Abstract
Our societal obsession with fairness has assumed psychological, economic and political importance with the continued growth in the desire for skin lighteners transcending boundaries of country, race, culture, and socioeconomic status. Whereas tanned complexions are perceived as representing youth and beauty in the West; pale, white skin represents the ideals of glamorous Asian women and men. This deep-rooted ideal is what propels the burgeoning skin-whitening business in Asia and elsewhere in the world. To further understand this phenomenon, we begin by reviewing the historical, cultural, societal, and individual motivations for skin lightening. Next, we explore the pursuit of fairness through empirical evidence. Finally, we propose an emergent framework for skin lightening as a form of cultural agency. As such, we argue that both public and private representations of agency may be the key motivation for consumer change.

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All interested are welcome.