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## Skin Positivity: Beautiful Shades

Oct 13, 2020 | Maxine Ihezie

Brands are missing the mark when it comes to reflecting the diversity of their consumers. Findings from our latest VGPS research revealed that only 14% of people feel represented in advertising, and when you take into consideration that 8 in 10 people expect brands to consistently commit to diversity and inclusion, it is clear that there is work to be done.

However, that is not to say that brands aren't making the effort, when taking race and ethnicity into consideration, there have been advances in representation. Deloitte's 2019 The Value of Diversity in Advertising study found that 92% of brands showed people of colour in their advertising. Yet, despite this progress brands are only scratching the surface when they fail to recognise the full spectrum of diversity within ethnic minority groups. One of those aspects being skin tone.

"There's complexities in complexion" sings Beyonce, a line that highlights the historic issue of colourism that exists in many communities of colour. Colourism, informally referred to as 'daughter of racism' by dark skinned actress Lupita Nyong'o, is discrimination based on skin tone, whereby individuals with lighter skin are favoured over those with darker skin. This typically occurs amongst people from the same race.

Advertising and the beauty industry have been called out for the way in which the lack of dark skin representation perpetuates Eurocentric beauty standards. Colourism rears its ugly head in a number of communities, be it the Afro-Caribbean, Latino, East or South Asian and it is common to see the promotion and endorsement of skin bleaching products. In fact the sales of skin lightening products are forecasted to reach $8.9 billion by 2024. Furthering the belief that the closer you are to whiteness, the more palatable you are in society.

"There are complexities in complexion"

In an age of inclusion, where customers are vocal about wanting to see images of people that are representative of the world they see and 'follow', it is no surprise to see a backlash for organizations and media productions that push negative narratives for example, this summer, a number of viewers condemned the Netflix show 'Indian Matchmaker' for its promotion of colourism.

In a commitment to celebrate all skin tones, cosmetic company, L'Oreal has now removed the words

[white/whitening, fair/fairness and light/lightening from its skin products.](#) When Fenty Beauty launched and boasted its wide range of foundation shades, a large base of seemingly forgotten consumers rejoiced and it sparked discussion on skin tone representation in beauty and the media.

What this showed was that consumers were watching and demanding to be seen. Visualising diversity should be considered in all its forms and show an inclusive vision of beauty. When representing ethnic minority communities intentionally address issues of colourism by reflecting all skin shades.

Celebrating self-love, beauty and everything in between, moves the visual language forward.