

# How media defines femininity

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



How Media portrays Femininity Whenever we watch Television or consume any other media we get confronted with female stereotypes. Thus the media influences our view of the world and often even determine our view of the world. One particular example is the definition of femininity and portrayal of women in the media. So Whatever the role, televisions, films and popular magazines are full of images of women and girls who are typically white and desperately thin. The media portrays a very stereotypical view of women and femininity. Additionally the media dictates standards of beauty and fashion and therefore supports the large beauty- and fashion industry. However the stereotypes portrayed in the media are mainly the same. There are mainly four stereotypes of women portrayed in the media. The femme fatale is a women who usually uses all of her cunning and sexual attractiveness to gain her independence by flirting and charming other men. The femme fatale occurs in nearly every Hollywood production at one time or the other. The next stereotype is the supermom. The supermom is usually white, married, middle aged and has at least two children. She manages not only the household but the whole family and portrays an idealistic stereotype of a lovely and caring mother. Another typical female stereotype occurring all over the media is the sex kitten. The sex kitten is mostly a young woman who has thought to have a great sex appeal: However she differs from the femme fatale since she does not want to gain independence but rather want to have fun with the man. The sex kitten can be seen as a purely sexual object. The last stereotype of women just recently evolved. A golddigger woman is a woman who associates with or marries a rich man in order to get valuables from him through lifestyle, gifts, divorce settlement or getting to

pay the cab fares home. This creates an image of women exploiting man. However this stereotyping of women in media is problematic. It reduces a wide range of differences in people to simplistic categorizations, thus promoting a wrong view of women. The media also achieves to transform assumptions about particular groups of people into realities in the peoples mind. So why does the media portray women by stereotypes ? Simply to justify the position of those in power, naimly middle-aged white men. Additionally the media than can perpetuate social prejudices and inequalities. But even worse is the effect of those media portrayals of women on young women and teenagers, since they are bombarded and get indoctrinated with an completely unrealistic ideal of beauty created by the economic interest of the beauty and media companies. The problem is that a large majority of women are naturally larger and more mature than any of the models. So the media presents an ideal difficult to achieve to sell beauty products which is a multibillion dollar industry. The women's beauty and body image plays a very important role in media. Women – and their body parts – sell everything from food to cars. Therefore many people associate nice products with a nice woman. In the advertisement indutry sex still sells and is probably continue to sell. However through promoting the beauty of women in advertising the media again materialises and depersonalises woman. Another problem is that popular film and media actresses in general become younger, thaller and thinner and therefore act as wrong idols for many young girls. Thus one can say that media reflects an unrealistic ideal of beauty difficult to achieve to enrich theirselves. So one has to ask the question of who decides on how the women are portrayed in the mass

media. The powerful positions in media are all held by middle aged white men who have an economic interests behind the objectification and eroticization of females by the media. Women instead do not have positions of authority in media. For example only a small percentage of tv-news editors are female. The media also relies on men in the important fields of business, politics and economics. Women tend to cover minor and unimportant fields were they can not express their professional abilities. The inadequate coverage of woman and womans issues seems to be a global phenomenon. In 2000 the Association of Women Journalists (Association des femmes journalistes – AFJ) studied news coverage of women and women's issues in 70 countries. It reported that only 18 per cent of stories quote women, and that the number of women-related stories came to barely 10 per cent of total news coverage. Another sad by effect of the definition of females or femininity in media is that it seems that for positions in media beauty is more important than brain. This problem underlines the inequality of men and women. For women it is not enough to be smart or even the smartest. Instead it is even more important to look and appear beautiful. So one can conclude that the media defines femininity on purpose in order to enrich theirselves. By doing that the media limits and empowers women in our society by creating unrealistic and external visions of female beauty. Thus the media makes women becoming " dehumanised" objects. Additionally the media to a great extend influendes the social development of young women and at the same type dictates the definition of femininity in our society. And finally this shows us that the decision making power in media really matters.