Pretty: The Rhetoric Meaning of Body Beauty and Creation of Meaning

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Abstract

This study was conducted to study 1) the creation of meaning of Pretty and 2) the methods in building body beauty and ways to get into the Pretty arena. The qualitative research design was applied. Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews with the sampled Pretty, their acquaintances and general people viewing the Pretty’s performance. The obtained data were recorded, categorized, interpreted and triangulated.

Results concerning the creation of meaning of Pretty showed that the meaning was differently interpreted from different perspectives of informants. Some looked upon Pretty as a tool for promoting the product, others viewed that Pretty was used as a tool to attract customers’ attention. Another view was that Pretty was a way of earning money. Regarding the methods in building the body of Pretty, it was found that most Pretty have already had a more illustrious body than the average Thai girls. They had a beautiful face, a proportioned and rather slim body with fine and shining complexion, conforming to the definition of being beautiful in the current social criteria. They were at the teen-age and therefore in the utmost condition both in fitness of the body and freshness of the complexion. With the privileges of young age and physical attributes, these Pretty did not need much additional attempt to take care of their physical beauty nor the tight weight control. In term of duration of the job, the Pretty considered the job as a non permanent job, restricted to the young age periods so they did not take the job as a serious or permanent job. They took it as an opportunity to earn experience and chances for a better life. Concerning how the Pretty got into the business, most of them knew about the job from friends and senior friends in colleges or universities or introduced to the job by the acquaintances working in the area of event organizing or product sales promotion fairs. Once the Pretty got the first job, they got the second, third and forth job for it was an opportunity to present themselves and their competence in the job to other companies or organizations attending the fair so they are more chances for them to be considered and offered further Pretty jobs.

Key words: Pretty: body beauty created by social norms, rhetoric meaning of body
Introduction

_Pretty_ is a notable way to introduce and promote products in most production fairs. The researcher was interested in investigating into the creativity and progress of this job. _Pretty_ was found to closely relate to beauty and the presentation of the body. The beauty and women figure were used as a contact of the manufacturers to the consumers for the purpose of attracting the customers’ attention to their products.

The term _Pretty_ to most people was related to beautiful girls with a beautiful face and body in the revealing clothing while introducing the products and their qualities to the people coming to the product show fairs. The most common product display fairs were motor product shows such as those gigantic international motor shows. “The Bangkok International Motor Show 2010” for example, had the biggest number of _Pretties_ for it was participated by all cars and motorcycles manufacturers and automobile agents all across the country. All the car manufacturers used _Pretties_ to attract attention and introduce to the fair goers the fundamental information of their products.

_Prettiness_ or _Beauty_ is defined as “attributes perceived as being attractive and pleasing to the eyes”. _Pretty_ is normally used to define a young woman who has an attractive look with a proportioned body figure with glittery complexion and fine long hair. This description of prettiness refers to concrete and by sight beauty. The present Thai society is still attached to this type of beauty and settles on the look of each person as pretty or ugly. Since Thai society focuses on sight prettiness rather than the inside beauty, a large number of young women try to put up this type of beauty to attract attention and make themselves invincible; and they depend on this type of beauty as instruments for seeking a good and satisfactory job like a job as a _Pretty_. At present, working as a _Pretty_ requires not only the beauty of the look but also other qualities such as good personality, good communication skills, ready wits, problem solving ability and patience. In doing the job, the _Pretty_ also needs to possess a thorough understanding of the product and its qualifications. Physically, the _Pretty_ works long hour, as long as the whole day (8 to 10 hours), and needs to stand in presenting the product. The work of a _Pretty_ requires a beautiful and strong body so the woman has to take special care in building her body. The _Pretty_ needs to keep herself in a good shape, not too chubby or too thin, with strong and firm muscles. In short, prettiness is the most important quality to the _Pretty_ so it is important that the _Pretty_ keep themselves, all
the time, in a good look as is said in the Thai motto “Fine feathers make fine birds. The tailor makes the man.”

Being a Pretty also refers to the intention of young girls to build and exploit their body beauty to gain personal quality and financial privileges in this consumerism Thai society which regards up-to-date and luxurious products as invincible factors for life. The Pretty is therefore viewed by the manufacturers of the products as an attractive tool to communicate their products to the potential customers. A Pretty is intended to represent the product so the business or the manufacturers select the Pretty that best reflect the image of their products. In this way, the Pretty with both beauty and ability are brought into the business and get a high salary. This attractive pay attracts a lot of young women into the business of beauty to raise their social and financial status. Being a Pretty is not as easy as one may think, however. Not just anybody can be a Pretty. To be a Pretty, one must be introduced to the business by the agency or the person will have to present herself well enough to show that she can symbolize the product of the business.

A Pretty job is preferred by a large number of young women at the age of 18-28 (Pinkaew Preuttiprasert, 2549, 4). Women at this age are compared to the beauty and attractiveness of blossomed roses. The prettiness the Pretties have, together with the good care taken for the fitness of their body make these pretty women qualified to the definition of prettiness required in the present society to keep every of the beholding eyes to their beauty.

Due to the present social and business trend, the concept of a Pretty has been well conceived by the average people in the society as the beautiful woman who works as a presenter of the products. However, there still are questions, to the researcher, if there are other definitions or meanings for a Pretty and what they are. The researcher also wants to explore into the issue of how the Pretties build up their body to the standard accepted by the Pretty arena and also how they get into this Pretty jobs. The researcher aims to vocalize the Pretties themselves of what the Pretties are like and how they get into this type of business. It is interesting to find out how these Pretties build up their body to the standard to be chosen to present the products in the context of Thai society so that people will understand and have more choices to the variety of products available in the modern consumerism trends.

Research Questions

1. How was the meaning for Pretty made?
2. How did the *Pretties* build their body to be qualified as a *Pretty* and how did they get into this *Pretty* business?

**Research Objectives**

1. To determine the meaning of *Pretty*.
2. To investigate into the methods of body building to be qualified as a *Pretty* and to explore ways to get into the *Pretty* business.

**Research Framework**

The three main concepts used as a basis for analyzing the research data were Bourdieu’s (1980) Body Habitus -the body building controlled by the social structure; Sant Suwacharapinun’s (2010), study entitled “The Rhetoric Meaning of Body Beauty” and Foucault’s (1990) concept of “Attributed Relationship” in analyzing the meaning of *Pretty* and the ways they employed in building a beautiful body. According to “Body Habitus -the body building controlled by the social structure”, Bourdieu indicated that Body Habitus took both the role of builder of the body and the body that was built. This means that an individual may have a control in building up his/her own body and at the same time is controlled by someone else or certain social structures to build up the body according to their norm references. So in this concept, *Pretties* have their own privileges in building their body and at the same time the society has signified the characteristics for the pretty body to be qualified for the job as the presenters of a certain product. In this regard, the women who want to work as a *Pretty* need to conform with this social criteria of being pretty. Women who want to be regarded as beautiful or pretty need to build their own body to meet the criteria set by the society. Regarding Bourdieu’s concept of Body Habitus, the body beauty was used as economical and financial prospects for the career success. In the case of *Pretties*, their job concerns the presentation of the beauty of the woman's body and face. This beauty can be compared to the product manufactured by the woman and it can be traded for money by means presenting the products in the job known as a *Pretty*.

Jariya Sapchataanan (2548) conducted a study on “Meaning and Body Building for a Ballet Dancing in the Thai Society”. The aims of this study were to understand the meaning of the ballet dancing which was considered as the prominent western art in the Thai society. An individual’s body was taken as the person’s assets to signify the person’s own self, the group or class the person belonged to. It could also differentiate the person from other social groups by the criteria set in the same society.
Ballet dancing was considered an activity for the people in the upper class of the society in the past; an average person in the society could not learn the ballet dancing. Later on, there were more Thai instructors and dancers of ballet, so they could teach more people in other classes in the society. The ballet dancing was then taken as less specified for only the upper class people and is now more popular among the middle class families. Moreover, the body figure of the ballet dancer is now well taken as the beautiful and admirable type among women. This activity of ballet learning is now taken more as the well-known woman’s activity in the Thai society.

The body building process of the ballet dancers needs a rigorous practice. The ballet dancers are required the quality of diligence, effort and patience, and the results will be seen in the perfection of their body. These qualifications would represent the person’s image in the present modern society, in which social value, health and beauty of the body need to be maintained continuously throughout their life.

Sunee Prasongbandid (2548) studied Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of Habitus and the humanistic theories. Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher who proposed the sociology of culture, as he labeled it, a “Theory of Practice” in the early decade of 1970. Several researchers studied into Habitus which was the key concept of this theory under the context of developmental process in the sociological theory. Bourdieu divided the theories in human sciences into two opposition views of the objectivism which based on objective social structure that placed requirements on its participants for membership and subjectivism basing on structures of actions and thoughts of the agent independent from the social structures. For Bourdieu, Habitus represents the abstract structure of an individual agent which can be structured from the outside social structures and, at the same time, the agent is able to structure his/her own practices. In other words, Habitus is structured by outside (objective) requirements of social structure, financial requirement, or language structure etc. On the other hand, Habitus is an active agent that can create subjective structures of action of its own. According to the concept of Habitus, while human are directed by the outside requirements of social structures, they can direct their own ways of action and practice.

In addition, “the Rhetoric Meaning of Body Beauty” presented in Sant Suwacharapinun’s (2553) article entitled “Meaning of Body Beauty and Aestheticism of Nakedness” was used as the research framework for this study. Sant stated that the concept of human body beauty existed among Thai people for a long time but this issue had not been seriously and empirically studied. This might be because the meaning of body beauty in the
Thai society was more related to the concepts of sexuality study in the schooling system so this limited the study in other concepts of body beauty. Moreover, the recent growing trend of consumerism has changed the concept of human body to the sales object to respond to sexual desire. The concept of body and meaning of body beauty in the Thai society, particularly in aestheticism was diverted and therefore reduced its value from its original meaning. The variety of meanings of body and beauty of human body in the Thai society and Thai traditions limited this meaning of beauty of the body to the objects of desire and it was taken more in terms of pornography.

The artistic and religious Body is one concept of body beauty based on the meaning conveyed by the craftsmen and artistic teachers in the Thai society who did not pay much attention to the importance of physical body. They did not take human body in term of its natural structure and size or as an actual touchable thing. They looked more at the virtue meaning the body beauty according to religious belief in Buddhism in particular. According to Buddhism, ‘body is not everlasting; it relies on the merit of being born, aging, getting sick and dying. When this meaning of body which is the core concept was diverted by the consumerism trends focusing more on the look rather than the feel, the religious concept of body has been left out and ceased to expand since then.

The Architectural Body which was taken more practically as a beautiful “body build” in the artistic physical human structures, like those shown in halls of contemporary arts had been left out. This concept of beautiful body to all architects and general people in the past has been unbelievably changed and decreased in its meaning and value. Other several meanings of body beauty are taken differently. The Social Body (getting its meanings according to society and individual criteria), the Abstract Body (body in internal concept), Sexual Body (body that shows the individual self concept) are differently conceptualized, interpreted and used for the benefits of body owners. These meanings were however not exploited fully because almost all aspects of these meanings were completely covered by the bigger body of Political Body.

Jaenrob Rakwijid (2549) conducted a study on “Career Success of the Beer Cheering Girls”. Results showed that beauty was a very important factor leading to success in this job while experience was reported as a supporting factor. Experience in negation, self defense, endearing and innocent behaviors, good manners, and general and attractive manners were positive factors for success in the job. The business skills such as sales and good communication skills were also found as contributing factor to the job.
The best time for the job as the beer cheering girls was in their young age when they were still young and attractive. So, the secondary source of beauty from plastic surgery was not very much needed among the research subjects.

In the actual work process of the beer cheering ladies, they had met several types of customers so they could collect all the experience relating to the job and techniques in negotiating with customers. They learned how to upgrade themselves or be more powerful in the negotiation when the customers were attracted to them. In their work, the beer cheering ladies, learned to apply the technique of taking both roles of hunted and hunter (known in the Thai proverb as “dogs chasing on chickens”) more appropriately in different situations in the job negotiating process.

Most of the beer cheering ladies considered body beauty as the most important factor for success in the job; and the best time to do the job was during their young age (at teen-age) while they were lively and fresh both in their physical looks and manners and they could gain more experience from this job. Since the job was limited only to young aged women with beauty and freshness in their early age, most beer cheering ladies reported that after the peak period for the job as beer cheering ladies they hoped to have a more permanent and secured job.

Although the women working as beer cheering ladies were considered being taken privileged from male customers in this present men-dominant society, the beer cheering ladies depended on some defense mechanism through their agents. The beer cheering ladies admitted that in doing the job they had some risks and they needed to be able to handle and interact well with the male customers, especially in the present male dominant type of society stating that they could not avoid this gender discriminating structure in the work places.

Foucault’s (1990) theory of “attributed relationship” was taken as one conceptual framework of this current study. Foucault wrote several books and the most important among these was “The Order of Things” (1970) and “The History of Sexuality volume 1: An Introduction” (1990). Foucault stated that power was always exiting and was in everywhere. He pointed out that power could not be grasped and held and possessed by any individuals to completely force or have control over other individuals or groups of individuals for the privileges of their own or their people or company. Power, on the other hand, revealed itself as an internal attributed relationship or interaction, such as the power of knowledge, economics status, and genders. Power subsists and penetrates everywhere. The exits of power, however, is not because it can control everything surrounding it but because power was existing in so as much as everywhere that it could not be specified as where power was existing (Foucault,
Power could not be said as “originated from” or “belong to” any person or institution in any society. Power was not situated in any particular places but stretched everywhere in the society. Power was therefore consisted of specific attributes in different points or areas in the society.

The researcher also based on the concept of the “Body Habitus - the body building controlled by the social structure” in analyzing the body building of the Pretty. According to this concept, beautiful body of a Pretty is made up by both the social structures for beauty and by the Pretty’s own concepts to make up a beautiful body to present the products. The researcher wanted to find out how the Pretty made up their body to make it look beautiful and attractive to people to enter the job. In general, beauty of the human body is decided by people in the society, signifying what attribute is or is not beautiful. Women use several ways to make themselves beautiful such as dieting, going to beauty salons. They also needed to practice to dance well in different types of dances.

The concept of “The Rhetoric Meaning of Body Beauty” was used to analyze into what it meant by the term body and what was the rhetoric meaning of body beauty in case of the Pretty. The answers to these questions might be the beauty salons, health centers, gyms and the miss and mister beauty contests. These social activities for beauty building exist in the society. Studying the meaning of body beauty and ways to create it can give us a picture of how human body is developed and what the rhetoric meaning of beautiful body represent. In term of the rhetoric meaning of body beauty, the researcher focused on how people in the society gave the meaning to a beautiful body, how this meaning differed from one in a certain period of time to the others and how the set of concepts of body beauty differed in one context of situation form the others.

Foucault’s attributed relationship was used to analyze the relationship between the Pretty, businesses who own the products, and customers of the products. According to this concept the Pretties exploited their power by using the beauty of their face and body to convince the business to choose them as the presenters of their products. The business, in the meantime, utilized their power in choosing the Pretty who had the personality similar to or suitable for presenting their products to their potential customers. In this regard, both the Pretty and the business made up their power to win the sales. For the Pretty, to gain the power, they had to make up their beautiful body according to the concepts of the rhetoric meaning of body beauty and the “Body Habitus the body building controlled by the social structure” to negotiate for the job as a Pretty. The business gained their power over their potential customers to increase sales of their products.
Research Methodology

This research has a qualitative research design. The research procedure is presented as follow.

1. The study area: Hat Yai District, Songkhla Province was chosen as a focus area as Hat Yai was the business center in the south of Thailand. It is situated in the boarding area to Malaysia and Singapore so there were a lot of foreigners from these two countries visiting Hat Yai both as tourists and for business. Hat Yai is also the center of education and economics. There are several big business activities in Hat Yai, such as Motor Shows, the Southern Agricultural Products Fair. Due to availability of these business activities, businesses hired many Pretties to present their products.

2. Research samples: The informants for the study were divided into major informants and informants. The major informants were 6 Pretties both ladies and guys. Most of them were studying at tertiary levels and 3 business people representing the business and agency who hired the Pretties. The informants included 5 people who were interested in the Pretties and attending to the Southern Agricultural Products Fair and other business fairs in Hat Yai.

3. Data Collecting Procedure: data were collected using the participating and non-participating observations. For the participating observation, the researcher got involved in the product presentations as the assistant to the Pretty. For the non-participating observation, the researcher observed the presentation of the Pretty without their consciences. For the general people used as informants were those who were interested in the job of the Pretty. The researcher basically observed and informally interviewed the passerby she met in the fair. In collecting these data the researcher observed their behaviors, their attires and the activities they were doing at that time. The informal and structured interviews were also conducted to these informants.

4. Data analysis and triangulation of the data: data collected from the field study were categorized, interpreted, analyzed and synthesized within the research framework explained in the earlier part of this paper. Data were also triangulated with data collected from different informants at a different places and time. Descriptive results were presented. The analysis of data was done at the same time of data collecting procedure so as get more explanation and clarification of the analysis. Documentation
from sources such as articles, published papers and Internet information were used to support analysis of data for a clearer picture of the research results.

**Research Results**

Results were presented and discussed in three parts of: 1) general demographic information of the major informants; 2) the creation of meaning for beauty of body; and 3) the ways the *Pretties* used to build up the beautiful body and how they got into this business of presenting products.

1. **General demographic information of the major informants**

Most *Pretties* were single females at the age of 20-29 who were living in Songkhla province. Most were university graduates, only some were studying in the graduate and post graduate levels. The length of time working as a *Pretty* ranged from 1 to 7 years. The ways to get into the *Pretty* job was by being convinced by friends, senior friends in the university or people in the product promotion organizers. Most of these major informants (*Pretties*) perceived the job as a sideline job not a major or permanent job. Pay for the *Pretty* job was given on a daily basis at a rate of 800-1000 baht for the first job and the highest rate paid to the informants in this study was 5000 baht per day. The work hours of the *Pretty* job were no more than 6 hours a day. According to the informants, the pay for this job could be saved for their future business and paid for educational expenses, clothing, and cosmetics for the next *Pretty* job. Regarding body building, the *Pretty* informants held that they did not do any special treatment or cares for their bodies and beauty. What the informants reported doing in this regard were working out and taking some food supplements but they did not go to the beauty salons or skin clinics.

2. **Creation of the Meaning for Beauty**

The term *Pretty* was generally perceived as a woman with a pretty face and body, dressing in good looking attires who was presenting and giving information of the products. In this study, it was found that qualifications and responsibilities of the *Pretty* as required by different types of businesses or organizations differed significantly from business to business. These qualifications and job description depended on the products the business wanted to present, types of business or organizations, target customers of the products or business, and
the image of the product that the business or the organization wanted to implant into their customers’ minds. Data gained from the interviews done with the Pretties, the business that used the Pretty in the product presentation and average people going to the Southern Agricultural Fair in Hat Yai, the term Pretty was perceived differently as: 1) Pretty was a way to present the products; 2) Pretty was used as a tool to attract attention of the customers; and 3) Pretty was a way to earn money. The meaning of Pretty will therefore divided into three different definitions as follow.

2.1 Pretty was used as a tool for products promotion. Pretty got this meaning because the main purposes for Pretty were to introduce, highlight and make the sale image to the product. Most of the informants said that Pretty was used by the business as a medium to introduce their products and to attract people’s attention to their products. Pretties have to give basic and general information of the products to the people who are interested in the products. According to information from the interviews with the informants, the Pretty can be divided into three types. The first type is the Pretty who is standing close to the product to attract passing people to the products and to give basic information about the products. The second type of Pretty is the dancing Pretty who is dancing in the production presentation booths to attract attention to the products. These Pretty performed the dance only and they are known as a Dancing Pretty. This type of Dancing Pretty is popular for there are rigid competitions in sales so the business needs an extra marketing tool apart from the product itself. The last type of Pretty is the Pretty MC who performs the sale and promotion activities such as leading games and giving away gifts. Their jobs are to invite the passerby in the fair to join the promotion activities. They sometimes call themselves as a master of ceremony (MC). These Pretty MCs usually have a variety of experience in product promotion so they are more skillful in product presentation and therefore get a higher pay and more difficult type of product presentation jobs.

**Meanings of Pretty given by informants**

“A Pretty is a person who brightens up the job of presenting the product…”

(Pueng, interviewed on 14 August 2010)
“A Pretty is a person who is standing by the promoted product at all time. They don’t need to talk a lot of; they just post beautifully with the product. In the product presentation, the Pretty is the one who introduces the products or works as an MC. Personally, I don’t care much what I was called, as a Pretty or an M.C. Both are fine to me.”

(Neng, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“Being a Pretty? A Pretty is, kind of, a job to present a product, I think.”

(Tan, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“...is a person who presents the product. Whether product looks functioning and interesting or not the presenter takes, kind of, an important role. If the presenter is not attractive, the product can’t be made attractive and will not get attention from customers and this will affect sales.”

(Phai, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“It’s kind of public relations, isn’t it? It helps promoting sales of the products.”

(Pleng, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“In my view, Pretty is the presentation of products to make the product better known to people.”

(Ming, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“Regarding the Pretty, I think of a pretty as a lovely and well dressed lady who is standing next to the product to present it to people. That’s my perception about the Pretty.”

(Fa, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

From the above mentioned perceptions about the meaning of Pretty, it can be concluded that Pretty was generally defined as a tool to present the products and to give general information about the product to make it more interesting to people. If the Pretty did not present the products well or did not give clear information about the product, this could reduce the sales of the product and will, in turn, cause bad results to
the Pretty. The business would not hire her for the next job. The business might consider the Pretty did not have sufficient work experience or that they did not work diligently to attract attention of the customers to the products. At present, there are several types of Pretty, the Pretty standing by the products, the dancing Pretty and the Pretty MC. To get a job in different types of Pretty jobs depended on the Pretty’s own experience. One might start this job with a dancing Pretty and when she got more experience and were more motivated to get more income, she would take better care of her body, face and look. She would have to develop her personality which included verbal communication and kept herself in a good look and beautiful body to attract the employers to get the higher level of Pretty job. From the observation done by the researcher at the South Agricultural Fair and other cultural fairs held in Hat Yai District, it was found that Pretty’s look was more attractive and outstanding from the general passerby at the fair. They usually stand by the products in the product display booth, talking on the microphone to invite the fair goers to look at the displayed products. At present the Pretty have become the medium or tool to publicize the products to the public.

2.2 Pretty was viewed as a tool for attracting customers to the products. Due to the high competition in production and sales, each company was using different marketing strategies to attract the customers’ attention so that they walked in to see the products, Pretty was meant to be coupled with the products and attached to the product information. Informants’ views of Pretty are given as follow.

“the person who makes the product more interesting and helps attract the customers’ attention to a certain brand or product.”

(Gik, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“it is like the business hires a Pretty to attract customers to their product, to make it more interesting. The meaning of Pretty in this sense is that the Pretty must be beautiful, capable, and be able to talk or speak well. To be able to speak well in this case means that the Pretty can present the product well. If the Pretty is just standing next to the product, she will not be interesting to the business who might hire her.”

(Tan, interviewed on 19 August 2010)
“Just like the person who is standing in the front of the booth to attract the customers to the products.”

(Pui, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“The term Pretty? In fact, pretty in English means lovely, or beautiful, isn’t it? But according to the job, Pretty is used to attract attention to the products, like moveable and dynamic media. The product itself sometimes can’t attract enough attention so Pretty is used to help build the image to the product or the image of the organization.”

(Ple, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“a person who can attract the passerby to attend to the Pretty and the products she is presenting.”

(Om, interviewed on 10 October 2010)

According to the informants, Pretty was a tool or medium for attracting the customers’ attention to the products. Pretty was therefore said to work as the product presenter to the passersby in the product display fairs. Some informants regarded the Pretty as a mobile and interactive tool to present the products in a more interesting way and at the same time made a better image of the business or organization of the products. To attract customers’ attention to the products, the Pretty needed to be both physically fit and mentally in good condition. They needed to have the problem solving ability. The Pretty had not only to attract customers to the product, but they also needed to motivate the business employers to hire them in the next business event.

2.3 Pretty was a way to earn money. A job as a Pretty was well-known and preferred by the good looking teenagers who have good personality and out-standing look. To work as a Pretty, both the look and the presentation skills were needed. Moreover, the Pretty job was a better paid job with the shorter work hours when compared with other jobs. Pretty was therefore a dream job for teenagers who wanted to make money for buying anything they needed.
“Pretty is a job that can make money and this money can give us something of our own. This makes me proud of myself to earn my own money. It’s not a bad job.”

(Ling, interviewed on 19 August 2010)

“Working as a Pretty, you work for a few hours and gained money easily. You don’t need to work the whole day and also you can dress beautifully.”

(Goy, interviewed on 22 August 2010)

From the above reflections about being a Pretty, it can be said that Pretty earned a good pay for each job. Payment however, was different from job to job. For some jobs, the Pretty were required only to stand beside the product and give some initial information about the product. Some jobs required the Pretty to work as an MC to conduct the sale promotion activities throughout the product promotion period so this type of Pretty MC got a higher pay for the job that was more difficult and needed more skills. According to the interviews, the pay for one job as a Pretty ranged from 800 baht to 5000 baht. This good pay attracted many young women to the job. Doing this job they had an opportunity to get dressed beautifully and wear a beautiful make up and the work was not too difficult and tiring. The working hour was no more than 6 hours a day. The pay for the Pretty job was also higher than other types of jobs. This gave them more money to pay for whatever they wanted. The informants also said that they were happy and were proud that they could earn their own living and considered the job as a Pretty was an honest and creditable job in the society.

3. Building of body beauty and ways to get into the Pretty arena

As findings of this study presented that the most important factor for working as a Pretty was a beautiful and attractive body, therefore the building of the body beauty needed to be done and maintained strictly so as to get a higher pay.

In the Pretty arena beauty or body beauty must conform to the social trends of beauty. In this study, it was found that most Pretties have already had a more beautiful body than the average people in the society. They had a beautiful face, a proportioned and rather slim body with fine and shining complexion, conforming to the definition of being beautiful according to the current social criteria. They were at the teen age and therefore in the utmost physical condition both in fitness of the body and freshness of the complexion. With the privileges of
young age and physical attributes, these *Pretties* did not need much additional attempt to take care of their physical beauty nor the tight weight control. Since most of the *Pretties* considered the job as limited to the certain age span, so they did not take the job as a serious or permanent job. They took it as an opportunity to earn experience and chances for a better life.

Regarding employment of the *Pretty*, there were two types of the *Pretty* employment; one was as a part-time job during the school vacation and the other as a permanent job for those who were graduated. Most were working as a part-time job so there were many university students studying in the faculties of Mass Media, Business Management and college students in Marketing and Accounting got into this *Pretty* job. To get into the *Pretty* business, most of them were convinced by friends and senior friends in colleges or universities. Some applied for the job by themselves at the event organizers or modeling companies. The requirements for a *Pretty* job are the age of 18-30, having good personality and good interpersonal skills. They do not need to be beautiful; but they had to have good and attractive personality such as a good look, being attractive with a smiley face, self confident, out going with communication and persuasive skills. The most important qualification is the good understanding about the product to be presented. Other personal qualifications are hard working and patient for the job involves the whole day standing job, presenting the product which requires the physical toughness. Most new *Pretties* worked for the event organizing companies and therefore were given the jobs as in product display booths. The main jobs of these new *Pretty* were introducing the products and convincing them to buy the products.

Pays for the *Pretty* job was given in fairly a wide range. For a part-time job done only during the school vacation, the daily pay was 200 baht while the pay for the *Pretty* working in the department stores was 400-500 baht. The *Pretty* who worked in the product promotion booths in the major provincial cultural fairs got a pay of approximately 1400 baht per day excluded of transportation and accommodation expenses.

The job as a *Pretty* is attractive to many teen-ages and young girls mainly because this job offers them an opportunity to present themselves in public which will lead them to future or further job opportunities. Another reason is that the *Pretty* job offers a much better pay when compared to other types of part-time jobs such as a job in a department store and fast food restaurant. Pay for the job as an experienced *Pretty* for the whole day job, presenting the
product by standing beside the product (not getting on the stage) is approximately 1000-4000 baht and up to 5000 baht for the MC job presenting the products on the stage. Job duration for the Pretty is around four to five years. At present, the Pretty has been taken as an outstanding job. This might be due to the wide spread of below the line marketing activities. A lot of manufacturers ranging from those of daily consumer goods to IT products go out to promote their products countrywide, ranging from small product display fairs to big national product display events. The biggest events for the Pretty job are the “Motor Shows”. It can be said that the Pretty who has experience from the “Motor Shows” event can use this job experience for a higher pay in the next job.

As for the process in building body beauty, apart from the plastic surgery, the Pretty need to take good care of their looks. The process of beauty building ranges from the simple routines of putting on make ups, buying cosmetics, going to beauty salons and skin clinics and keeping up with current outfits fashion. In short, the most common ways taken by the Pretty in beauty making included doing make ups, hair set ups, skin spa, and weight control. All are done for the purposes of keeping the body beauty for they regarded these qualifications as important requirements for the Pretty job to present the products in public.

The information concerning how the Pretty got into this business gained from the interviews with the Pretty informants, their acquaintances, and the event organizing company personnel revealed that most of the Pretties knew about the job from friends and senior friends in colleges or universities or introduced to the job by the acquaintances working in the area of event organizing or product sales promotion fairs. Once the Pretties got the first job, they got the second, third and fourth job for it gave them an opportunity to present themselves and their competence in the job to other companies or organizations attending the fair so there are more chances for them to be considered and offered further Pretty jobs.

Summary of the Results

The findings of this study were as follow.
1. Regarding the creation of the meaning of Pretty, different informants gave three different meanings of Pretty as: a tool for promoting products, a tool to attract customers’ attention and a way of earning money.
2. As for the methods in building the body of Pretty, and how they got into this business, it was found that most Pretties have already had illustrious attributes for being beautiful to the current social norm with a good personality. As a result, these Pretties did not need
much additional attempt to take care of their physical beauty. They just needed to handle the common process of beauty activities such as doing make ups, hair set ups, skin spa, weight control; taking vitamins or diet supplements and working out. Regarding how the Pretty got into this business, results revealed that most of the Pretty knew about the job from friends and senior friends in colleges or universities or by the acquaintances working in the area of event organizing or product sales promotion fairs. Once the Pretties got the first job, they got the second, and third for it gave them an opportunity to present themselves and their competence in the job to other companies or organizations attending the fair to be considered and offered further Pretty jobs.

Discussion of Results

Findings from this study were discussed in three aspects as follow.

1. As regards to the creation of meaning of Pretty, three different meanings were found.

1.1 Pretty was a tool for promoting products. Most people in the society used this meaning because to them the Pretty was used as a tool to present and highlight the products for an increase of sales. This definition of Pretty was in accordance with the findings in Pinkaew Pruettiprasert’s study (2549) “Public Opinions towards the Pretty Girl in Marketing Events”. In Pinkaew’s study, it was found that Pretty was used as a marketing tool to introduce the products and to give general information about the product. Moreover, the informants in the current study categorized Pretty into three levels. First was the Pretty standing beside the product to give basic information about the products to the interested customers. Another level was the Pretty who worked as an MC, managing all the sales activities to attract the fair goers to the products. These activities included leading games and giving away gifts and rewards. The last level of Pretty was the dancing Pretty who performed the dance in product display booths. The only job for this type of Pretty was to dance. In conclusion, the Pretty is currently a very famous way to present and promote products.

1.2 Pretty was a tool to attract customers’ attention. In this regards, Pretty worked like a moving or mobile mechanism to draw attention to the products. In this regard, this made the Pretty job better than other marketing tools normally used in product promotion. The attractive qualities of the Pretty were unique and outstanding looks. This power of prettiness of can be compared to as the concept of “attributed relationship” proposed by Foucault (1990) for it had the power to attract people’s attention to them and their
performances. This power to draw attention seemed to be restricted to increasing interest of the people to the product, it did not, however, guarantee that this could convince them to buy the target products. This was also found in the study of Waresara Wisutwatanasak (2548) which reported the attitudes towards the performances of the Pretty in the “Thailand International Motor Expo” that the pretty girl could attract attention to the products (cars) in that they could make a more admirable image to the car. They could not, however, give detailed information about the cars and they could not influence people’s decision to buy the cars.

1.3 Pretty was a way of earning money. This meaning derived from the contentment of the Pretties that they could earn money using their distinguished personal attributes. This finding was in accordant with the results found in Jaenrob Rakwijid’s study (2549) “Beauty and Career Success of the Beer Cheering Girls” which revealed that the informants earned the monthly income of 8001-9000 baht plus extra tips from customers each night of work and percentage of commission calculated from the whole sales of beer. The most admirable aspect of the job of the beer cheering girls in this study was the income that was sufficient for their expenses and for some savings. The study reported that these beer cheering girls were introduced to the job by friends and their work hours were quite different from place to place, approximately from 5 p.m. until 11 or 12 p.m. Most of the customers were average people ranging from teenagers to working age depending on the venues of the beer gardens.

2. In term of methods in building body beauty, it was found in this study that the meaning and methods to build body beauty as perceived by the informants were based on the social structures of what being pretty means by the specific social structure norm or belief at a certain period of time. The current trend of beauty was as the Korian-like beauty –someone who has a beautiful face with small slanted eyes and fair complexion. The women with this beautiful Korian-like look were more admirable to the modeling agents. This concept was in line with Bourdieu’s concept of Habitus: body beauty built up by social structures, which imposed that the meaning of beauty in structured or controlled by the objective social structures and the agent’s individual self. Body beauty in this sense was built up by both social structure and the individual person. In building body beauty, the Pretties took both the role of being controlled by the social structured meaning of beauty and the role of individuals who could control their own body beauty according to their own perception of beauty.
As was found in Janerob Rakwijid’s study (2549) that body beauty was the main reason for success in a job as beer cheering girls, work and personal experience, however, were also taken as important the supplement factors for success. Among these experiences, negation and self defense skills, cleverness, appealing techniques with endearing behavior, good manners, and general attractive manners were found as positive factors for their job success. The business skills such as sales and good communication skills were also contributing to their job. The current study found further supportive characteristics for a successful job as the Pretty. These concerned experiences such as work experience as a Pretty, speaking techniques and good communication and public relation skills. Other beauty attributes reported by most of informants in this study also included the cleanness of body, skin and attires. Attractive personality was also included in the concept of beauty for the Pretty. Women beauty according to the social structures include pinky-white complexion. The better look of body skin the women have made them more attractive and perceived as beautiful according to the current trend. Employers of the Pretty also agreed that beauty was an important factor to draw the customers’ attraction to the products and bring on their decision to buy the products. In fact, this type of women’s beauty was not only taken as an essential attribute among the Pretty, it was also well accepted among average women in the current society as an important characteristic for their life to increase their image and self confidence.

Since body beauty took an important role in success in the job as a Pretty, the work span of this job was short and therefore taken as a part-time and non-permanent job. As can be seen from the informants’ responses stating that they had a supplement plan for their future job, which must be more secure and well accepted by the social norm.

In conclusion, results from the present study indicated that most of the Pretty informants recognized the body beauty as an important factor for their job and that the body image was the essence of this career in presenting the products to the public. This concept was well affirmed by the study by Jariya Sapchatanan (2548) on “Meaning and the Making of Body in a Ballet Class in Thai Society”. The study purposed the idea that the individual’s body was considered as the person’s assets to signify his/her own self, the group or class he/she belonged to and, at the same time, it was used to differentiate the person from other social groups by the criteria set in the same society. The findings of the current study also accorded Bourdieu’s Body Habitus: body beauty controlled by social structures. Meaning of
body beauty in this study included the cleanness of the body, skin and attires; and good personality was also included in the concept of being beautiful. Informants in the current study stated that they did not do or plan to do any plastic surgery for they were still at young age and because they did not plan to do this job as a permanent job.

Most of the Pretties took normal standard cares of their body and their beauty including putting on make up which must be done regularly for the good look and good personal image which was considered very important factor for the job. Other activities in building the beautiful body and image included other beauty related routines such as going to the beauty salons, skin clinics, and keeping up with the current fashions.

The conceptual framework of attributed relationship was used in this study to study the power relationship among the pretty girls, the company of the products and the consumers of the products. As for the pretty women, they exploited their power of their beauty so that the products companies employed them as the product presenter. The companies exploited their power in terms of selecting the pretty women who had the personality that could represent or reflect their product image to make their products more interesting or attractive to the potential customers. According to concepts of “attributed relationship” the Pretties and the companies demonstrated the exploitation of power of each party. The Pretties made use of their beauty by building up their body beauty according to the meaning of beauty as perceived by current societal trend and the concept of “Body Habitus - the body building controlled by the social structure” in negotiating for the job with the business. Similarly, the companies exploited their power in selecting the Pretty who they thought to have the image and personality that could represent their product well so as to attract the consumers to their products.

2. Regarding how the Pretty got into the business, most Pretty knew about and got into the business of presenting the products in the product display fairs from friends, senior friends in colleges or universities and friends of friends because this type of product presentation business was blooming. At the present time of the study, all business wanted to present their products and they wanted to be the leading company among the companies doing the same area of business. They put priority in marketing and advertising their products by employing beautiful women known as Pretty to draw their potential customers to the products. These businesses selected the beautiful women they thought to represent the image of the products they wanted to sell. For example, in
presenting the products of cars and motorcycles, the business conceptualized a car as beautiful, luxurious and powerful so they were looking for the Pretties who were beautiful, with a dignified, elegant and strong look. Motorcycles had the image as forceful, confident, attracting, spruced and stylist so the Pretties to represent that image of the motorcycles must be those with the attractive, stylist, skillful and active look to present the products of motorcycles.

Suggestions deriving from the research findings

1. From the results of the present study, Pretties were used as a tool for promoting the products, a technique to attract the customer’s attention to the products and the way to increase earnings for the Pretties themselves. To be successful in their jobs, Pretties must maintain their body beauty and personality in a perfect state at all time. This research results showed that average people in the present day society think of the Pretty as a beautiful women who had attractive personality. It was suggested that public and governmental organizations should also use these Pretties which seem to work well with business promotions in their campaigns for resolving social problems.

2. Findings from the current study on the meaning of Pretty and the way these Pretties build up their body beauty and the ways they got into the business of product presentation showed that Pretties were used for three purposes: as a tool to promote the products, as a tool to attract attention of the customers to the products and as a way to earn money. The methods to build the body beauty among the Pretties in the current study were not very complicated and did not need much attempts of the Pretty in general. What they did were some routines for beauty such as putting on make ups, having hair done, skin spa, weight control, vitamin and food supplement intake and working out. Regarding how the Pretty got into the business, most of them were introduced to this business by friends or senior friends in colleges or people who work in the event organizers or product presentation business. It was suggested that there should be further studies on how the job as Pretty originated and how this job has survived from its original state up to the present time.

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Interview


Om, (Alias) person interviewed. Porin Wanseng interviewer. At Robinson Hat Yai interviewed on 10 October 2010.