
Media As A Cause Of Dissatisfaction With Body Image

Media has become a dominant and influential part of our lives, especially in advertising. Media in Advertising has made a huge impact in western society. Have you ever wondered why advertising companies digitally enhance models to make them look perfect, and how they make us question our body image? This essay is about the way advertising companies makes us feel bad about our body image. Those who watch TV and keep up with mainstream media see beautiful people on ads, and wonder why they don't look like them. Body image has become a huge problem in our society. In advertising, appearance is key. Encouraging people to accept their body image can help people feel comfortable in their body and less insecure about their flaws.

Media is one of the leading causes of issues with body image, and self esteem in both men and women. This is because almost all advertisements send a message about physical appearance and beauty. A few examples of this are commercials for clothes, cosmetics, hair products, weight loss, plastic surgery, and fitness. Poor body image is a public health issue. Health risk such as alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and mental health issues are often caused because of a person's body image insecurities.. "Correlational studies have linked media exposure with negative feelings about one's body image, showing that the more time spent watching television and reading magazines, the higher the experience of body dissatisfaction and problematic eating disorders"(515). Karlie Kloss, a former victoria secret model, recently confessed on why she left the company. She said"The reason I decided to stop working with Victoria's Secret was I didn't feel it was an image that was truly reflective of who I am and the kind of message I want to send to young women around the world about what it means to be beautiful"(Kloss). The victoria secret fashion show is one of the biggest fashion shows in the world, it is broadcasted every year and brings in millions of views. Last year victoria secret decided to be more diverse in choosing their models; however, they did not have at least one plus size model. "The message that Victoria's Secret is sending out is quite clear; plus size isn't sexy, curves aren't something you should be proud of and when it comes to body type, there is only one ideal"(Laura capon).

Advertisers will always digitally enhance body image to make the model look perfect. Advertising companies airbrush photos to make models look skinnier, have bigger or smaller muscles, large breasts, erase cellulite, etc. Victoria Pendleton, an olympian who modelled for a magazine, was photoshopped so that her muscles were made to look soft. She stated 'It still surprises me that we have such a narrow view of what makes women attractive. I've been photographed lots of times over the years, but one picture sticks in my mind. I wore a dress that exposed my whole back, and when I saw the photo on a screen at the shoot I thought 'Wow! My back looks muscly,' and I felt really proud. But when the picture was printed, my back was smooth and practically muscle free. They'd softened it all, and I was so disappointed because I'd put a lot of work into that! I guess, in their opinion, being muscly isn't that attractive in a woman. But surely if you take a picture of an athlete, you'd expect to see some muscle, wouldn't you?'(5). Another example of a celebrity who has been photoshopped is Andy Zroddick, who is a professional tennis player and was the cover of men's fitness in 2007. He stated 'Little did I know I have 22-inch guns and a disappearing birthmark on my right arm'(Andy Roddick). Roddick wrote this after he saw the cover photo which removed his birthmark and enhanced his

biceps.

“In Western Societies, the ideal self-concept of a woman is represented by an ectomorphic, or thin, stereotype”(131). “Thus, it's not surprising that marketers tendency to employ attractive models has been taken to an extreme as many advertisers show highly idealized images of physical attractiveness”(131). Because of the application of digital enhancing photos or “Photoshopping”, this trend has accelerated. Many images that are used in magazines have been digitally altered to some extent. This is a huge problem in western society because these models are portrayed to represent an ideal body image that the average woman cannot meet.

There are many concerns about the representation that unrealistic models in advertising has a negative consequence on women. Many people compare themselves to these unrealistic lifestyle ads, because of the comparison made between the models where they are being recognized as a body standard.” A major concern is that is that such idealized images raise comparison standards of attractiveness while decreasing body dissatisfaction, self esteem, and self-evaluation”(131). Young women, and women who are already suffering with accepting their body image suffer from eating disorders. The advertising industry has set unrealistic expectations for teens about their physical appearances by using models with 'perfect bodies.' The modelling industry today has put a tremendous amount of pressure on models, causing them disorders of both mental and physical illness. These disorders then creating the look of the “perfect body” have now lead to unrealistic expectations of body image for society.

Many women turn to plastic and cosmetic surgery in order to make them feel better about themselves. “277 female college students completed a questionnaire measuring the new media exposure to perfect facial ideals, magazine exposure to cosmetic surgery contents, online appearance interaction, materialistic values, and their attitudes towards cosmetic surgery”(Abstract). The result showed that all this exposure associated with the acceptance of cosmetic surgery. In the past decade, cosmetic surgery has pervaded both western and non-western popular culture. “Statistics compiled by the American society of plastic surgeons reveal that 17.1 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in America in 2016”(1). Mass media plays a key role in cosmetic surgery, there are many shows about cosmetic surgery.

What are the stats on Body Image? Eighty four per cent of the women in the U.S. are ashamed of their body image. Thirty four per cent of males in the U.S. are ashamed of their body image. Research shows that body dissatisfaction can lead to suicide, mental illness, and drug abuse. Teen girls devote about an hour a day to their physical appearance. Teen boys spend about thirty minutes a day on theirs. Eighty per cent of girls admit that they compare themselves with photoshopped celebrities.

Body shamings should be banned. Body shaming ads should be banned because unrealistic beauty harms young minds and bodies ”I'M SICK OF BEING BOMBARDED by messages suggesting that my body isn't good enough! The truth is, no matter how many times teens are told that all body types are beautiful, we will never truly accept that notion as long as we're surrounded by ads promoting unrealistic body images”(Nadya Khan). Celebrities post body positive messages on their social media accounts, yet are pictured in magazines looking extremely thin and beautiful. The message we're receiving is: 'All body types are beautiful—but be skinny and expose a lot of skin’(4). If there were a ban on ads that promote unrealistic body images, maybe teens would feel less pressure to meet society's beauty standards and find it easier to be themselves. This might not put an end to our insecurities; however, its a start.

Instead of worrying about their insecurities, people can focus on bettering themselves.

Many companies have participated in using the power of exposure in advertising. Clothing brands are beginning to use more plus size models in their ads. Cultural obsession with slender models can be overturned if advertising used bigger models. Susan Ringwood stated 'Increasing the diversity of body shapes and sizes portrayed in the media could rebalance our views about our own bodies in an emotionally healthy way'(Susan Ringwood). The fashion industry has responded and agreed to being more considerate when choosing models. "Seventeen magazine, responding to gutsy high school student's petition, also pledged to feature only real, unaltered images of girls in its pages"(NY DAILY NEWS). This means that seventeen magazine, which is a very popular magazine, will finally stop photoshopping people to make them someone they're not. In conclusion, encouraging people to accept their body image can help people feel comfortable in their body and less insecure about their flaws.

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