

Objectifying women

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Although we may not realize it, but media is a very powerful source of influence. Influence that can affect people in many ways that may be positive and beneficial for corporations, but not so much for the general public. Media uses a variety of means such as advertisements, movies and music videos to convince its consumers and potential consumers in buying their products, or following their lifestyles. Majority of these means are dominated with portraying different views of women.

Whether it is a detergent ad, sports themed movie or a popular pop song, each and every source of media is focused on objectifying women. While watching your favorite television show, you may not pay attention to the advertisement in between, nor do you pay attention to the fact that most of them have women in it, nor the way that they are portrayed as. Since it is seen as a common thing, our minds are accustomed to this idea. Most women in today's media are viewed as sex objects, and most advertisements use this as a way to sell a product.

Magazines, television, and the Internet display this quite well by constantly portraying pencil thin models with impossibly long legs, perfect complexions, enhanced breasts, and incredibly thick locks (DeYoung & Crane). These women are then illustrated in sexually provocative poses for the purpose of selling something as ordinary as shoes. This may seem to be a harmless way of promoting a product, but these sexually provocative advertisements have had a grave effect on our society. Media completely changes the way we see women and how we describe beauty.

It has started to sell beauty; it creates an unattainable ideal woman, compelling other women to attempt to transform themselves into model

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look-alikes. Beautiful women do not have to be tall, skinny or should have long hair, but these images have created a category which define beauty, hence we have started to believe that as being the real definition. After all, it's been scientifically proven that extended exposure to media changes our brains and the way we think, with average media exposure for children shown to be around 10 hours per day there is a lot of brain changing going on (DeYoung & Crane). So we can only imagine the affect of all this on little girls, teens as well as older women. Many of which lack self-esteem and empowerment. They are struggling everyday to find ways to look and feel more confident and beautiful. To tackle this, Dove launched a marketing campaign in 2004, called “ the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty”. It included all sorts of media sources such as advertisements, video, workshops, sleepover events and much more.

The campaign featured women of diverse shapes and sizes. The central objective behind it was to celebrate differences in physical traits that represented all kinds of women: to inspire them so they can be confident and comfortable with themselves (Arruda, 2011). Firstly, the idea that Dove has is impeccable, the implementation and its source are not. Unilever owns Dove, which also owns Axe (male grooming products) amongst many other brands. Axe is a well-known brand, especially for its sexual commercials in which they objectify women and perpetuate unrealistic images of beauty.

They habitually feature young, longhaired, thin, and large breasted models that are usually throwing themselves at the male-models. If Dove truly believed in liberating women to broaden the conventional definition of beauty, it would end its affiliation with such companies. Even though, that

might be difficult as Unilever is a parent company, the least Dove can do is to address criticism it faces. The central point of this campaign is to liberate women and celebrate different types of beauty.

On the contrary, this campaign has been criticized to only show women that naturally have a small frame and all images that they show are manipulated. Not just faintly edited to remove pimples, but bodies are altered to fit the beauty norm. A 'heavy' woman may be included, but she has got to be the right kind of heavy, her image will be altered to remove freckles, lumps and bumps (Dye). In other words, "Campaign for Real Beauty" presents unreal bodies, which people can never attain.

Additionally, it has been said that to appear socially responsible and to gain more market share resulting in an increment in profits was the core reason of this campaign. Due to this, Dove brand itself is deceptive, as it is not fully committed to its core proposition of the campaign. We need to understand the power that media has on our societies. Objectification and degrading women has led to many consequences that include fatalities such as anorexia and bulimia. Many young girl and teens are self conscious about their appearance and weight.

Some have gone as far as going on a diet from as little as 13 years of age (The causes and the experience of eating disorders). To terminate this atrocity, the government needs to step in. We know that there are many campaigns against cigarettes and alcohol, if the government is able to spend money on such issues, we are certain they can take part in this. The government must control where/how diet pills and such products are sold. A

teenager of 15 years must not be able to walk into Walmart and pick up slimfast, on her way back home from school.

An awareness campaign to attack this must begin immediately; it could include seminars to help with self-esteem, spread educational handouts. Media can become an instrument of change and help awaken minds. Videos can be put on the Internet about empowering women, advertisements can show real life stories to inspire young women rather than dishearten. To conclude, we need to understand the great damage that media is causing on our society as a whole. It portrays women not as an equal but as an object to boost profits. This makes an irrational criterion about beauty in our minds, which corrupts the real definition.

Women make up half the population on this planet, and if they lack self-esteem and confidence we are not on a suitable path to success. The government must take action as it distresses not just our generation but our future as well.

Bibliography

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