THE ILLUSION OF PERFECTION: UNVEILING SOCIETY'S BEAUTY STANDARDS AND WOMEN'S SUBJUGATION TO THEM

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ABSTRACT

This research examines women's makeup practices as women are very conscious about their appearances. Women use cosmetic product to enhance their external appearances and make them feel gratified. The basic aim of this research is to discover makeup practices as well as how society constructs beauty standards and make women dependent on makeup. Furthermore it explores the factors that influence respondents' preferences for buying makeup products. Qualitative research methods involving in-depth interviews have been used to conduct this study with the aim of obtaining insights about the societal constructed beauty ideals that make women dependent on makeup. It is a data collection technique, in which small group of people are interviewed to get holistic perspective regarding any phenomena. The sample of the study consisted of 19 women, of age range between 18 – 40 years. This age was sketched to include the perceptions of young as well as middle aged females, In order to fulfil on the perimeter of these beauty standards women rely on buying makeup products which make them feel satisfied. This research was conducted in Dheri Hassan Abad Rawalpindi. The sample was collected through purposive sampling technique. The findings suggest that women feel the need to change their natural appearance just to conform to societal norms of having flawless skin with no imperfection at all. So women incorporate advertising discourse, not yielding to them or resisting them, but rather altering them to suit their needs in using makeup products for constructing confidence and preparing themselves for engagement in the society. This research will help policy makers to deeply understand how our media play a crucial role in shaping makeup culture and feminine beauty ideals in a way that women feel dissatisfied with their natural beauty and how this dissatisfaction regarding women makes the advertisers sell their cosmetic products successfully.

Keywords: Beauty Ideals, Societal Standards, Social Constructs, Beauty Industry, Cosmetics.

INTRODUCTION

There are many different types of media available all around the world. The most powerful way to spread images that symbolize socio-cultural ideals is through the mass media. Society's ideal of beauty and attractiveness is one of the most influential ideals spread by media (Waheed, 2019) .The media has an impact on many dimensions of human existence because it constantly portrays unrealistic and unachievable images of feminine beauty (Swadia, 2018).

Makeup is the use of cosmetic products to enhance or modify one's appearance, either aesthetically or to hide imperfections. The images portrayed on different sites of media are unreal and idealized. With constantly portraying ideal beauty and body image comparison through media, the decision of beauty choices of women are globally affected. Women wear makeup in order to fit in beauty ideals set by the society (Henriques, 2020).

According to Schildkrout (2001), body art is not just the newest trend; it has a very long history. From an anthropologist's view humans use art to communicate powerful messages. There are some hidden symbolic meanings in art and every culture has their own art. There is no culture where individuals do not paint, pierce, tattoo, sculpt, or

simply adorn their bodies. Fashion trends come and go, and different types of body art are popular and individuals from different cultures do something to improve their look.

The concept of beauty differs from one culture to the next. Every culture has its own set of beauty standards. The term "beautiful body" is frequently used to describe a healthy body with non-threatening facial expressions. However, this does not imply that all cultures interpret beauty in the same manner. Anthropologists claim that people's perceptions of what a healthy person should look like differ between cultures. Some people believe that being overweight is a sign of health and prosperity, while others believe the reverse.

According to Liebelt (2016), a global beauty business has emerged in recent years, with implications for people's body views, beauty standards, and beauty practices across cultures. The anthropological perspective shifts the focus away from the question of the driving forces of beautification and aesthetic body modification to study the practices and meanings of beauty as they are embedded in everyday life, as well as the circumstances that have given rise to particular beauty cultures historically. Aesthetic bodily changes, according to anthropologists, must be understood in their social and cultural settings, not as individual decisions, but as significant within certain groups of friends, workplaces, or metropolitan neighbourhoods. This is not to say that beautification and bodily adornment are something new or that anthropologists have come rather late to the study of what seems to be a recent phenomenon. Media clearly informs everyday practice. Through the media we become aware of new trends and fashion. Media also aware us from the ideals and images that are dominant in the fashion beauty industry. Thus, the definition of a skin as 'black' or 'white' is socially constructed and continues to mean different things in different places. In some cultures black is a sign of beauty while in other white is a sign of beauty. This research shows how society sets standards for individuals and how these standards are shaping our society. Nowadays, makeup is indulging in our everyday life in a way that we cannot think of going out without having a little touch up.

Review of Literature

In a variety of situations, women's ability to apply cosmetics to conceal or enhance certain facial traits may help them achieve favourable results. In professional settings, cosmetics may be used to positively influence women's perceived leadership abilities while applying for employment and to generate positive workplace impressions. Wearing more cosmetics can help women manage their social relationships and subjective well-being by increasing views of their competence and warmth (Kellie et al., n.d).

Cosmetic items have been used for a long time to help out females to feel confidence and seem more beautiful. The practice of self-improvement stretches back to at least 1500 B.C. From ancient Egypt and Arabia came the tradition of enhancing the shape of eyes with various shapes and the use of *kohl* to deepen brows and eyelashes. For religious reasons, the Egyptians believed greatly in the use of cosmetics. They only used cosmetics to make themselves seem pretty, but they believed that by wearing a lot of makeup around their eyes might keep off bad spirits. The Egyptians used these cosmetics for spiritual purposes, but the Greeks just used makeup for the sake of appearance. Cosmetic businesses have produced a variety of new goods and established more business by the late 1800s and early 1900s. Despite the fact that cosmetics had been developing for millennia, it was still essentially used by particularly erudite buyers. The cosmetic business began to provide a wider range of products and color options in the 1970s. Women no longer wore a single style, and applying cosmetics became a form of self-expression. As fashion developed over the following thirty years, cosmetics continued to improve. Makeup became an essential item that many women used and continued to use on a daily basis in order to keep their appearance look presentable. In 2007, the cosmetics business took in $209.9 billion, according to current data. Makeup has had many varied meanings throughout history, including designating spirituality and even social status. One thing has been constant throughout history is the belief that wearing cosmetics makes one seem more attractive. This study is critical in understanding whether or not this idea has really an influence on how women judge themselves. Understanding that cosmetics increase attractiveness is not something new but understanding if it has an effect on a woman's perception of herself is something new. A deeper

knowledge of the affiliation between product usage and self-perception may be established via the collection of data. This will lead to a better knowledge of understanding woman's intention for purchasing cosmetics, especially on such a personal level, as well as a better comprehension of makeup product usage and purchase patterns (Silverio, 2010). According Scott (n.d), the media influences rather than reflects social perceptions of women's bodies. Women's body image satisfaction is also impacted by their acquaintance with the slim ideal presented in fashion magazines, according to the researchers. More often the photos these women are viewing have been computer-edited, with models blended and layered with cosmetics and hide all the imperfection. The Pakistani makeup industry has been breaking barriers and the days are not far when the local brands will be appreciated widely due to their quality and cost-effectiveness. Women in urban Pakistan have long enjoyed access to the care of beauticians and stylists. Expensive facials and mani-pedis for men are now becoming more common. Pakistani men are getting increasingly metrosexual.Males in Pakistan are now more concerned with skincare, opting for blackhead removal, acne treatments, and even they wear makeup before important events such as weddings. This all happened due to the internet and the age of satellites and TVs. Men are increasingly getting conscious about their skin and now consider facial an essential thing to do. Previously, it was uncommon, but today grooming themselves is common among men ("Nails are buffed," 2018).

People in Pakistan are similarly preoccupied with having pale skin. Women's complexions are clearly divided into two categories: "fair" and "dark." Racism has a long history on the subcontinent, having deep roots interlace with caste and colonialism. The majority of women in our culture focus on their color and body image. They are more concerned with their beauty than with their academic performance. In influencing young girls, the media and marketers play a huge role by persuading prominent female media celebrities to support their fairness businesses. The majority of these beauty advertisements are intended to persuade women that having a fairer complexion is linked to happiness, prosperity, and romance (Albani, 2005).

Methodology

This chapter incorporates the methods that were used to carry out research in order to include all the necessary details regarding the phenomena under discussion. Purposive sampling technique was used to get insight about the daily lives of particular women to explore their perceptions regarding the use of makeup. Purposive sampling technique is a non random sampling technique which simply lets the researcher decide what kind of information he wants to acquire. Hence identifying the people who are willing to provide information relevant to the topic of the study (Bernard, 2002). This research was conducted in Dheri Hassan Abad Rawalpindi. The sample of the study consisted of 19 women, of age range between 18-40 years. This age range was sketched to include the perceptions of young as well as middle aged females. These females also belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds, also were working as well not working. In Depth interviews were conducted from women. It is a data collection technique, in which small groups of people are interviewed to get holistic perspectives regarding any phenomena. In current study the method of in-depth interviews was used to get detailed and in-depth insight of the dependency of women on makeup products.

Result and Discussion

This section aims to discuss the makeup culture regarding feminine beauty ideals. It compromises the themes regarding the dependency of makeup products among women. It further incorporates their perception and views regarding excessive use of makeup products due to fit in societal standards. The literature and the supporting articles are discussed in the findings. So the following factors have been explored according to the current research. The respondents feel that society constructs beauty ideals and make women dependent on makeup in order to fit in societal standards. People might acquire a poor body image for a variety of reasons. It can develop as a result of a stressful incident. Perhaps family members or close acquaintances make fun of their skin color, making them self-conscious about their looks. Other times, these problems arise as a result of media. Women who are slim or in shape are frequently featured in magazines, on television, and on social media. Young females begin to believe that this is the way they should seem. They don't realize that media employs editing techniques to make

models and actresses appear perfect. The negative impact of social media on women is exacerbated by the fact that there are too many opinions on what a woman's body should look like, many of which are divisive, leading females to believe that the only thing that matters about them is their appearance and that they are not worth much unless they have a "perfect body."

The findings suggest that women feel the need to change their natural appearance just to conform to societal norms of having flawless skin with no imperfection at all. So women incorporate advertising discourse, not yielding to them or resisting them, but rather altering them to suit their needs in using makeup products for constructing confidence and preparing themselves for engagement in the society.

Humans are unique the way they are. Everyone has their own identity and set of features that make them beautiful. But due to our societal standards, every woman is struggling to have fair skin tone. Women in our society wear makeup to enhance their features and make them look fair. They don't realize that media employs editing techniques to make models and actresses appear perfect.

Conclusion

This work is done in Dheri Hassan Abad Rawalpindi. There are basically two findings. Firstly society places unrealistic expectations on women by promoting the myth that all women should be beautiful and free of flaws. As a result, many women feel compelled to alter their natural looks in order to comply with society expectations. Secondly media play a crucial role in shaping makeup culture and feminine beauty ideals in a way that women feel dissatisfied with their natural beauty and this dissatisfaction regarding women makes the advertisers sell their cosmetic products successfully.

Recommendation

- In the digital era, media is the biggest platform of knowledge and information. All people are somehow connected through the media. Media programs promote fair complexion as a beauty ideal and as many people are following media so media should be responsible enough to not promote such content in which fair complexion is shown as a beauty standard.
- Demoralize such advertisements which promotes beauty ideals based on specific physical attributes.

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