Media & Body Image

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**Abstract:**

As the problem of self image continues to grow, researchers continue to look for answers. When the student researcher conducted surveys and interviews, results were shockingly. By consulting with experts from university’s about the correlation between body image perception and media influence, feedback differed. It seems that even professionals cannot pinpoint if social media and beauty propaganda are the cause of the constant to wanting change one’s image. In the public eye, it seems, that everyone covets what they are shown every day. Whether by magazine advertising, or pop sensation music, the 21st century has taken a certain way of thinking to what ‘beauty’ is, and how to achieve it. The researcher found that feedback from experts’ coincided with survey feedback, the agreed target women was maturing women.

**Introduction**

The concept of beauty changes with time, and environment. In Africa, beauty is most likely defined differently than here in the U.S. The problem about “being beautiful” is that one has to apply to society standards in order to completely “feel beautiful”. Or so the 21st century has led the public to believe. With technology evolving, and pop culture growing- it is almost impossible to avoid social media interaction. Although it may not be on purpose, media has a made an impact on how people look at themselves, and at others. Like every situation with an upside, there must be a downfall- hence, the increase of eating disorders, and acceptance of cosmetic survey. Through thoroughly conducted surveys, interviews and the digging deep of research, this research paper is made to establish a correlation between public minds and media persuasion.

The student researcher dives into the attempt of reaching some sort of conclusion on how ‘body image perception is affected by the media’, this being **the primary question.**

**Secondary questions** include: “In what ways does the media use propaganda for advertising?” And, “Who is the most susceptible to this kind of commercialism?”

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By gathering important statistics and information from the public eye peers in a variety of online sources a knowledgeable step-by-step schedule process was made. The essay schedule started by collecting all the feedback from survey monkey, an online survey website. Then, for other online sourcing the researcher posted a Facebook link to the Survey Monkey site. This particular information is valuable because it is voluntary, and the responses came from family and friends- not only from the CMNI but also from Minnesota, Michigan, Georgia and Illinois. (Appedices 3)

It is crucial to gain a firm hold of the research goal by knowing the specific audience whom the statistics have been gathered from. In contrast, it is also important for the researcher to acknowledge who has yet to be spoken to, in order to rule out any sorts of variables that could question the credibility. By using prior knowledge about the subject on body image, it gave the researcher an advantage when it came to gathering statistics and piecing them together.

*The final step* in the process to conduct the most accurate research experiment was credible sourcing. Because credibility is crucial to a research paper and project, having made sure to have a variety of sources for the information is imperative. From research websites, and PDFs from students covering the same subject the audience may reference;

**(Greene, S. B. (2011). *Body Image : Perceptions, Interpretations and Attitudes*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.) (Jobsky, A. (2014). *The Body-Image Meaning-Transfer Model: An Investigation of the Sociocultural Impact on Individuals‘ Body-image*. Hamburg, Germany: Anchor.)**

Utilizing literature to gain ideas and have a view of different standpoints the researcher used (*Body Respect*, Linda Bacon, PhD 2014) This of course, was just the basic primary sources which lead to numerous others. (Reference Appendices 4)

Piecing together the outcomes of surveys, and interview- the student researcher continued to find concurring information regarding the primary and secondary questions. Finding others (from all sorts of standpoints) that can support the responses from the research questionnaires would only benefit the researcher’s work. Of course the Internet has a wide variety of credible, and not so credible sources. However, the researcher has found an undeniable amount of confirming results from other students, doctors and professors looking into the same topic of interest. From PDFs pertaining similar research, (K. Klein, 2013 Senior at Claremont McKenna) (Reference Appedix 6)

**“College women are exceptionally vulnerable to the impact that social media can have on their body image as they develop an outlook on their bodies and accept the developmental changes that occurred during puberty. This paper provides evidence that there is a relationship between the recent surge in disordered eating and high consumption of social media.”**

(…) One can utilize fellow student research. Or, from a doctoral standpoint, (P. Diedrich, PhD, BBC News) “The more time spent on Facebook, the more likely people are to self-objectify themselves”. She (Diedriech 2014) also explains there is a tendency to seek out negative social interactions in these forums, and to ask people to comment on how you look, which can lead to body image anxieties. (Appendix 5)

**DISCOVERIES:**

One of the researcher’s first findings was the statistics on the Internet. Including usage and demographics on how much social media has increased in the last 10 years. (Reference appendix 1.)

The significance to the research relates to the primary question, “How does the media affect people's perception on body image?” through the Internet. Twitter and Instagram have the option to post photos and blogs on new fashion trends and eating habits. Teens are the main audience to download and use these types of social medias. (Appendices. 1)

Other demographics include responses from surveys and interviews. It was revealed to the researcher that Women are the gender of targeting choice, specifically women from the age of late teens to early 20s. Almost 70% of all survey applicants agreed on this certain statistic.  Along with half of the conducted interviews. (Reference Appendices 3)

*A slightly contradicting piece of information* the researcher received during gathering process was from one of the experts she had reached out to. *(Robyn Goodman, Florida University)* stated that

**“Most experiments have failed to show causation. Much of the research is simply correlational. Age groups: basically all research looks at college age women so we really don't know. Gender: again basically all research has looked at women so again not clear how men are influenced.”**  (Appendices 2)

Significance: To ensure the possibility of equal respondents and to eliminate the option of having bias statistics, the researcher interviewed and surveyed the same amount of females as males.

**CONCLUSION:**

And so, ended the project of the researcher. With the primary and secondary questions answered, credible sources to confirm the research, and gathered statistics from a diverse audience, became this paper.

**Primary Question Conclusion**: There is such a strong correlation between body image perception and media influence. Enough conducted research from hundreds of credible sources concur this. Even if it be subconsciously, minds are prone to this kind of ‘persuasion’, whether its on what to look like or how to dress like.

**Secondary Question(s) Conclusion:** In accordance to survey analysis and gathered knowledge, women from the ages of 18-25 are the most targeted for body image change. T.V and music are the most agreed upon advertising on what society can expect what form “beauty” should come in. (Reference App. 3)

Not only is this controversial problem prominent to the present, but getting so large the CNMI may start to be affected by it. It is for this very reason, that the researcher chooses this topic. In an island full of love and self acceptance, it would be quite the change to participate in this particular issue. Although islands in the Marianas keep their cultural tradition, and are still new pop culture influence- the infliction of poor self esteem veering from media influence is still very possible.

**APPENDICIES:**

1.) "Social Media Usage." Pew Research Center, 8 Oct. 2015. Web.

* Graphs provided supporting social media use

2.) Finder, Expertise. "Robyn J. Goodman, University of Florida." *: Beauty and Advertising, Body Image and Media, Cosmetic Surgery and Media*

* Expert reference.
* Email respondent.

3.) *SurveyMonkey: Free Online Survey Software & Questionnaire Tool*. Evangeline Babauta, 27 Sept. 2016. Web.

* Main source for public view.
* Statistic provider for primary and secondary questions. (70%..)

4.) (*Body Respect*, Linda Bacon, PhD 2014)

* Available at NMC library
* Personal look into self esteem issues // literature source

5.) Roxby, Philippa. "Does Social Media Impact on Body Image?" *BBC News*. Dr. Diedrich, 2014. Web. 14 Nov. 2016.

* Doctoral reference
* Supports social media claim

6.) Klein, Kendyl M. "Senior Thesis." *"Why Dont I Look like Her?"* N.p., 2 Dec. 2013. Web. Nov. 2016

* PDF reference
* Credible student reference, can be used as comparison to current research.