s salary doesn’t make a difference that much to their house expense because they spent it more to their beauty. And so because of this, women are not socially, economically or politically strong. They are trapped by the beauty myth.

Thus, even if it is said that Ethiopia is working on gender equality, still women are trapped by the beauty myth and they are not free. The beauty myth hinders their advancement and could not compete equally with men. Even students in the universities are running to get money from men because men are still treating them as an object. Women are selling their bodies as a source of income and as a short way to be rich than getting it through education or so. Thus, “the

production of femininity” can seem “either entirely voluntary or natural” (Jeffreys, 2005, p.174) but it is not both.

In Ethiopian context, beauty is important in the construction of femininity as manifested in the local proverbs, music, books. But this differs from one ethnic group to the other. Female are more conscious about their beauty than men. Because of this, from the feminist point of view women are oppressed. They do not do it by their own choice but it is a social and economic necessity. Musicians, dancers, artists are all required to make up their face, and their hair to be accepted by the society. Whereas men are presented with their natural physical appearance for most jobs because they are men. Women need to go to hair salons before going to work or occasions which usually need constant care and treatment. But men even if they go to hair salons they usually don't change their hair texture or color.

“....Women may have the right to walk in public, and the right to work outside the home, but they must show their deference through their discomfort and pain. The cost is high”(Ibid, p.173). Women become dependent on the hair beauty products and in turn they believe that they are deficient without it. They have lost their confidence on their natural beauty. Those women using the artificial hair for example, it is not so easy to drop that artificial hair and appear with the natural one because the society already knows her by that artificial image and she will fear that she may be rejected by her families and colleagues. So we can't say that it is by their own choice that they alter their hair because the situations forced them to follow the societal standards for acceptance and to be considered beautiful. They are tied with the societal norms, with the codes of the working environment, occasions and the like.

Man with kinky hair doesn't matter but a woman with that hair type has to always iron it or cover it with some artificial one. They can't go out simply with their natural hair- they have to make their hair and have acceptable look. The ideal served a political end. The stronger women were becoming politically, the heavier the ideals of beauty would bear down upon them, mostly in order to distract their energy and undermine their progress (Wolf, 2002, p.3).

4.4 Analysis based on Objectification Theory

Advertisements in Addis Ababa portray women almost with the same hair texture, color and length. Women in those advertisements appear with made hair and facial-makeup and others. These advertisements can be criticized for always promoting the artificial beauty of women. As Kenaw indicated there are advertisements with women holding roles that do not demand body portrayal but still we see an emphasis on physical body. This is still depicting women as sex objects (Kenaw, 2006, p.19).

From the selected ads in this study for example the advertisement of a food product seems to focus on the woman appearance rather than the product. And the woman appearance has no connection with the product advertised. This may also connote that woman these days' prefer to cook in the kitchen with uncovered hair, the opposite seem to be traditional one. Thus, as Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) indicated by internalizing observer's perspectives as a primary view of the physical self, women may lose access to their own physical experiences (as cited in "Self Objectification," n.d, p.8). As a result, it can be said that internalizing women hair beauty ideal may result in losing the natural hair image of women.

Plus to this, the objectified images of women may affect women in that area to constantly evaluate their appearance and as a result adjust it accordingly which may also consume their time and energy that could have been spent on other activities. As Lee & Johnson (2009) indicated “self-objectification arises when a person or society emphasizes focus on physical appearance, beliefs about importance of appearance, and internalization of appearance ideals” (as cited in Davis, 2013, p.25).

Thus, the billboard advertisements in Addis Ababa seem to divert from the primary objective of promoting a product, service or idea to presenting the objectified image of women. This kind of advertisement is considered nowadays mandatory to get attention of the viewers of the advertisements. Plus to this, the women beauty ideals promoted by those ads hinders the accessibility of natural beauty and forces women to try to reject their biological natures. Such as, a young and beautiful woman on an advertisement connotes growing old as non beauty.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications

This chapter presents conclusion of the study analysis. After that, it forwards implications for further studies.

5.1 Conclusions

The study was conducted on women hair images on print advertisements focusing on the billboard advertisements in Addis Ababa. It examined how advertisements portrayed women beauty with special emphasis on women hair images. It analyzes what the hair beauty concept means and the hidden myth of the beauty theme those advertisements present.

Qualitative research was employed using a semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes and also by analyzing from the feminists' perspective and objectification theory. The research uses the critical paradigm which requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subject of inquiry which is believed to transform ignorance into more informed consciousness.

In the first place, advertisements that include the most frequently seen hair styles are selected and then described based on their textures, colors and length. Then their connotation is interpreted. And through the deconstruction of the hair image, the mythic meaning of the feminine hair beauty is analyzed so that it enables to understand how women hair beauty is positioned by the advertisements. Plus to this, the outcome of the semiotic analysis is reviewed from the feminism perspective and objectification theory.

Thus the analysis shows that the relationship of sign and its meaning is unnatural and they are related to meet a certain goal. The women hair images in those advertisements carry the 'obvious' meaning of women hair beauty in Addis Ababa. But this concept is not something universal because it doesn't include the hair type of all women like who have got kinky, black and short hair. It can be understood that the theme of women hair beauty is not free but fixed with respect to the linguistic community that uses it. The concept of hair beauty is then at one time historical and intentional and it is the motivation which causes this myth to be 'obvious', 'absolute', 'unconditional' or 'fixed'.

Thus the analysis shows that the meaning of hair beauty is distorted by the concept of modern, professional and beautiful look. Myth is always clear when seen from the standpoint of the signifier which has been robbed. For instance, the mythical nature of the use of the image of the women hair is apparent if the women's actual/natural hair texture is known or considered. As a result, the study indicates that the straight, blond, colored and wavy hair sign is 'rich' in history. Myth functions by depriving it of history and turning it into an empty form to carry a different meaning. This is analyzed from slavery and white supremacy point of view.

The myth and connoted hair beauty values reflected in the advertisements are what they are because of the belief in white supremacy which is related to the history of slavery. As history indicates, slavery made African Americans to subject their Negroid hair and skin to straightening and bleaching to minimize the difference between themselves and whites. From this point, Blackness began and continues to be juxtaposed to Whiteness, and each is defined by what the other is not.

In early 1900's, a generation that had heard stories of or personally experienced enslavement were eager to dissociate themselves from the slave class. However, the average Black person was also subjected to a beauty ideal and there was lack of natural hair images. In the 1960's black hair underwent its biggest change and thus Afro hairstyles began to appear but the capitalist backlash diminishes these revolution. Thus, the Westernized hair beauty ideals continue to survive. Furthermore, the manufactured hair products in the world today promote the concept of hair beauty by their products. Therefore, it can be said that the hidden myth of those concepts serves the interest of the few.

From this we can understand that reality was once objective or exists externally, but overtime it is shaped and reshaped by different factors such as political, economical, social or gender based. This process of naturalization then put this reality into structures which then is inappropriately framed to be the universal truth. Accordingly, since the women hair images promoted by different advertisements present only a few women hair types then the reality that it carries is not objective but rather is a historical reality.

The existing advertisements in Addis Ababa are then worded to play on stereotypes and promoted a negative association with natural blackness. It is then clear that straight and colored hair became such a part of the culture that made women of Addis to unconsciously respond to the social norms and expectations.

Moreover, from the feminists' point of view, it is found that women are trapped by the hair beauty myth and thus this hinders them from advancement. Their struggle for economic independence is met by the beauty myth. And the objectification of women in advertisements pressured women to evaluate their physical appearance every day. Thus, these beauty practices are important aspect of women's oppression.

Generally therefore, similar women hair images results in having homogeneous definition of hair beauty which in turn erases the hair diversity image. So, as it is said the ideal served a political end.

5.2 Implications

Women hair images in advertisements in Addis Ababa have some implications. The existing advertisements promote the ideal hair beauty which in turn enriches the idea to continue to exist in the minds of the people as 'universal' concepts. But the promoted idea is fixed, not free because it doesn't serve the interest of all people.

The study implies that the reality of women hair beauty is distorted by different media outlets like advertisement. And this shows that the natural hair image of women living in that area need to be adjusted accordingly in order to be considered as having beautiful, modern and professional hair in that society.

Thus, this implies that advertisers could make a difference by giving attention on how to present the advertisements for the benefit of the society. They should promote the societal value of that

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The study implies that the reality of women hair beauty is distorted by different media outlets like advertisement. And this shows that the natural hair image of women living in that area need to be adjusted accordingly in order to be considered as having beautiful, modern and professional hair in that society.

Thus, this implies that advertisers could make a difference by giving attention on how to present the advertisements for the benefit of the society. They should promote the societal value of that

particular people so that they could appreciate what they have. Plus, they can contribute in developing the idea that diversity is beauty. As a result, promoting the different hair styles in Ethiopia could enrich the values of the society and also could help the people to be creative in their own ways.

On the other hand this study also implies that media and their products are not all natural and thus it enables the readers/listeners of any advertisement to critically examine the media messages before accepting it as the reality of the world. Additionally, it indicates that any media products that seem to hold a universal concept could be deconstructed, questioned or examined.

Moreover, other researchers may study the other women beauty images in line with this analysis in the future studies. They may also conduct a study on the effect of the internalization of the beauty ideals by the readers/ listeners of any advertisement. Other methodological approaches may also be used to find out new possible realities in advertisements or any media outlets.

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Appendix

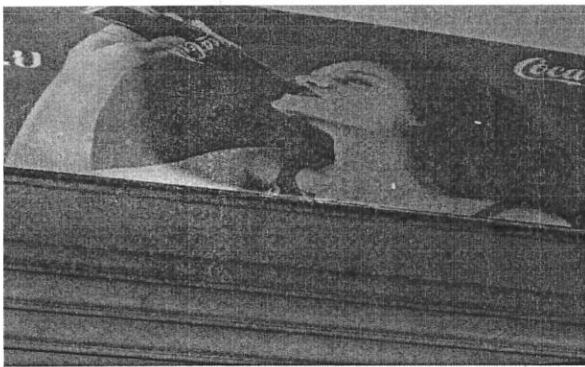
Women Hair Images of different advertisements analyzed



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)