

The Ever-Evolving Beauty Standards

Introduction

Beauty standards have been a subject of discourse for a prolonged period, significantly impacting the societal outlook toward physical appeal and affecting diverse aspects of culture. The evolution of beauty standards, ranging from skin bleaching/whitening in Asian and African countries to portraying beauty in art and objectifying women's bodies in media and advertising, has had a significant and enduring influence on our daily existence (Benn et al., 2016). The present article examines diverse aspects of beauty standards, elucidating their historical backdrop and ramifications for modern-day society.

The influence of beauty standards on individuals is noteworthy, as it encompasses diverse practices such as skin lightening, the depiction of beauty in art, and the commodification of women's bodies in media and advertising (Iftekhhar & Zhitny, 2020). Understanding the historical context and consequences of beauty standards is crucial to address and modify the restricted notions of beauty that persist in present-day society (Benn et al., 2016). By adopting a culture that values inclusivity and diversity and providing individuals with the agency to establish their own standards of beauty, it is possible to foster a more equitable and tolerant society.

Skin Bleaching/Whitening in Asian and African Countries

Beauty standards have held a prominent position throughout various cultures, frequently imposing a sense of obligation upon individuals to adhere to a specific aesthetic norm. Skin bleaching, or skin whitening, is a contentious practice that seeks to diminish the appearance of dark skin areas or attain a lighter skin complexion (Skin Lightening, n.d.). The practice of skin lightening has historical roots in ancient civilizations; however, its significance and influence have become increasingly prominent in contemporary Asian and African societies (Iftekhar & Zhitny, 2020). The present article explores the historical background of skin bleaching, its contemporary status, and its associated impacts, illuminating the intricacies underlying beauty ideals.

History

The historical practice of skin lightening, traced back to ancient civilizations, is multifaceted and intricate. Numerous techniques were utilized by ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks, to attain a lighter complexion. In ancient Egypt, there was a significant emphasis on beauty and aesthetics, with fair skin closely linked to notions of royalty and social standing. The ancient Egyptians employed diverse natural substances such as honey and olive oil for skin lightening. The aforementioned components were purported to possess properties that could lighten the skin and were incorporated into their customary beauty practices.

Likewise, in antiquity, both Rome and Greece regarded fair complexion as a representation of aesthetic appeal and elevated societal status (Iftekhar & Zhitny, 2020). Individuals would employ a combination of white lead, chalk, and flour to produce a brightening outcome on their epidermis. The aforementioned compounds were administered through dermal application and frequently amalgamated with various oils or constituents to produce a paste-like texture.

Skin whitening gained considerable popularity during the 19th century, particularly among white women in the United States. During this period, there existed a yearning to imitate the aesthetic norms of European women, who were renowned for possessing light skin tones. In the United States, Caucasian females have increasingly embraced methods and commodities to achieve skin lightening, thereby conforming to the dominant standards of physical attractiveness.

As early as the 1920s, there was evidence of a propensity for lighter skin in Ghana. Historical records show a correlation between a fairer complexion, elevated socioeconomic status, and aristocratic lineage (Iftekhar & Zhitny, 2020). The rationale for this correlation can be ascribed to the notion that those involved in physically demanding occupations, such as agriculture or outdoor labor, had greater exposure to sunlight, resulting in a natural darkening of their skin. Hence, individuals with lighter skin were regarded as a representation of a higher social status and financial prosperity, as it implied that they possessed the resources to evade arduous physical work (Skin Lightening, n.d.). Hence, to attain a lighter complexion, individuals employed

surface-level and chemical means, such as the application of white powder and Venetian ceruse by men and women, respectively.

Today

The prevalence of skin bleaching in Asian and African countries is a concerning phenomenon that reflects the pervasive influence of beauty standards in these regions. The statistics surrounding skin-whitening products in these countries paint a stark picture of the extent to which individuals feel compelled to alter their natural skin tone.

In African nations, the usage rates of skin whitening products among women range from 25% to a staggering 80%. This wide range highlights the varying degrees to which skin bleaching has become normalized in different countries. The reasons behind this widespread practice are complex and multifaceted (Cnn, 2022). Historical factors, cultural influences, media representations, and societal pressures perpetuate skin bleaching as a beauty ideal.

Asian countries also exhibit a significant demand for skin-lightening practices, with approximately 40% of women engaging in such practices. India, in particular, stands out as a market where skin whitening is highly sought after. Over half of the skincare products sold in the country are intended for skin whitening purposes. The pursuit of fair skin in India is deeply rooted in historical and cultural factors (AoC Media Company, 2020). The association of fair skin with beauty, social status, and marriage prospects has been perpetuated through generations. This societal pressure and the belief that fair skin is more desirable contribute to the sustained demand for skin whitening products.

The global market for skin whitening was estimated to be worth \$8 billion in 2020, indicating the scale of the industry. The market is projected to experience substantial growth in the coming years. Asia's skin whitening market alone is valued at 13 billion. Despite evolving cultural and conversational landscapes surrounding skin color and beauty standards, the production and sale of skin-whitening products have continued to thrive (Cnn, 2022).

Effects of Skin Bleaching

Skin-lightening products are formulated to impede melanin production in the skin cells. The interventions impede the synthesis of the enzyme tyrosinase, which is responsible for catalyzing the biosynthesis of melanin's constituent amino acids. Hypopigmentation occurs when the natural process of melanogenesis fails to replace the sloughed skin cells, leading to decreased melanin production and consequent skin lightening (Dermatology & Dermatology, 2021).

Skin bleaching has been linked to a range of documented negative health outcomes, including dermatitis and exogenous ochronosis, characterized by a loss of skin elasticity and blue-black pigmentation. Skin bleaching has been associated with several adverse effects, such as hypertension, fatigue, photosensitivity, paresthesia, neurological manifestations (tremors,

cognitive impairment, and mood changes), nephropathy, pulmonary toxicity, and increased susceptibility to skin malignancies (Benn et al., 2016). In the event of an unfavorable outcome, skin bleaching may heighten the likelihood of mercury toxicity. Certain skin lightening creams may contain mercury, a toxic substance scientifically linked to adverse health effects such as kidney and lung damage when used over an extended period. Unmonitored skin-lightening procedures may comprise perilously elevated levels of hydroquinone and topical corticosteroids (Dermatology & Dermatology, 2021). The concurrent application of these two compounds results in the cessation of melanin biosynthesis in the skin. Melanin is the biological pigment responsible for determining the coloration of the skin. Prolonged usage of these concentrated preparations can result in persistent skin pigmentation, commonly characterized by the appearance of gray, blue, and purple spots. The presence of mercury in the majority of skin-lightening products is responsible for this adverse outcome (Benn et al., 2016).

According to the World Health Organization, a majority of skin products in India, approximately 61%, are targeted toward skin lightening. Furthermore, a study by the International Journal of Pharmacy & Technology revealed that nearly half of the 23 skin fairness creams tested in India contain steroids (Liu, 2018). The World Health Organization says mercury in skin-lightening products can lead to decreased immunity against bacterial and fungal infections, liver impairment, and psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, or psychosis. The EU and Korea have prohibited using these particular ingredients in cosmetic products, whereas the US has not implemented such a ban (Benn et al., 2016).

Negrophilia and Exoticism in Art

Beauty standards have significantly impacted the perception of oneself and others over time. The art world has adhered to these norms, wherein artists have frequently been attracted to cultures categorized as exotic or primitive (Eparrino, 2023). During the 1920s, a cultural trend called Negrophilia surfaced, encapsulating the fervor for African American culture among innovative artists and unconventional individuals in Paris. Negrophilia, initially perceived as a novel substitute for bourgeois values, eventually led to the dehumanization, sexualization, and marginalization of Black individuals (Harrison, 2000). The present article provides an in-depth analysis of the historical backdrop, prominent artists associated with the subject matter, the current manifestation of these phenomena, and the implications of Negrophilia and exoticism in the realm of art, with a particular emphasis on the objectification of women of color.

The Artist

Negrophilia emerged in the early 20th century due to artists' captivation with African art, music, and dance. In this era, notable personalities, including Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Jean Cocteau, were enamored by the liveliness and distinctiveness attributed to Black culture (Archer, n.d.). The individuals perceived it as a revitalizing departure from the commonplace bourgeois principles that held sway over their community.

The artists who participated in Negrophilia were attracted to the expressive qualities of African art, which are distinguished by their bold shapes, rhythmic patterns, and spiritual symbolism. The African sculptures piqued their interest due to their portrayal of vitality and freedom, which are absent in Western art's conventional customs. The artists drew inspiration from the abstract and stylized depictions of the human form in African sculptures, which diverged from the realistic and classical standards that were dominant in Western art during that period.

As artists started to mimic the beauty of African sculpture on the physical features of Black people, the interest in African art became problematic (Eparrino, 2023). The result was the creation of fetishized and encoded visual representations that were both fashionable and disparaging. Black people were objectified, exoticized, stripped of their humanity, and made into little more than symbols of the avant-garde imagination.

It is important to highlight that Negrophilia did not only exist in the artistic arts. The influence of Black culture might also be felt in dance and music. Jazz was accepted as a dynamic and avant-garde musical genre during this time by the Parisian avant-garde scene (Harrison, 2000). Black performers of the time, including Josephine Baker, achieved iconic status by personifying the spirit of liberation and rebellion that suited the time's bohemian sensibility (Archer, n.d.).

Although Negrophilia was initially perceived as a deviation from the strict conventions of bourgeois society, its outcomes were not emancipatory. Applying African aesthetics to the Black body led to the objectification of Black individuals, reducing them to mere subjects of

fascination and desire. Objectifying individuals sustain detrimental societal beliefs and strengthens the hierarchical structures of colonialism and white supremacy.

The Contemporary Existence of Negrophilia

Negrophilia may not be as pervasive today as it was in the 1920s, but traces of it can still be seen in various modern art and media forms (Loft, 2020). Harmful stereotypes and the marginalization of Black people are continued through the fetishization and selective exploitation of Black physical characteristics, hairstyles, clothing preferences, and cultural traditions in some contexts.

Negrophilia is quite evident in modern culture, especially in visual art and advertising. Black women's hypersexualized bodies continue to be troubling, contributing to their continued commodification and dehumanization. Advertising frequently uses sexualized images of Black women to highlight items or pique the public's curiosity (Loft, 2020). This practice perpetuates the harmful trend of objectifying Black women and strengthens ingrained prejudices about their presumed sexual orientation.

Moreover, the fashion industry has faced criticism for contributing to the perpetuation of Negrophilia. The recurrent issue of predominantly white designers and models appropriating Black hairstyles and fashion choices has been observed (Eparrino, 2023). The contemporary manifestation of Negrophilia is observable within the entertainment industry. Black performers frequently encounter limitations in their roles, which tend to reinforce racial stereotypes or involve characters that are excessively sexualized (Archer, n.d.). The imposition of such limitations curtails the artistic scope of Black individuals and perpetuates detrimental narratives about them, thereby exacerbating their marginalization within the media milieu. Aside from visual media, music, and dance have also experienced the perpetuation of Negrophilic inclinations. The longstanding issue of predominantly white artists appropriating Black music genres, such as hip-hop and R&B, has been a concern.

Consequences of Negrophilia in Art

The effects of Negrophilia and the commodification of Black culture have significantly affected how Black people are portrayed in media and the arts. Artists have unintentionally contributed to the process of racial "othering," which reduces Black people to mere objects of fascination and desire, by objectifying and sexualizing cultures that are frequently described as "primitive" or "exotic." The effects of these results have been profound, maintaining prejudiced stereotypes and enhancing existing power imbalances (Loft, 2020).

One notable effect of negrophilia in art is the perpetuation of racist stereotypes. Fetishizing and exoticizing Black culture typically means flattening and oversimplifying complex and diverse societies into simplistic representations. Harmful generalizations may be perpetuated by simplifying and categorizing complicated identities and experiences (Eparrino, 2023). This may

portray Black people as too sexual, primitive, or inherently different from the predominating social norms. The persistence of stereotypes contributes to the marginalization and discrimination of people who identify as Black in society and affects the perspective of such people (Harrison, 2000).

Moreover, portraying Black culture in art as objects and sexualized entities perpetuates pre-existing power differentials (Loft, 2020). The act of "othering" Black individuals by positioning them as objects of fascination and desire depict them as exotic or "other," distinct from the prevailing culture. This phenomenon reinforces a hierarchical structure in which the dominant culture maintains control over the perspective and the ability to establish and depict the "other" culture as exotic (Eparrino, 2023). As a result, individuals of Black ethnicity are subjected to marginalization and a lack of autonomy, as their accounts and encounters are frequently interpreted through the perspective of the prevailing culture.

Women of Color and the Hypersexualization of Dark Skin

The over-sexualization of women of color who have dark skin has reaffirmed harmful stereotypes and oppressive power structures. The false belief that Black women's appearance possesses an innate sense of exoticism and attractiveness dates back to many historical periods, which has led to the sexual objectification of Black women's physical traits, particularly their dark complexion (Eparrino, 2023).

Concern has been raised about how Black women are portrayed as nude in art. In times of enslavement and colonization, the images were frequently used to strengthen exaggerated sexualized portrayals initially used to defend organized sexual assault and mistreatment of African American women. Black women were dehumanized by being portrayed as objects of desire, strengthening ideas of control and white superiority (Archer, n.d.).

The objectification and exploitation of women of color based on their dark skin can be attributed to a long historical background of sexualization. In the historical epoch of slavery, Black women were frequently objectified and dehumanized, being appraised primarily for their physical characteristics rather than their intrinsic worth. The bodies of Black women were objectified to satisfy and provide to others, thereby reinforcing the belief that their physical attributes exclusively determine their value (Loft, 2020).

The portrayal of Black women as dehumanized entities persisted even after the abolition of slavery. The ramifications of this phenomenon of excessive sexualization have had a significant impact, transcending the confines of the artistic domain. Black women have been the target of racialized objectification, whereby they are subjected to stereotypes that portray them as lacking in morality, overly sexual, and promiscuous. The impact of detrimental stereotypes has contributed to the formation of societal perspectives and behaviors that have led to the exclusion and oppression of Black women across multiple domains (Eparrino, 2023).

The persistent hypersexualization of women of color remains prevalent in contemporary times, albeit potentially exhibiting more nuanced manifestations (Archer, n.d.). The media and popular culture continue to exhibit a penchant for depicting women of color as alluring and exotic, reinforcing detrimental beauty ideals prioritizing Eurocentric characteristics, and perpetuating racial prejudices (Loft, 2020). The continued use and promotion of sexualized imagery have the effect of not only marginalizing women of Black ethnicity but also diminishing their individuality and ability to act independently.

Beauty Standards and Olympia's Influence on Women's Nude Portrayal in Art

The discourse surrounding beauty standards has persisted for centuries, with Édouard Manet's "Olympia" being a contentious piece of art that subverted conventional beauty ideals. The artwork portrays a reclining nude female figure named Olympia, accompanied by a maid presenting her with a bouquet (Stockwell, 2019). The nudity of Olympia is accentuated by her direct gaze toward the viewer, which subverts the conventional male gaze. The artwork in question generated a significant controversy upon its initial display at the Paris Salon in 1865, and it persists in captivating audiences with its provocative depiction of the subject's aggressive stare and explicit sensuality.

The Historical Depiction Of Female Nudity In Art

The representation of the human anatomy has long served as a muse for artistic expression, with the conventions governing its depiction exhibiting a convoluted trajectory that has undergone various transformations across distinct artistic periods. In the context of ancient Greek art, the depiction of nudity was deemed socially acceptable, albeit exclusively in the representation of the male physique. In contrast, exposure to female nudity was considered demeaning (Artincontext, 2022). In ancient Greek culture, nude statues and sculptures of men were commonly utilized as representations of dominance and magnificence in various settings such as households and temples. However, depictions of unclothed women were primarily limited to portrayals of individuals engaged in prostitution or as subjects of violent acts within artistic works. The advent of the Impressionist Movement in the early 19th century marked a turning point in the cultural acceptance of explicit female nudity in art (Callerame, 2022).

Olympia's Impact on Art History

Manet's work Olympia is frequently cited as a turning point in the development of art history. The piece strayed from the time's accepted artistic rules and conventions, posing questions about accepted ideas of aesthetic beauty. Olympia was not portrayed as a divine or mythological character, and her appearance did not meet idealized beauty standards. On the contrary, her character was portrayed as a real woman, complete with all her flaws and weaknesses (Stockwell, 2019). The person's hair was pushed back tightly, highlighting the contour of their rectangular face. Despite their curvy and abundant appearance, the subject's breasts were painted with such a bright hue that the areolas were not easily seen.

In contrast to the typical depiction of women without such hair in contemporary artwork, Olympia's armpit is shown to have hair thanks to subtle black brushstrokes. The subject covered her pelvic region with her left hand, making it impossible to tell her gender outright (Artincontext, 2022). Her hand also seemed tense, indicating that she was uncomfortable or

worried about her sexuality. The observer was denied a portrayal of the iconic nude body with all-female traits due to the interplay of many factors (Callera, 2022).

Manet's painting *Olympia* can be interpreted as a form of artistic protest against the stereotypical and limited depictions of women in art. The classification of women is complicated by Manet's departure from the idealizing conventions of portraiture in his depiction of femininity. The painting of *Olympia* elicited a strong reaction from viewers upon its initial exhibition due to the contentious nature of the subject's gaze. This was compounded by identifying details within the image suggesting the subject was a prostitute. In contrast to the polished and idealized depiction of the nude figure in Alexandre Cabanel's *La Naissance de Vénus*, which was also executed in 1863, *Olympia* is portrayed as a genuine woman whose nudity is accentuated by the stark illumination (Stockwell, 2019).

Olympia's Influence on Women's Nude Portrayal in Art

The portrayal of female nudity in art was influenced by Manet's masterpiece *Olympia*. The artwork questioned accepted standards of visual beauty. It paved the way for later painters to depict the naked female form more sincerely and realistically. No idealization of *Olympia's* nakedness or portrayal of her as a goddess or nymph was present in the portrayal of *Olympia* (Artincontext, 2022). Instead, the portrayal of the character portrayed her as a real woman with inherent flaws and failings. How female nudity was depicted in this case profoundly affected other painters, such as Gustave Courbet, who received criticism for his depiction of a nudist sex worker that did not refer to gods or nymphs (Callera, 2022).

Olympia has profoundly influenced the history of art and the representation of female nudity in art. The artwork questioned accepted standards of aesthetic attractiveness and paved the way for later painters to depict women more truthfully and genuinely. *Olympia* was not depicted in a manner that met the idealized ideals of nudity, nor was she presented as a deity or other mythological character. On the contrary, her character was portrayed as a real female persona with flaws and failings (Stockwell, 2019). The approach of depicting female nudity described above greatly influenced later artists and continues to be a source of inspiration and provocation for modern audiences.

René Magritte

René Magritte, a prominent Belgian artist, impacted the art industry through his surrealist works. Although the literary works produced by the individual in question frequently challenged traditional notions of reality, they also explored more profound societal concerns. Magritte's artistic works served as a medium for discussing issues such as the objectification and sexualization of women. Magritte's "Le Viol" (The Rape) is a highly contentious piece that exemplifies his inclination to question conventional notions of aesthetic appeal and bring attention to the objectification of women (Ydsa, 2021). The present article delves into Magritte's distinctive methodology of utilizing art to reveal societal conventions and their influence on the dialogue about beauty standards.

René Magritte's Surrealist Vision

René Magritte's surrealist artworks presented the observers with a paradoxical amalgamation of reality and imagination. Through strategically placing commonplace objects in unconventional settings, the artist compelled his viewers to examine their cognitive interpretation of reality. Magritte's artistic creations conveyed a profound message that surpassed the confines of mere aesthetics (Iftekhar & Zhitny, 2020). Despite the absence of mannequins in his paintings, the artist frequently conveyed a human form being reconceptualized and rearranged.

Challenging Beauty Standards and Addressing Female Objectification

The esteemed artist Magritte created the painting "Le Viol" (The Rape) in 1934. This artwork has continued to evoke strong reactions and provoke academic discussion, as noted by Benn et al. (2016). The artwork utilizes the method of superimposition, whereby the feminine physique is superimposed onto the facial characteristics, substituting the conventional traits with untypical ones. According to Ydsa (2021), a transformation occurs in the female anatomy wherein the breasts take on the shape of eyes, the navel resembles a nose, and the pubic mound is said to represent a mouth. The artwork sought to confront the viewers with the disconcerting reality of the commodification and dehumanization of women.

The artwork "Le Viol" challenged the dominant standards of bodily appeal that objectified women, reducing them to mere objects of desire. Magritte's unconventional depiction of subjects presented a challenge to the prevalent male-centric viewpoint that was pervasive in surrealist art. This viewpoint often perpetuated women's objectification, as Ydsa (2021) noted. Magritte aimed to incite critical analysis and encourage discussion concerning the inherent power dynamics in society by showcasing an alternative perspective.

Impact and Legacy

Magritte's artwork, such as "Le Viol," has been controversial. Nevertheless, it has played a crucial role in challenging conventional beauty standards and promoting discourse on the issue

of women's objectification. The artist's intellectually stimulating artworks persist in eliciting a response from viewers, prompting them to critically examine established cultural conventions and the portrayal of femininity in artistic and media contexts (Benn et al., 2016).

Magritte's artistic oeuvre extended beyond "Le Viol" and encompassed a wider range of perception, reality, and identity themes (Ydsa, 2021). Through the defiance of traditional artistic conventions and questioning established beauty standards, he incited a revolution within the art world. The impact of Magritte's artistic style is evident in the works of later generations of artists who persist in subverting established societal conventions through their creative output (Ydsa, 2021).

The Impact of Sexualization and Objectification of Women in Media and Advertising

The longstanding issue of sexualization and objectification of women in media and advertising has been a topic of ongoing debate and discussion. The "male gaze" is a commonly used term to describe the portrayal of women as sexual objects, where their individuality and aspirations are overshadowed by the emphasis on their bodies and appearance (Roderick, 2019). This article examines the transformation of beauty ideals in media and advertising, drawing attention to the contrasts between historical and contemporary perspectives. In addition, a detailed analysis will be conducted on particular instances of advertisements that utilize the male gaze, and an exploration will be undertaken on the implications of this widespread phenomenon.

Before and Today's Comparison

Historically, the portrayal of women in media and advertising has been entrenched in gender-based conventions, constraining them to restricted and constricted societal positions, including those of domestic caretakers and maternal figures. Frequently portrayed as nurturers, with an exclusive emphasis on their household duties, their distinctiveness and individual ambitions were eclipsed (Roderick, 2019). The representation in question sustained the cultural norms that restricted women to domestic settings and weakened their ability to act independently and self-govern.

A gradual transformation has occurred in portraying females in media and promotional materials. In contemporary times, there has been a growing recognition of the imperative to portray women in a more diverse array of roles that authentically reflect their complex and varied identities (Lee, 2018). The departure of women from traditional gender norms and their active engagement in various domains such as education, politics, science, and business indicate their heightened visibility and prominence (Roderick, 2019). As previously stated, the process of transformation has facilitated the ability of women to reclaim their narratives and challenge the limiting stereotypes that had previously constrained them.

The progress made in portraying women's diverse and complex roles is a favorable advancement. The progress of society has enabled the acknowledgment and commemoration of the unique qualities, skills, and accomplishments of women, granting them the ability to pursue their ambitions beyond the constraints imposed by conventional gender norms (Not an Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls | UNICEF USA, n.d.). Women's increased visibility and representation across diverse domains have played a pivotal role in inspiring future generations of women to strive for excellence and question established social conventions (Lee, 2018).

Notwithstanding these favorable changes, the portrayal of women in media and advertising remains a concern. Despite the increased portrayal of women in diverse roles, there remains a pervasive concern regarding the sexualization and objectification of their bodies (Lee, 2018).

Examples of Male Gaze in Advertising

Yves Saint Laurent

The portrayal of women in overtly sexualized contexts in Yves Saint Laurent's advertisements has been the subject of extensive scrutiny. Advertisements for swimwear frequently showcase women in various locations, such as swimming pools, beaches, or opulent resorts, donning scanty attire that exposes a significant amount of skin. The advertisements deliberately target the male perspective by accentuating the physical allure of the models' bodies. The interplay of camera angles, lighting, and poses synergistically engross the viewer's attention and establish a correlation between the merchandise and the erotic appeal of the feminine physique (Izzyfalkovich, 2016).

Texas Direct Auto

The utilization of the male gaze is notably conspicuous in promotional material released by Texas Direct Auto. The advertisement prominently showcases the female physique, emphasizing its contours and allure. The accompanying tagline of the image, "Don't you just want to slap that bumper?" can be interpreted as objectifying the woman depicted and reducing her to a mere object of desire. This instance highlights the objectification of women's bodies to garner attention and promote merchandise without regard for their agency, intellect, or distinctiveness (Ezquerro, 2018).

Lingerie Ads

Using the male gaze is a common marketing tactic in lingerie advertisements. The advertisements under scrutiny center around the female physique, commonly featuring models in provocative stances adorned in lingerie that accentuates their bodily features. The primary objective is to cater to the imaginative and hedonistic inclinations of the male demographic. The phenomenon of objectification of women, wherein they are reduced to their sexualized body parts and their physical appearance is prioritized over the lingerie being advertised, reinforces the notion that women's worth is contingent upon their ability to conform to prevailing beauty standards (Kamath, 2021).

The ramifications of said promotional materials are significant. According to Lee (2018), the media plays an active role in promoting the objectification of women, which leads to a gradual decline in their self-esteem and self-worth. Additionally, the media perpetuates unrealistic standards of physical beauty that are unattainable for many women. The sexualization and exploitation of women and girls are discussed in an article titled "Not an Object," published by

UNICEF USA, with no specified publication date. Extended exposure to such visual depictions may result in adverse effects, such as a negative perception of one's body, diminished self-assurance, and a distorted perception of one's physical appeal. Moreover, the notion of the male gaze perpetuates a hierarchical structure that diminishes women's autonomy and strengthens the ubiquity of gender disparity.

Conclusion

The discourse surrounding beauty standards has persisted for centuries and has undergone a process of transformation throughout history. Societal factors have influenced beauty standards and are subject to ongoing evolution. The phenomenon of skin bleaching/whitening in Asian and African countries, the portrayal of negrophilia and exoticism in art, the impact of "Olympia" on the representation of women's nudity in art, René Magritte's perspective on female objectification and sexualization through his artwork, and the objectification and sexualization of women's bodies in media and advertising are among the various instances that illustrate how societal norms have influenced and continue to influence beauty standards. Acknowledging the influence of societal norms on the formation of beauty ideals is imperative, as is the need to confront detrimental gender-based preconceptions that tend to minimize acts of violence perpetrated against females. Through this approach, it is possible to foster a society characterized by inclusivity and diversity, which values and appreciates beauty in all its manifestations.

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