

Is Advertising to Teenagers Ethical? Media's Influence on Body Image and Behavior

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
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ABSTRACT

An examination of the ethics involved in advertising to adolescents. Specifically, a content analysis and survey research was conducted dealing with how television commercials and magazine advertisements targeted towards males ultimately affect female body image and behavior. The content analysis consisted of Axe Body Spray advertisements, as well as Sports Illustrated: Swimsuit Edition. Findings of survey research include increased body monitoring as a result of exposure to advertisements. Implications and future opportunities are discussed.

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Introduction

Almost everyone in American society is exposed to various types of media on a daily basis. With the blessings of new technology being introduced at the speed of light as it seems to most, there are several issues that must be examined that come with it. Media Literacy and the impact media has on society has been my biggest area of study throughout my career at Bryant University. As a Communication major with a concentration in Psychology and Marketing as my minor, I am able to see all perspectives on media, specifically within the discipline of advertising. Through all three of these disciplines, I have been exposed to so many different types of content in terms of the effects of media, why they occur, and other issues surrounding the problems we identify. As most media technology is relatively new, media studies remains a growing field, and more research and information is presented on a daily basis. Additionally, I have always been interested in why advertisers use the images they ultimately produce to get their product messages across and, of course, at what expense this comes to potential consumers, whether they be intended or unintended by the marketing campaigns.

Furthermore, seeing so many of my peers and closest friends, especially females, have their own individual issues with body image and the different expectations they feel pressured to fulfill, and even worse, the number of healthy, beautiful and intelligent women that suffer from so many issues that are similar, has given me an incredible personal motivation to want to learn more about the details and issues that surround this topic. This is why I chose to investigate whether advertising to teenagers is ethical, focusing on media's influence on female adolescent body image and behavior for my Senior Honors Capstone.

LITERATURE REVIEW

American society relies heavier on media's influence than most other nations in the entire world. Not only do we turn to media sources for entertainment and news, but we constantly are learning from the media that is presented to us; as one of my favorite professors lectured in class, there is no television that is not educational. We learn every time we watch.

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While people of all sexes, genders, ages, shapes and sizes can be affected by media in their own individual ways, there are clear groups that are much more vulnerable to media effects from exposure than others. Teenagers and adolescents, the group aged 12-18, are considered one of the most vulnerable groups, as there is a lack of regulation protecting them from certain advertisements, and they remain a concern as any psychological damage incurred during this time period could potentially lead to resounding effects throughout adulthood. While many consider teenagers to be cognitively mature enough to process messages seen in advertisements in an accurate manner, a large amount of science implies the contrary. Teenagers' brains are not biologically developed to a point in which they can read and interpret messages correctly. In simpler terms, they are often unable to avoid some of the implicit or subliminal messages that are sent, and in some cases overlook the implied inaccuracy of explicit messages, which ultimately can have an astounding influence on their opinions and beliefs. According to a report published by the Society for Neuroscience,

“Cognitive control over high-risk behaviors is still maturing during adolescence, making teens more apt to engage in risky behaviors...with the brain's emotion-related areas and connections still maturing, adolescents may be more vulnerable to psychological disorders” (2012).

Because the frontal lobes, which are responsible for rational thought, are less active during this time, and the amygdala, a part of the temporal lobe responsible for self-control, judgment, and emotional regulation, is overactive, it creates a significant impairment for proper decision making and the ability to control their emotions, which are increased during this time due to hormone overproduction (ACT for Youth 2002).

While biological influences are certainly a huge factor, cultural influences also play a large role in increased media influence on teenagers. A person's culture identifies which practices will take place within their society, which societal norms are established, and of course, what customs will formulate how a person interprets him or herself (Hood 2003). According to the National Association of Social Workers, “there is an increased value placed on peer acceptance and approval, and a heightened attention to external influences and social messages about cultural norms” during the period of adolescence (2001). The significance of

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culture in a teen's life is its ability to give information about what society accepts and expects of them as an individual. With cultural influences having an impact upon teenagers as well as the biological development of the brain, self-control, judgment abilities, and control of emotions are all underdeveloped and the increase in the amount of emotions experienced, and search for identity and acceptance teens search for all combine to form extremely high impressionability levels for this demographic. Females are specifically challenged biologically by the different hormones they experience from males, in addition to the greater pressures they face from the media (APA 2012).

Forming identities amidst the combination of the cultural, social, familial, personal and biological factors can be extremely confusing for anyone, and as a result, it has become somewhat normative for adolescent females to not only develop habits of disordered eating or extreme dieting, but also fall victim to certain behaviors that are crucial to forming an identity through personal morals and values, such as when they choose to engage in sexual behaviors, whether to experiment with drug use, and the priorities they place on things such as appearance, grades, friends and family. Even more importantly, the impact of these behaviors can have a serious detrimental effect on a female's mental health, as many increase the likelihood of anxiety, depression, and eating disorders as mentioned above. According to the American Psychological Association, "sexual well-being is an important part of healthy development and overall well-being, yet evidence suggests that the sexualization of girls has negative consequences in terms of girls' ability to develop healthy sexuality" (2012).

Content Analysis and Further Review of Literature

While there will always be issues on some type of level found in all types of media content, regardless of the intent of the advertiser, company or consumer, historically, there have been clearly identifiable patterns that can be found throughout most advertisements. Content targeted towards female as well as male consumers have potential for negative effects upon both men and women. In most content targeted towards women, patterns of gender stereotyping emerge. As can be seen in Appendix A, Figures 1-3, three of the top rated female magazines all include aspects of gender stereotyping solely on the cover of the magazine (MC

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Marketing Charts 2010). Consistencies in all three covers include implications along the lines of being thin, fit, beautiful and pleasing men. Additionally, Women's Health, a magazine by the very title that's goal is to promote healthy behaviors in women ironically suggests the same things as the other top two magazines Seventeen and Cosmopolitan, with an added stereotype thrown in with the advertisement of recipes – cue stereotypical “women belong in the kitchen” jokes.

However, despite the negative gender stereotyping that occurs in content that targets female consumers, the patterns that have begun to emerge in content that is targeted towards males can be considered as much worse. Looking at three of the top rated magazines, Maxim, SI: Swimsuit edition, and Men's Health (covers seen in Appendix A, Figures 4-6), not only can we identify issues with gender stereotyping, but more importantly objectification, a much more concerning trend. Defined as viewing a human being as an object or instrument to fulfill the objectifier's task, a person who is objectified falls into features of instrumentality, loss of autonomy, inertness, interchangeability, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to body or appearance, and silencing (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2011). Sexual objectification takes the objectification a step further, and occurs with the fulfillment of a person's value only coming from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person being held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness, which is narrowly defined, with being sexy; a person being sexually objectified or made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seeing the individual as a person with ability for independent action, decision making and emotions; when sexuality is inappropriately imposed on a person (APA Sexualization of Girls 2005).

In both the Maxim cover, as well as SI: Swimsuit, women are shown in a very submissive, sexual manner. More alarming are the advertisements located within these magazines, many of which show women's body parts, specifically sexual ones, separated from their bodies as a whole. Often times, the image will not even include the woman's face or eyes. This brings the focus and message upon just the functions of the body parts being showed, separating the body from the person itself, sending the message that the two should be unrelated.

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Sexual objectification, somewhat of a sub-category into self-objectification, “occurs when women’s sexual parts or functions specifically are separated out from her person, reduced to status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (Freeman 2010). Sexualization usually occurs when an individual’s value is derived solely from their sex appeal or behaviors, excluded from any other characteristics. Recent research has found several links between sexualization and eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression – the three most common mental health disorders associated with females of all ages (American Psychological Association 2012). To make things worse, teenagers are simply not receiving the correct type of education regarding sexuality and sexual behavior.

“Studies show that teens received most of their information about sex from the media: magazines, TV, the Web, radio and movies. The underlying marketing message is that there is a link between physical beauty and sex appeal – and popularity success, and happiness” (Media Awareness Network 2010).

Because of this, many teens are more apt to put their trust into the types of people portrayed in the media – focusing solely on looks rather than actual qualifications such as trustworthiness, intelligence, and personality. As a result, “physical appearance is ...perhaps the most important basis of adolescent girls’ and young adult women’s self-worth (Impett, E., Hensen, J., Breines, J., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. 2011).

This disturbing trend is leading towards extremely destructive results: according to the objectification theory (seen in Figure 8 in Appendix A), the sexual objectification experiences that women are exposed to in these advertisements lead to self-objectification, which is when women monitor their bodies, paying attention to themselves as parts rather than people. The body surveillance or self-monitoring that occurs from this leads to greater body shame, anxiety, and a more unrealistic view of their own bodies. As a result, eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction have emerged as trends, all of which have been proven to also increase body shame, anxiety and unrealistic body views. The two columns at the right continue to bounce off each other to reinforce the negative body images developed. According to a study conducted by Auburn University,

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“A host of negative experiences have been associated with high trait self-objectification, including appearance anxiety, body shame, decreased intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, disordered eating, and depression. There is a direct link between viewing one's body as a “thing” to be evaluated (self-objectification) and disordered eating” (Kahumoku 2008).

Self-objectification is theorized as an emotional state as well as a personality trait (Harper, B. & Tiggemann, M., 2008). Furthermore, portrayals of women in advertisements and the media often create a form of self-objectification in females. In many advertisements, women are shown not only in the stereotypical light as discussed previously, but also in sexually submissive and demeaning positions that often appear “weak, childish, dependent, domestic, irrational, subordinate creatures, the producers of children and little else compared to men” (Kang 1991), and often seen as objects or creatures valued less than human for sexual use, pleasure or deviation.

Considering all of these factors, there have also been disturbing statistics that have emerged over the past decade worth noting. The average female model shown in American media is 5' 10", and 110 pounds, leaving a 6 inch and over 30 pound discrepancy between the model and the average American woman, who measures in at an average of 5' 6" and 144 pounds. The images women are being exposed to are so incredibly different from reality that it is creating overwhelming dissatisfaction levels among females, particularly adolescents. Between 50 and 88% of adolescent girls do not feel comfortable about their size, and over 49% know someone with an eating disorder. In addition, over 55% of girls in America show signs of disordered eating (University of Minnesota 2005). While most women in studies report that they do not believe explicit nor implicit marketing images defining beauty affect their own personal body image, several studies have proved otherwise. According to one published in 2006, results proved that exposure to idealized images of beauty actually influenced implicit attractiveness evaluations; both for self as well as others in the gender group, in addition to influencing behaviors as a result (Gurari, I., Hetts, J. J., & Strube, M. 2006).

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Several proponents of advertising claim that teenagers are not necessarily exposed to the type of advertisements that depict sexual imagery, among the most criticized of advertisements. However, both recent studies as well as knowledge of teenage culture prove that this statement holds little to no truth. Teenagers consume more media daily than any other age group, with an average of 11.8 hours of media content per day, 28 hours of television per week, and 20,000 television commercials per year (Kaiser Family Foundation 2010). In addition, teens have rated MTV, Comedy Central, and Adult Swim as the top channels that understand them the most among both male and female participants (Marketing Charts 2007). Other popular stations according to the study include ESPN, ABC and the CW.

There is no question that teenagers today feel the pressure to mature faster and stronger. The “closet kid” phenomenon, which describes even children monitoring their behaviors by only playing with age-appropriate toys in private, is an excellent example of the adultification of children and teens at an age where they are emotionally incapable to adequately process made-for-adult content. Magazines supposedly targeted towards teens are being read by tweens, the age right before children reach their teenage years, and therefore, these materials are no longer seen as appropriate for the intended audience. As a result, teenagers begin to seek maturity by accessing media that had originally been intended for adults. For example, the three television states rated highest had all been originally targeted for an audience over the age of 18 years old. MTV has recently changed its demographic to age 12 and older, to many parents' concern (NY Times 2011, Media Life Magazine 2012, Crain's New York 2011).

Other media proponents claim that many teens do not even have the capability of understanding the sexual innuendo they may be exposed to in media messages being consumed. However, the Kaiser Family Foundation found that in a focus group of children aged 8-12, the majority understood sexual content and innuendo displayed in a variety of video clips (Kaiser Family Foundation & Children Now 1996). While the young teens may be even physically incapable of performing any of the sexual acts,

“Bandura's observational learning theory suggests that children will not only learn the mechanics of sexual behavior, but the contexts, motives, and consequences portrayed.

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They will attend to and learn from models that are attractive, powerful, rewarded and similar to them. Children do not usually act immediately on what they learn from television; instead, they store such knowledge to be used when their own circumstances elicit it” (Huston 1998).

In addition to the gender stereotyping, sexual objectification and other adverse effects discussed earlier, television commercials can be just as bad – if not worse for teen exposure. An ad campaign that has received some of the most criticism for its portrayal of females is the Axe product line. Depicting an often nerdy male character surrounded by thin, beautiful, and always sex-crazed model or models is shown in nearly every advertisement released from the brand, usually making a promise that their body spray, body wash, hair product, or another product from their line will guarantee sex or at least “getting the girl.” Axe’s television commercial called “Billions,” which was launched in 2006, depicts a man fitting the typical nerdy description being devoured by billions of women, all of whom fit the thin and beautiful body ideal, that are scantily clad in bikinis, travel to great lengths to get to him, and even physically compete with one another to gain an advantage. The main message that is consistently sent by the ads is essentially saying “the more Axe product you use, the more gorgeous, thin, supermodel women will want to have sex with you” (Brookes, M. 2010). Simply looking at those messages, it is easy to devise how there are such huge problems with female relationships at the teenage level, and why teen girls feel as though they need to fit the thin beauty ideal in order to be attractive to a man. When the billions finally reach the main subject, he grins with a face of ecstasy, as if his every pleasure and desire was being fulfilled. This commercial was aired on MTV, back in 2006, when they claimed their target market was 18 and over. Although Axe Body Spray claimed that its target market was 18 years or older, the main consumers of the product were as young as 10-years-old (Brand Channel 2010).

“The commercials are based off the idea that the painstakingly sexy woman, a body image unattainable by the great majority of real women, is ultimately what men want. This man is not displayed as loving the woman that he is with, nor is he displayed as loving the average looking woman, he is not even displayed as loving only one

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woman, but rather he is depicted as sexually desiring many women who are throwing themselves at him because the “Axe Effect” (Brookes, M. 2010).

The same inappropriate levels of media exposure work for magazine content as well. Maxim, Sports Illustrated, and ESPN are among the top rated magazines that teenage boys are exposed to (Kaiser Family Foundation 2004, Center for Parent and Youth Understanding 2003). Axe has several print advertisements that contain sexual innuendo and usually objectify the woman to a sexual object who is yearning for a man to quench her one true request, which is all about pleasure, all of which can be seen by simply conducting a Google image search. One study that analyzed several advertisements found that 20.2% of 600 advertisements pulled from 8 different magazines used some form of sex appeal (Korn 2006). Even worse, almost 5% of the advertisements analyzed made at least one sex-related promise (Korn 2006).

Kate Upton, currently 20 years old was just made the cover girl of the Sports Illustrated Magazine's 2013 Swimsuit Edition, being her second consecutive year on the cover. Beginning her modeling career in her early teenage years, Kate most certainly does not fit the average teenage body type. Even more inappropriate are images still being used by separate advertising campaigns from when she was a teenager in bathing suit and lingerie-type fashion wear (Appendix A, Figure 7). Clearly drawing attention to her body and more specifically sexual parts, Upton is the definition of objectification of the female body. Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition objectifies women in that it literally puts them as objects of viewing pleasure inside a magazine built for men.

Some say that since Sports Illustrated is targeted towards older men, that the creators of the issue should not be responsible for any negative effects incurred by the viewing of the images. However, the Carl's Jr. /Hardee's Restaurant Chain does claim to target young teenage boys. And the head of their new campaign of so called “food porn” as critics have called it is none other than Kate Upton. Several of the advertising campaign leaders and executives of the chain have made statements such as “The first thing you have to do is get people to watch your ads. I guarantee you there will be a very small number of young guys fast-forwarding through this ad” (Thompson 2012), and that it is “always about giving young

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hungry guys what they want” (Forbes 2012). However, while a “pop-culture guru,” Barbara Lippert from the GSP ad agency commends Hardees for their ability to grab young sexy stars before they become entrenched in the media, she also admits that “when you’re constantly aiming at 14-year-old boys with stuff like this, you’re not helping 14-year-old girls with their self-images” (Horovitz, USA Today 2012).

Furthermore, there are several conflicting messages sent by these advertisements. Taking a look at the Kate Upton marketing a fast food restaurant makes it very clear that someone that looks like her can shove greasy, fattening bacon cheeseburgers into her mouth and stay thin and beautiful; a concept that we all know is inaccurate to say the least.

However, the conflicts go much deeper than the superficial level. One of the most controversial conflicts inside a corporation is the Dove versus Axe campaigns. Both brands are owned by the corporation giant Unilever, which aired a huge campaign by Dove named the “Campaign for Real Beauty,” which focused on American women of “normal” shapes and sizes, featured mini-films such as Dove Evolution and Onslaught, which bring light to the negatives of the beauty industry, and promote women to be self-confident in themselves. The campaign was a huge success, as the Evolution video won an award at the Sundance festival. Even the head marketers of the campaign truly believed that they were doing right because of the realistic images of women, the critique of the accepted media, and the dialogue surrounding the alternative definitions of beauty (Heiss, S. 2011). Taking a closer look however, there are a few major flaws with the campaign. First and foremost, it is almost too obvious that a marketing campaign that promotes self-acceptance and high self-confidence is responsible for selling products such as skin firming cream; as if to say you can be heavy, but you cannot have cellulite – or even the skin aids that help with wrinkles; you can grow old, but you better not look it. A bigger controversy arose when it was exposed that many of the models that were heading the campaign on billboards and print ads were actually photo-shopped and airbrushed – a challenge that the artist admitted to being difficult as he was required to make them stay normal, but somehow attractive.

Even worse were the comments recorded by Chicago Sun Times columnist Richard Roeper, who admitted “I find these Dove ads a little unsettling. If I want to see plump gals

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baring too much skin, I'll go to Taste of Chicago" (Pozner, Women in Media and News 2005), or Lucio Guerrero who wrote that "the only time I want to see a thigh that big is in a bucket with bread crumbs on it" (Pozner, Women in Media and News 2005). Unfortunately, this is the type of mentality that is overcoming American society, and making its way into the minds of teenage boys, which ultimately has a huge impact on how females view themselves.

At the same time, Unilever launched the "Bow-Chicka-Wow-Wow" and "Axe Effect" campaigns, two separate advertising sprees that focus on over-sexualized, thin, beautiful models whose only care in a world is pleasing and getting the man using their product. Their campaigns worked so well that their sales boomed, not for the originally intended 18 and over market, but for middle and high school aged boys. Their nerdy main characters shown getting the attractive females actually roped consumers in, which goes to show that it wasn't

"just another demonstration of the power of sex in advertising; it's also a fascinating example of just how deeply companies and marketers probe the depths of our inner psyches -- our hopes, dreams, and daydreams -- in the service of crafting the kinds of provocative, scandalously sexual, and smashingly successful campaigns that push the very limits of advertising as we know it. (The Atlantic, Lindstrom, M. 2011).

The relevance of how advertisements that target men and that are consumed by men could be pulled into question. If women aren't necessarily seeing all of the advertisements that are so destructive to females, then it is relevant to question why do they matter? However, "research has suggested that third-person perception about media images of female ideal bodies may create or strengthen young women's dissatisfaction with their bodies and their desire for a better body shape" (Chia, S., & Wen, N. 2009). In addition, teenage females are participating in behavior to further increase their attractiveness to men. In my experience during high school, girls often pretended to enjoy consuming sports media and crude humor to seem more desirable to the men.

However, because attractiveness is linked with higher popularity and better career prospects (Gurari, I., Hetts, J. J., & Strube, M. (2006), it is unlikely that advertisers will change the content of the view of their models. On the contrary however, recent studies have shown that "Average-size female fashion models are perceived by consumers as equally

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effective in advertisements as ultra-thin fashion models” (Diedrichs, P. C., & Lee, C. 2010). This issue calls into question why exactly do advertisers continue to promote sexuality and the feminine ideal of thin and extremely beautiful? While most claim that they do not want to bring in negative associations with their product by promoting them with average or unattractive models (Korn, D. 2006), it seems as though the sole reason is that beauty and sex sell – and the bottom line is all that matters to these companies.

METHODS

Participants

Ninety six participants were recruited for my personal research I conducted to gain more knowledge about how the issues discussed throughout the literature affect students. By using social media to recruit participants from a variety of locations, as well as three Bryant University Professors who requested volunteers from their classes, some of whom offered extra credit for compensation for completion of the survey. The average age of the participants was 20.57 and the ages ranged from 14 to 44. There were far more females that completed the study than males, with males comprising 26% of respondents (n=25) and females comprising 74% (n=70). The respondents were from a variety of geographical locations, listing several different schools such as Park Hill High School, UNC, Drexel University, and Oregon State University, but the majority of participants indicated they were students at Bryant University. Participants were asked other demographic questions, such as sexuality and class (freshman, sophomore, etc.), but given information already received, collected data on these two factors was disregarded.

Procedure and Design

The survey consisted of 76 items spread over 5 sections. Section 1 asked participants to define their own ideas of the perfect man, perfect woman, and who they would like to be and why in an open ended format in order to generate thoughts about body image and attractiveness among participants.

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Section 2 used a survey scale derived from previous research called the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3), which consisted of 30 questions based on a 5 point Likert-scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, and employed questions such as “I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty,” “I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars,” and “Magazine articles are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.””

Section 3 was composed of 5 Likert-scale questions in the same format as Section 2, and derived from a portion of the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS) from the literature. This section asked participants to respond to questions such as “At parties or other social events, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of others,” and “The best way for a person to know if they are overweight or underweight is to compare their figure to the figure of others.”

Section 4 was composed of a mix of Likert-scale questions, open-ended questions, and yes or no questions, all having to do with the participant’s views on his or her own sexuality, as well as what was acceptable sexual behaviors of others. This survey was developed by the researcher, and not derived from any of the literature. Questions included “My parents had “the sex talk” with me before or during high school,” “In high school I felt pressured to have sex by what I saw on television or the movies,” “In high school, where did you get most of your information about sex and other sexual behaviors?” and “I had sex/participated in sexual behaviors before I graduated high school.”

Finally, Section 5 was composed of mainly demographic and simple yes or no questions, requesting information about the participant’s age, height, weight, school, sex, and whether they were satisfied with their body, happy with the way they looked, if they had ever dieted or exercised to obtain a certain look, and if they or anyone they have known have suffered from an eating disorder.

As discussed, the survey was distributed through use of social media, specifically Twitter and Facebook, as well as through the encouragement of Bryant University Professors, some of whom offered extra credit for completion of the survey. The online survey resource Questionpro.com was used in both data collection and analysis. After accepting the

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Confidentiality Agreement located on the introduction to the survey, participants were able to fill out the questions, separated by each individual section. Survey completion took an average of 15 minutes, and the drop-out rate was 65.14%.

Experimental Manipulations

As this was an online distributed survey, there were no experimental manipulations completed.

RESULTS

Rather than positing specific research questions or hypotheses for this study, I chose to conduct more exploratory research to learn about how the college population may still be affected by media. With the results, most of the attention to the study was placed on percentages and averages found by the participants' feedback. However, I did run a select few linear regressions to see if there were statistically significant correlations between any of the variables.

Exploratory Data

Some of the most significant percentages derived from data collection include 57% of participants reporting that they were not satisfied with their body (n=x), 92% of participants reported that they had dieted or exercised to achieve a certain look (n=x), 74% reported that they or someone they know has an eating disorder or displayed signs of disordered eating (n=x), 85% reported that they compare their figure to others in social situations (n=x), and 83% reported that they compared their appearance to others in social situations (n=x).

Statistical Data

Due to the length and variability of the survey, only select variables were chosen for linear regression statistical analysis through SPSS (SPSS data charts can be seen in Appendix C, Figure 2). For the first analysis, Q10 ("I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to be thin") was placed as the dependent variable (DV), and Age, BMI, Sex, Satisfaction with Body (BODSATF), Happiness with Looks (LOOKHAP), Having Dieted or Exercised (DIETEXC),

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and having or Knowing Someone with an Eating Disorder (EATDISR) were the independent variables (IV). Results indicated that SEX, LOOKHAP, and DIETEXC were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), but AGE, BMI, BODYSATF and EATDISR were not ($p > 0.05$). As seen in the table, if a participant was female, unhappy with the way they looked, or had previously dieted or exercised, they were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they had felt pressure from TV or magazines to be thin.

The second analysis employed all of the same IVs as the first analysis, Age, BMI, Sex, BODSATF, LOOKHAP, DIETEXC, and EATDISR, and the DV was Q35 (“At parties or social events, I sometimes compare my figure to others”). For this analysis, the same three variables were found to be statistically significant as the first (SEX, LOOKHAP and DIETEXC ($p < 0.05$)).

Finally, through the analysis of several other variables, it is important to note that BMI was not found to be statistically significant in a correlation with any of the other variables. It is also important to note that this data is considered exploratory.

DISCUSSION

Findings

The statistically significant results found were consistent with the previous research conducted on the subject, and assisted in supporting the objectification theory framework, as seen in the Appendix, Figure 8. The fact that females who are unsatisfied with the way they looked and had previously tried diets and exercise to obtain a certain look, rather than for health reasons, all contributed to comparison to others' bodies and appearances goes hand in hand with the self-monitoring, which occurs in column two of the framework, to reinforce columns three and four. This reinforcement creates a cycle that teenage girls become stuck within.

Unfortunately, some of the percentages found in my study were not consistent with previous research conducted. For example, within the literature, it was discussed that two thirds of teen girls that had experimented with sex regretted it; however, in my study I found

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that of the female participants that reported having had sex before graduating high school, only 31% reported that they had regretted it. This could potentially be attributed to the non-randomized sample, with demographic qualities that are not representative of the overall population.

An additional area of concern was the responses to the question "I'm happy with the way I look," versus "I am satisfied with my body." For the first, results indicated that 57% were happy with the way they looked, but approximately 57% also reported they were not satisfied with their body. Further clarification of what "looks" entail may be an area to concentrate on in future research.

Overall however, the data percentages did give some support to the claims made in the literature. Most of the participants reported that they did compare themselves to others at certain times (Figure 3 in Appendix C).

Limitations

Due to the lack of time and other resources for this study, I have identified several limitations that should be addressed. First and probably most importantly, the survey sample was not representative of the population, nor was it the group that the ultimate focus for the project. By using social media and professors to promote the survey, participants were mostly Bryant University students that are currently enrolled in Communication and Marketing courses, or users of social media that follow the primary researcher, or accounts that shared the survey. As discussed previously in the methods, the average age of the participants was about 20 years old, and there was a wide range, as participants aged 14 to 44 participated. Because the main focus of the project was on adolescents, and the survey required mostly college-aged students to recall emotional states or cognitive thoughts from their high school experience, data may have been misrepresentative, or potentially inaccurate.

Another limitation identified after data collection were inconsistencies within the questions in the survey. One of the biggest issues discovered was with the yes or no question "I have or know someone who has suffered from an eating disorder or showed signs of disordered eating," located in Section 5 of the survey (Appendix B). As there is quite a large

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difference between an individual personally having an eating disorder and knowing someone who has one, there should have been a clearer separation of the two possibilities in order for more accurate analysis. Additionally, there was not anything in the survey that indicated the participant's amount of media consumption. As this study is focusing on the effects from media, it would have been interesting to analyze results from the differences in media consumption, and the potential differences in strength or variance of effects as a result. Another identifiable issue with the survey is the height and weight questions. They were used in order to calculate the participant's BMI, or Body Mass Index, which is a representative number of a person's healthiness generally used by the medical field. Using a formula, I manually calculated each participant's BMI based on their height and weight. The two issues with this were first, a person's height and weight may have significantly changed since they were in high school, and second, BMI is not always an accurate representation of a person's health. As body fat weighs much less than muscle, extremely fit or strong participants may have had higher, unhealthier appearing BMIs, when they may have been in excellent shape.

Lastly, using exploratory research always leaves room for lack of data. By looking at percentages rather than analysis, I was unable to calculate consistencies and relevance statistics for the survey questions, and therefore, the statistically relevant data found has potential for inaccuracy.

Future Research

For future research, I have several suggestions that I believe would make the data stronger and more reliable. First, addressing all limitations identified previously is crucial. By conducting the research several times, each data output and reflection may present new areas to improve upon.

Additionally, looking back at the survey, I believe it would be extremely beneficial to have two surveys available, differentiating between sexes – one survey would be distributed to males, and another to females. For the male directed survey, questions would focus mostly on expectations of females, and what they have seen or observed. For the female directed survey, it would have questions similar to the study conducted for this project, with

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corrections based on limitations and further research on previous survey scales that could potentially be incorporated.

As with most studies completed within the social sciences dealing with behavior and effects, it would be extremely beneficial for more research to be done on the topic in an experimental fashion.

CONCLUSIONS

The issues and trends discussed in the literature review are supported by the research conducted by myself and many others, and the negative effects from media will continue. More and more frequently does it seem young girls are negatively influenced and even young men are beginning to come forward and show increased statistics of negative body image and an increase in eating disorders (Elliott, R., & Elliott, C. 2005).

As discussed, despite proven research depicting the negative effects, many advertising companies continue to refute responsibility for any issues arising, as teenagers may not have been their intended target market. However, just because someone is not a targeted consumer does not mean that they are not consuming. Anyone who is exposed to these media messages is at risk for lower self-esteem, body image, and an increase in likelihood of mental health disorders, especially teenage girls. The fact remains that profit and revenue will be the driving factor for corporations, and as long as sex sells, they will continue to use it as a strategy in marketing their products and services.

My conclusion is more of a suggestion for advertising corporations: as research continues to be published on the adverse effects of their advertisements, they will begin to face more and more public scrutiny, possible government regulations or reintroduction of policies, both leading to a potential loss of revenue. In order to try to counteract many of these issues from happening, proper education on how to read media messages is crucial.

Seen in Appendix D is a Prezi style presentation on many of the topics I've discussed throughout the literature review and content analysis, explaining the issues with the media images and messages, and the effects they are causing. If an advertising corporation were to

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sponsor a similar presentation, distribute it to middle and high school health classes, and assist on educating students about potential issues, it would make a huge impact on the number of effects and strength that they would have; in an extremely positive way. Not only would it do a great public service, and avoid having to deal with lawyers and much stricter regulations in terms of what content they release, but it would be an excellent public relations campaign, suggesting that they do care about every one of their consumers. By doing so, corporations would reduce the scrutiny they face for the negative content, improve their public perception, and be able to counteract negative effects from their distributed media, while still being able to produce the images and make their bottom line.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Figure 1-2



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Figure 3



Figure 4-5



Is Advertising to Teenagers Ethical? Media's Influence on Body Image and Behavior
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Figure 6



Figure 7



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Figure 8

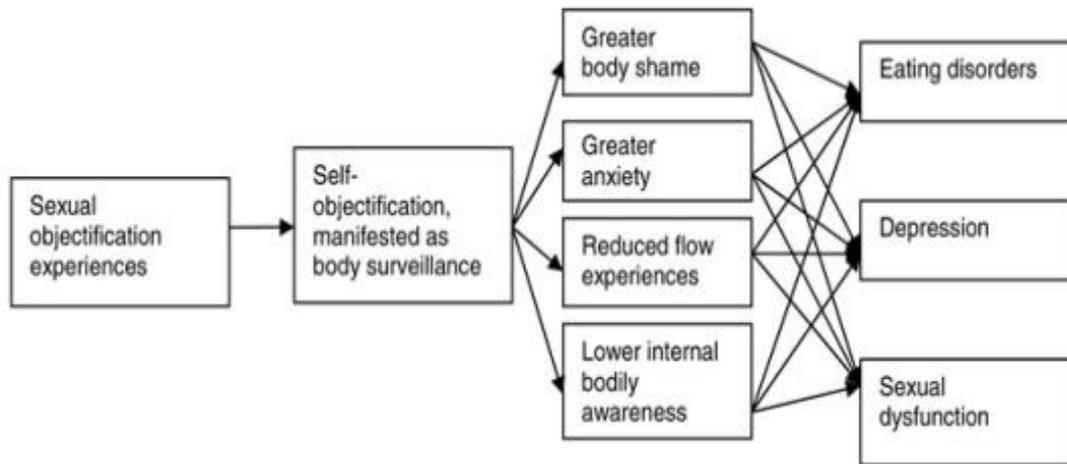


Fig. 1. Objectification theory framework.

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Appendix B

Section 1:

Please answer the following questions as an introduction to the questions you will be asked in this survey. Keep in mind that all responses will be kept confidential, and no content derived from the survey responses will be able to be traced to your identity. If you have any questions at any time during the process of completing the survey, please do not hesitate to request assistance from the research prompter.

1. Please explain your idea of the perfect woman.

2. Please explain your idea of the perfect man.

3. If you could look like anyone, name who it would be and why.

Section 2:

Please answer the following questions regarding your personal reactions to advertisements, doing your best to avoid any previous biases. Circle the number that best represents the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

2. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

3. I would like my body to look like the people who are on TV.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

4. I compare my body to the bodies of TV and movie stars.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

5. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

6. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

7. I would like my body to look like the models that appear in magazines.

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- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
8. I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
9. Music videos on TV are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
10. I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
11. I would like my body to look like the people who are in the movies.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
12. I compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
13. Magazine articles are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
14. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
15. I wish I looked like the models in music videos.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
16. I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in magazines.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
17. Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
18. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to diet.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
19. I wish I looked as athletic as the people in magazines.
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
20. I compare my body to that of people in “good shape.”
- | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
21. Pictures in magazines are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

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- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 22. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 23. I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 24. I compare my body to that of people who are athletic. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 25. Movies are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 26. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 27. I try to look like the people on TV. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 28. Movies stars an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 29. Famous people are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 30. I try to look like sports athletes. | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |

Section 3:

Please answer the following questions regarding your personal reactions to advertisements, doing your best to avoid any previous biases. Circle the number that best represents your own personal behavior.

- At parties or other social events, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of others.

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
-------	---	---	---	---	---	--------
- The best way for a person to know if they are overweight or underweight is to compare their figure to the figure of others.

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
-------	---	---	---	---	---	--------
- At parties or other social events, I compare how I am dressed to how other people are dressed.

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
-------	---	---	---	---	---	--------

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4. Comparing your "looks" to the "looks" of others is a bad way to determine if you are attractive or unattractive.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

5. In social situations, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Section 4:

Please answer the following questions regarding your personal views about sexual behavior and attitudes. Please keep in mind that ALL information derived from this form will remain confidential, and will not be linked to your identity in any way. Circle the number that most correctly relates to your personal views, and do your best to answer the short answers both accurately and thoroughly. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to request the prompter's assistance.

Sexual Information

1. I get most of my information about sex from television or the internet.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

2. My friends and I have talked about sex or sexual behavior before.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

3. I am comfortable about talking about sex.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

4. I have felt pressured to have sex by friends who have talked about it.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

5. I have felt pressured to have sex by a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

6. I feel very knowledgeable about sex and sexual behavior

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

7. My parents have had "the sex talk" with me.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

8. I have felt pressured to have sex by what I see on television or the movies.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Disagree

9. Where do you get the most of your information or knowledge about sex or sexual behavior?

Please explain the first time you can remember talking about or learning about sex.

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Please provide the following information about yourself. All responses will remain confidential. Please do your best to answer all answers accurately, due to the importance of the results for analysis purposes.

Age:

Height:

Weight:

Sex:

Male

Female

Grade:

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Are you satisfied with your body?

Yes

No

Are you happy with the way you look?

Yes

No

Have you ever dieted in order to obtain a desired body weight or image?

Yes

No

Do you know anyone who has or has had an eating disorder?

Yes

No

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Appendix C

Figure 1

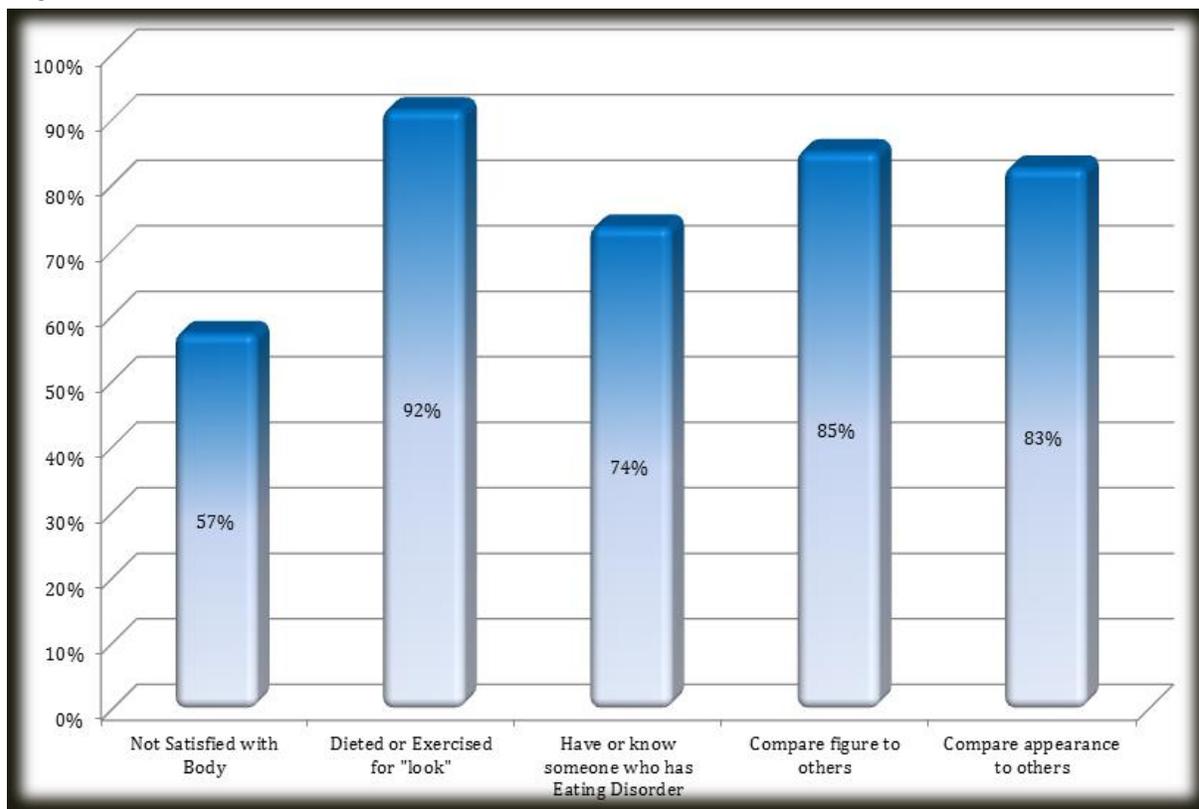


Figure 2

Coefficients^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	AGE	.020	.033	.118	.612	.543	.935	.074	.016	.019	52.268
	BMI	.029	.020	.204	1.459	.149	.934	.174	.039	.037	27.275
	SEX	1.484	.221	.741	6.728	.000	.967	.632	.180	.059	16.923
	BODSATF	-.271	.269	-.122	-	.317	.932	-.121	-.027	.049	20.441
	LOOKHAP	.820	.268	.342	3.056	.003	.937	.348	.082	.057	17.429
	DIETEXC	-.662	.322	-.211	-	.043	.884	-.242	-.055	.068	14.601
	EATDISR	-.266	.222	-.102	-	.235	.852	-.144	-.032	.098	10.173

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Coefficients^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	AGE	.020	.033	.118	.612	.543	.935	.074	.016	.019	52.268
	BMI	.029	.020	.204	1.459	.149	.934	.174	.039	.037	27.275
	SEX	1.484	.221	.741	6.728	.000	.967	.632	.180	.059	16.923
	BODSATF	-.271	.269	-.122	-	.317	.932	-.121	-.027	.049	20.441
	LOOKHAP	.820	.268	.342	3.056	.003	.937	.348	.082	.057	17.429
	DIETEXC	-.662	.322	-.211	-	.043	.884	-.242	-.055	.068	14.601
	EATDISR	-.266	.222	-.102	-	.235	.852	-.144	-.032	.098	10.173
					1.007						

a. Dependent Variable: Q10

b. Linear Regression through the Origin

ANOVA^{c,d}

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	903.693	7	129.099	189.578	.000 ^a
	Residual	46.307	68	.681		
	Total	950.000 ^b	75			

a. Predictors: EATDISR, LOOKHAP, SEX, DIETEXC, BMI, BODSATF, AGE

b. This total sum of squares is not corrected for the constant because the constant is zero for regression through the origin.

c. Dependent Variable: Q10

d. Linear Regression through the Origin

Model Summary^{c,d}

Model	R	R Square ^b	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.975 ^a	.951	.946	.825	.951	189.578	7	68	.000

a. Predictors: EATDISR, LOOKHAP, SEX, DIETEXC, BMI, BODSATF, AGE

b. For regression through the origin (the no-intercept model), R Square measures the proportion of the variability in the dependent variable about the origin explained by regression. This CANNOT be compared to R Square for models which include an intercept.

c. Dependent Variable: Q10

d. Linear Regression through the Origin

Variables Entered/Removed^{b,c}

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method

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1	EATDISR, LOOKHAP, SEX, DIETEXC, BMI, BODSATF, AGE	.	Enter
---	--	---	-------

- a. All requested variables entered.
b. Dependent Variable: Q10
c. Linear Regression through the Origin

Coefficients^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	SEX	-.043	.141	-.050	-3.03	.763	.937	-.040	-	.024	40.889
	Q10	.119	.065	.287	1.842	.071	.938	.235	.048	.028	35.628
	BMI	-.011	.016	-.188	-6.78	.500	.940	-.089	-	.009	113.114
	Q12	.040	.057	.097	.706	.483	.945	.092	.018	.036	27.617
	Q31	.160	.079	.433	2.026	.047	.957	.257	.053	.015	67.171
	Q32	.026	.038	.051	.668	.507	.856	.087	.017	.119	8.417
	Q33	-.193	.071	-.527	-	.008	.936	-.337	-	.018	54.856
	Q34	.021	.039	.051	2.725	.596	.927	.070	.014	.073	13.641
	Q35	.043	.082	.117	.521	.605	.954	.068	.014	.013	74.637
	AGE	-.032	.016	-.444	-	.049	.935	-.255	-	.014	71.517
	WEIGHT	.004	.003	.399	2.012	.174	.933	.178	.036	.008	123.527
	BODSATF	.508	.096	.544	5.280	.000	.968	.570	.138	.064	15.596
	DIETEXC	.204	.153	.152	1.333	.188	.919	.172	.035	.052	19.199
	EATDISR	.094	.104	.087	.906	.369	.876	.118	.024	.074	13.500

- a. Dependent Variable: LOOKHAP
b. Linear Regression through the Origin

Model Summary^{c,d}

Model	R	R Square ^b	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.980 ^a	.961	.951	.33204	.961	100.815	14	58	.000

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Model Summary^{c,d}

Model	R	R Square ^b	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.980 ^a	.961	.951	.33204	.961	100.815	14	58	.000

a. Predictors: EATDISR, Q10, Q32, Q34, BODSATF, DIETEXC, WEIGHT, Q12, SEX, Q31, Q33, AGE, Q35, BMI

b. For regression through the origin (the no-intercept model), R Square measures the proportion of the variability in the dependent variable about the origin explained by regression. This CANNOT be compared to R Square for models which include an intercept.

c. Dependent Variable: LOOKHAP

d. Linear Regression through the Origin

Model Summary^{c,d}

Model	R	R Square ^b	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.952 ^a	.907	.900	.42488	.907	121.307	7	87	.000

a. Predictors: DIETEXC, LOOKHAP, SEX, WEIGHT, BODSATF, AGE, BMI

b. For regression through the origin (the no-intercept model), R Square measures the proportion of the variability in the dependent variable about the origin explained by regression. This CANNOT be compared to R Square for models which include an intercept.

c. Dependent Variable: EATDISR

d. Linear Regression through the Origin

Coefficients^{a,b}

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	AGE	.047	.017	.730	2.741	.007	.944	.282	.090	.015	66.431
	WEIGHT	.003	.003	.308	.856	.395	.935	.091	.028	.008	121.701
	BMI	-.011	.017	-.203	-6.26	.533	.924	-.067	-	.010	98.754
									.020		
	SEX	-.135	.119	-.180	-	.259	.887	-.121	-	.042	23.623
					1.136				.037		
	BODSATF	-.083	.125	-.102	-6.65	.508	.885	-.071	-	.046	21.862
								.022			
	LOOKHAP	.066	.124	.074	.531	.597	.883	.057	.017	.055	18.266
	DIETEXC	.386	.150	.322	2.579	.012	.935	.266	.084	.068	14.628

a. Dependent Variable: EATDISR

b. Linear Regression through the Origin

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Figure 3

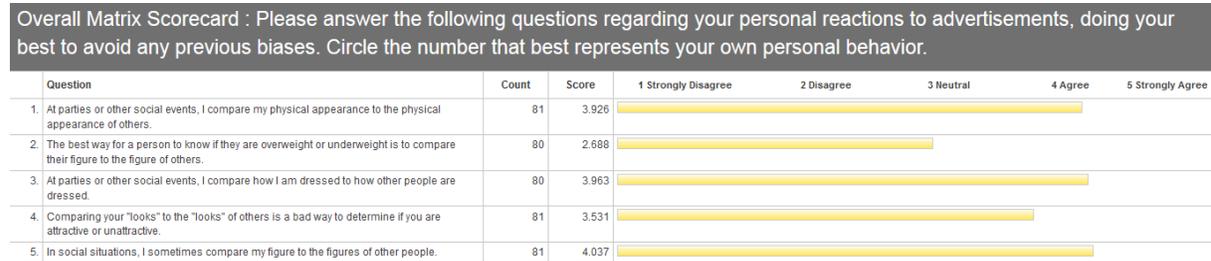


Figure 4

*See Raw Data attached in Excel File

Appendix D

*See Attached Prezi in PDF

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