The Effects of Facebook Images on Women’s Self-Esteem and Body Image

A Master’s Thesis

Presented to

Information Design and Technology Program

State University of New York

Institute Of Technology

Utica, New York

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree

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May 2013
SUNYIT Information Design and Technology
Approved and recommended for acceptance as a thesis project in partial fulfillment of the requirements of for the Master of Science in Information Design and Technology

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Abstract

This project looked at the effects Facebook images have on women’s self-esteem and body image. Previous studies have shown how women are negatively effected by the images they are presented with in the media by way of magazines and television. Therefore, with this study my goal was to see if the same was held true through social media such as Facebook. For this project I analyzed Elle, Glamour and Vogue’s Facebook pages. In particular I analyzed 40 images of women on each of their Facebook pages. From there I wanted to find if the number of likes the images received were related to how sexualized the women were in each of the images. Through this study I found that highly sexualized images do receive more likes than images that were less sexualized. This conclusion supported by hypothesis. In addition, the following study shows how marketing and advertising has not changed as technology has advanced. Even through social media, women are constantly being exposed to images that can have a negative impact on them in a variety of ways.
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Information design has evolved overtime due to the changes in new media over the years. Previous studies have shown how information and images can be presented in a way that affects women’s self-esteem and body image. Women have been exposed to these images through magazines, television and the Internet. However, with the advent of social media such as Facebook, the frequency by which women are now being exposed to various images has increased exponentially.

There have been many women who have brought the issue of body image to the public eye. In 2004, Dove created a Campaign for Real Beauty that consisted of several advertisements of real woman instead of models. Their goal and commitment was to avoid altering the images in a way that would encourage an unrealistic form of beauty. One video that caught my attention during the campaign titled “The Evolution of Beauty” which went viral. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omBfg3UwkYM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omBfg3UwkYM)

The video showcases an average everyday woman who goes through a transformation of hair, makeup and Photoshop editing to enhance her appearance. In the final product her lips are larger, she has a longer neck, her hair is perfect and she has flawless skin. In addition, her eyes were enlarged and her face was slimmed down. At the end of the whole process the image is displayed on a billboard. (See Figures 4 – 6) The Evolution of Beauty shows how beauty in advertisements is truly a click away. At the very end of the video there is a message displayed that reads “No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted.” Many of the comments on the video mentioned how our society is obsessed with beauty that is fake and manufactured. In addition to this campaign, Dove later launched a new campaign in 2010, Dove Movement for Self-Esteem.
On their site, Dove, states how they are using everyday women in advertising and taking it to a new level in an effort to turn “standard beauty-marketing practices on their head.” Their hope is that by launching this campaign they will set a precedent and inspire others to think about the ethical implications surrounding the way women are represented in the media (Lagando, 2004).

According to Rolling Stone art director Andy Cowles, “It’s not immoral to retouch people; and everyone does it. The difficulty is when you mess with the truth, when it’s distorted and done to the point where you can see it and the person doesn’t look real.” (Freydkin, 2003). Larry Hackett, editor in chief of People uses the “wedding picture test.” This involves only removing crows feet and hairs that fall out of place. He stated, “That kind of retouching doesn’t alter the reality but it makes it sweeter” (Haughney, 2012).

As you can see, there are mixed opinions with regard to digitally altering images in media. The following study will explore deeper into the concept of digital manipulation by way of Photoshop and the social media tool, Facebook, in hopes to understand its affects on women’s perceptions of the reality of images they are exposed to.

The way a society defines beauty and being a woman has changed over the years. Studying how women are portrayed in social media is an important topic because it is interesting to see what and how our society defines an “ideal” woman as compared to what was socially acceptable in the past. In addition, the way Facebook showcases women affects our society in more ways than we may think. Women are burdened with a great deal of stress and experience pressure when it comes down to grooming and beauty.
There are certain standards that women are expected to live up to such as being successful, assertive, sexy and well-maintained.

Everyday the visual culture pervades the lives of women. As a result, this affects how women evaluate themselves, the world, and their relationships. Women are confronted with images specifically attempting to sell dominant ideologies and normalizing them with identification markers such as mother, career women, wife etc. The images that women constantly face are shaped by the visual culture and impact their self-concept. According to Kerry Freedman, “Individuals appropriate characteristics of visual representations, adopting these representations as a description of himself/herself. From this perspective, people can be manipulated through images that are often antithetical to their individuals natures.” (Lai 2009).

Body image dissatisfaction and identity development in women are two important factors that can lead to the possible development of eating disorders. Through various studies it has been recognized that the majority of the population that struggles with body image dissatisfaction is women. Western media have been identified as being the source of the “thin ideal” for women. In particular, messages found on Facebook that are both verbal and non-verbal are constantly telling women to divert their attention to their outer appearance, rather than focusing on ways women can work on developing their inner beauty (Tiggeman, Polivy, Hargreaves, 2009).

Social networking sites make loving your body and becoming comfortable with whom you are intangible for women. In the current media, women are generally portrayed as extremely thin. When social comparison to magazines involving these images takes place, several negative consequences can arise (Bessenoff, 2007). An
extensive relationship has been found linking one’s exposure to new media and body dissatisfaction, the drive for thinness and eating disorders (Tiggemann, 2009). Fashion magazines attempt to influence their target audience, teenagers and young adults, through thin models and product placement advertisements (Adomaitis, 2008.) These thin idealized images girls and women are exposed to have the potential to stimulate body disturbance (Harper, 2007).

Through Dove’s campaign it is evident that the presence of beauty images is certainly all over the media and affect one’s body image. In fact, it’s extremely hard to try and relax by turning on the television or reading through your favorite magazine without being bombarded with images that depict an ideal beauty. One common theme shown in television, magazines and advertising is beauty. In the 1970’s one could expect to have been exposed to 500 advertisements a day. Now we see as many as 5,000 (Johnson, 2009). Beauty and fashion magazines are notorious for providing their readers with advice on how to get in shape for a particular season or event, how to do their make-up and what accessories to buy to look like a celebrity (Lagnado, 2004).

With the constant change in technology today new forms of media are being discovered to send messages of what women feel society sees as the thin ideal. The Internet is a strong factor in terms of the media. The Web has given us access to personal Web sites, social networking groups and television network online communities. Basically anyone is able to spread a social message with help from the Internet. Even companies use the Internet to advertise and promote their products. However, if you notice when these advertisements are present, they are accompanied by entertainment and news as if they are trying to blend in.
It is suggested that media consumption and the level of body image satisfaction are related. Researchers have studied magazine readership and television consumption with a cultural ideal body image and have found them to be connected. The media has been analyzed as a source for causing eating disorders and psychological disorders in women. In addition, there is a connection between the media and the formation of society’s vision of the thin ideal body image. The more someone is exposed to the media, the more they interpret the media world as a reflection of the real world. In turn, if people accept images in media as being the same as their everyday lives, the way they perceive the images as mirror images of themselves will be very high (Cohen, 60.)

The Internet brings forth a new type of media that is also responsible for causing society to form such a correlation. This study will take a look at various types of media consumption and the effect each form has on women’s self-esteem and body image. It will also examine the differences these effects have on body image satisfaction in terms of exposure to television, magazines and the Internet.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beauty Advertising

The question of whether or not the media has the power to influence the actions and beliefs of others is debatable. However, the main purpose of advertising is to get a response to what is being promoted or marketed. Over the past century, American culture has turned more consumer-driven ultimately causing advertisers to come up with even more ways to market and sell their products. In turn advertisers took advantage of the cultural beliefs of the time to increase responses to the claims they made.
The Victorian standards for women gave birth to the twentieth and twenty-first century beauty industry advertising. At this time women started to escape cultural expectations of them to be weak and modest (Wolf, 2002).

A mass production of women’s magazines occurred during the 1860’s and 1870’s. One of which was Harper’s Bazaar, published by Hearst. This magazine was the start of other magazines using beauty images that were geared toward women.

Guilt was a tactic used by advertisers in the twentieth century. For example, advertisements made girls feel need to be popular and athletic to get a boy’s attention. These advertisements caused girls to become almost obsessed with how they looked. Many girls during the 1920s began showing signs of depression in terms of their physical appearance. According to Lisa Jacobson, one of the reasons for this was due in part to mass-market advertising (Jacobson, 2004).

Advertising changed gears in the first half of the twentieth century and instead began to target women in ads to make women more socially aware. The ideal housewife was what advertisements in the 1950s marketed to women. It is suggested that this resulted due to World War II (Wolf, 2002).

During modern times, magazine images gave women the notion that heroism was measured by beauty and appearance. Today, magazines define beauty by depicting young, thin, and flawless women. Advertisements related to dieting increased 70 percent between 1968 and 1972. Since women follow what is being advertised in magazines, this could very well have impacted an increase in the thin ideal many women hold. Women’s magazines increased in number during the 1980s and 1990s. This meant competition was rising and advertisers had to come up with new ways to make the information marketed
to women very influential. With a combination of television, Internet and magazine advertisements, the messages about beauty are now able to reach an even larger audience (Wolf, 2002).

Media – A form a channels

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, media is defined as “a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment.” Television, magazines and the Internet are forms of media that transmit messages. These channels send the message of what defines the ideal body and beauty in society. When women are repeatedly exposed to these channels, the more likely they are to want to conform to them. Almost every women’s magazine has sections dedicated to health and beauty. These advertisements may seem harmless at first glance because of the helpful tips. However, when analyzed deeper, the underlining message being sent is how to promote the thin ideal image (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). The Internet opened up a whole new avenue for magazine and television advertisements simply because it created an additional way to reach their target audience by constructing an online community where they can create a need for their product.

MEDIA THEORY

Since women are depicted as extremely thin in the media, self-comparison to the images they are exposed to can lead to negative consequences. In relation to Festinger’s social comparison theory, when women find a difference in themselves compared to media images they are more likely to feel less satisfied with their weight and appearance.

Irving provides evidence that there is a connection between women’s perceptions of their bodies and the media’s portrayal of women. In his study he found that when
women were exposed to images depicting thin women, they experienced a lower self-evaluation. According to Havighurst, “Accepting one’s physique is an essential feature of adolescent development. However, the pervasiveness of the thin ideal presented in magazines and other types of mass media may severely hinder women from accomplishing this developmental task.

The concept of body image consists of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes related to one’s own body. When these perceptions begin to get distorted, body image and eating-disordered behaviors are seen. One reason women experience problems with their body image is because they are judged for thinness. The media is viewed as the most pervasive and powerful source in terms of reinforcing and transmitting the idea of the thin ideal to women (Tiggemann, 2009). Women respond to the images in media by comparing themselves to the thin images. By doing so they find they are lacking certain physical qualities and therefore form negative body dissatisfaction. According to researchers, “media portrayed images of the current beauty ideal, the hallmark of which is an ultra slender body, contribute to body dissatisfaction” (Stice, 2001). When one is repeatedly exposed to images depicting extremely thin women, this promotes an internalization of the thin-ideal body image for women and ultimately leads to body dissatisfaction.

Through several content analyses there is evidence of the thin ideal presented on television, magazines and the Internet embodies the notion that “thin is normative and attractive” (Levine, 2009).

**Behavioral Psychology Principles**

Behavioral psychology is a learning theory that implies “humans learn many behaviors because of their pairing with basic human needs and responses, such as the
need for food, sleep, reproduction and the like.” (Alessi & Trollip, 2001, p. 18). This can be applied to women and how they perceive magazine advertisements because they will try to behave a certain way based on what an advertisement is suggesting or trying to sell. Take for example, this magazine advertisement from *Women’s Health* featuring Jillian Michaels on the cover. There is a bright and large type text reading “Lose Belly Fat!” – “A Breakthrough fitness weightloss and fitness plan.” Women may read this and feel that they need to follow the plan to achieve a body that is desirable. Pairing that text with a toned and fit body such as Ms. Michael’s causes women to behave a certain way because they feel that is how they will improve their body image.

http://www.dailystab.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/jillian-michaels-womens-health-cover.jpg
Furthermore, Edward Thorndike also coined the term operant conditioning that uses rewards and punishments to modify the behavior. (Alessi and Trollip, 2001, p.19) If women try extremely hard to change their normal habits to achieve a body like they see in the media, they may be successful or they may not get the results they had hoped for. As a result, this could lead to negative thoughts about one’s body image and is associated with eating disorders. If a woman does achieve the body of her dreams she may reward herself with say a new dress to show off her new body. On the other hand, if she still feels down about her appearance and is no where comparable to model’s bodies in the media she may punish herself by not eating properly or view herself negatively thus not seeing her true beauty. “Anorexia, bulimia and compulsive overeating are not just about food and weight. Low self-esteem, inability to cope with stress and other related issues lead to such eating disorder.” (Bagley, 2009) All of these illnesses can be triggered by media images. However, women don’t stop to think about that. Instead, they see someone with a perfect body and immediately want to be like her or look like her and will do anything to achieve it.

**Cognitive Psychology Principles**

Cognitive theory is a learning theory of psychology that attempts to explain human behavior by understanding thought processes. After looking at Facebook images a woman’s perception, attention, encoding, memory and comprehension can be affected by the presentation of the image. The visual presentation of the image, including the color, font choice, and the image used, etc. are all related to how women perceive and pay
attention to every detail about the women they are looking at. Images posted to Facebook allow women to apply the information, or take action, meaning that they associate a fit body as the only way to be viewed as beautiful and accepted into society. If the image is produced correctly with absolutely no flaws, this helps enhance a woman’s ability to understand the information and with all that they took from observing the image, they will act based on what they learned (Alessi & Trollip, 2001, p 19).

Perception and Attention

“Learning begins with attention to and perception of information in the learner’s environment.” (Alessi and Trollip, 2001, 21) The best way to draw attention is to provide a change. Women will be drawn to images because more often than not the images used grab their attention. Once women perceive and encode the information they obtain from images they may use that information at a later time.

There are several methods to enhance one’s memory. “The principle of repetition claims that the more information is practiced or used, the better and longer it is remembered.” (Alessi and Trollip, 2001, p.23). When women are continually exposed to images on Facebook showcasing perfect bodies and displaying messages on how to obtain a certain body type or trick and tips to look a certain way that information begins to store in their memory.

Motivation Theory

Malone’s motivation theory suggests that the three relevant factors in motivation are challenge, curiosity and fantasy. In terms of challenge, some women become highly motivated if their goal of looking a certain way requires some level of difficulty. Another factor in motivation involves sensory curiosity, which is caused by visual effects that
attract attention. Seeing practically flawless models may be motivational enough to make women feel that they need to change their appearance if they feel they don’t stand up to the images they are exposed to. Cognitive curiosity is aroused by information that conflicts with the learner’s existing knowledge or expectation, is contradictory, or is in some way incomplete. As a result, you may seek new information that resolves this conflict.

For example, a woman may currently feel that she is happy with her appearance and that her body shape and type is pretty comparable to other women around her. However, as she becomes more exposed to Facebook images featuring female models, or women close to her age, this all begins to change. She will quickly notice that what she thought was healthy and attractive isn’t anywhere close to the images presented of other women in society. More often than not women compare themselves to these images without knowing that so much of what they are viewing is not reality. Photoshop editing is being done to the images to perfect them. When women examine the media images presented to them they begin to learn what beauty is, decide how they should look and compare themselves to the way the media defines beauty. This in turn motivates them to alter their appearance to mirror the models seen in the media.

This leads us to the last component of motivation, fantasy. “Fantasy situations encourage learners to imagine themselves in imaginary contexts or events using vivid realistic images.” (Alessi & Trollip, 25). The thin bodies portrayed in media are suggested to encourage fantasy and provide inspiration for women by making thinness tangible.

Social Semiotics
From a symbolic standpoint, beauty is not intrinsic but a result of action (Millard, 2009). Social media consumers have a major role in shaping the way personas are played. The personas of media consumers are shaped based on the way advertising and fashion script performances. For example, a woman may decide to go on a diet to lose weight in order to reach her goal of fitting into the hottest trends available only in model’s sizes. Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver state, “Ads say and do more than relay product information. Furthermore, individuals draw on different codes and resources to generate their own meanings of texts even if the creator manipulates the semiotics and nuances (Millard, 2009 p. 149). When women are exposed to the images and messages channeled through different forms of media they create meaning from them in order to suit their purposes. Self-esteem is the most prevalent motivator in women’s behavior.

**Communication Theory/Uses and Gratifications**

Social media plays a huge role in the lives of women because their images can be used for a variety of purposes. The uses and gratifications theory suggests that “people’s needs influence what media they would choose, how they use certain media and what gratifications the media give them.” (Wikibooks) The approach also emphasizes motives and self-perceived needs of audience members (wikibooks).

According to Blumler and Katz, the same communication message can be used for different purposes by different people. This concept can be applied to Facebook and the images presented. Different women are going to interpret the messages the images send differently. Some may be offended while others will not be affected at all. The content of new media “provides daily, multiple, overlapping and all too often, unhealthy messages about gender, attractiveness, ideal body sizes, and shapes, self-control, desire, food, and
weight management (Levine, 2009).

Not every woman is going to compare her body to the bodies she sees on Facebook. However, some women may take these images very literally and feel as if they need to change their eating habits or exercise routines so that they can attempt to mock the image’s appearance. The uses and gratifications theory shows how images on Facebook can be used as a comparison for what women desire to look like. The images act as a guide and source of information.

One important media gratification is personal identity or self-reference. Here women begin to find reinforcement for personal values, find models of behavior, identify with valued others in the media, and gain insight into oneself. (wikibooks, p. 4).

The media dependency theory states “the more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person.” (wikibooks, p. 6) Women will select a medium they feel best satisfies their needs.

**Advertising Ethics**

The typical size of models in advertisements and magazines has decreased. Weight standards for women began to trend toward the very thin in the mid 1960’s. Since then, body dissatisfaction in women has increased (Bessenoff, 2007). The rise in defining a slender body as a beauty standard for women is prominent in the media. Over the years the way the female body has been depicted in media has grown increasingly thin. From 1960 to 1979 the weight of women featured in Playboy advertisements decreased. The average weight in 1960 was 91% of the population mean. In 1978 the average weight was 84%. During this time there was also a trend toward non-
curvaceousness. Bust and hip measurements of the models decreased and their waist measurements increased. Due to the messages geared towards women in the media, it’s not surprising that so many women have a desire to be thin and have a feeling of dissatisfaction with their bodies (Turner, 1997).

One would think that if there were research claiming how body image dissatisfaction and exposure to media images are connected, in terms of ethics, the media should focus on portraying healthy body images and depict all sizes and shapes in the images they produce so that women are able to more closely relate to these realistic images. This raises the question, are fashion industries guilty of promoting a standard of beauty?

Baker and Martinson (Ong, 2001), developed an advertising test called the TARES test. There are five components of the test that relate to content and intention of advertisements. These categories are truthfulness, authenticity of the persuader, respect for the persuadee, equity of the appeal and social responsibility for the common good. The test serves as a checklist for advertisers in the hopes that they take into consideration the consequences the messages and content they channel have on those who view them. Advertisers, magazine editors and television producers are responsible for these questions.

The main purpose of advertising is to communicate messages repetitively in hopes to persuade an audience. In doing so beliefs that were previously formed assist in the formulation of new ones. In producing the thin ideal image of a women’s body there becomes a requirement for certain products to achieve this form of beauty. In turn, the media keep this ideal constant in society by using extremely thin models.

**Digitally Altering Photographs**
Glamour’s Body Image Survey

Glamour conducted their first ever body image survey in 1984, which was unique because it was the first magazine to have done such a project. The findings were quite shocking, and it was learned that 75% of the women surveyed felt they were too fat. The survey also showed that over 60% of the women admitted to being dissatisfied with or ashamed of their stomach, hops and thighs (Dreisbach, 2009).

Over the years we have been surrounded by size acceptance and body love no matter where we turn. It almost seems as though women understand and have found beauty within themselves. However, Glamour wanted to find out how true this really is. On the 25th anniversary of their body image survey, Glamour conducted a new body image survey that involved 16,000 women. What they found was approximately 40% of the women were unhappy with their bodies. This number did not change much compared to their 1984 survey. Glamour did give ways of combating body dissatisfaction. However, it made me begin to question whether or not they fully support their advice. Upon reviewing the article on Glamour.com I noticed a headline “How to Look Like a Victoria’s Secret Ad (From The Neck Up Anyway). (See Figure 1)

Figure 1
This relates to the debate of whether magazine reading has a negative impact on women’s body satisfaction. There has been much controversy on the issue of Photoshop and its use on magazine images. The technological development of Photoshop has most definitely impacted the state of images in magazines. Photoshop was first released in 1990 (Story, 2000). Now twenty-two years later, Photoshop enables people to make various realistic changes to any photo they desire. In addition, Photoshop is the primary technology used in mass media for editing images. The digital alteration of images through use of Photoshop is becoming more common than many people may recognize.

According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, Photoshop is defined as “to alter (a digital image) with Photoshop software or other image-editing software especially in a way that distorts reality (as for deliberately deceptive purposes) (Merriam Webster, 20120). When women look at photo shopped images they are exposed to practically flawless women who are physically perfect, and that in turn creates negative self-image
because they realize they don’t match up to these women. What I found to be quite interesting is the fact that *Glamour* has now decided to not use Photoshop to alter images. They polled 1,000 readers and asked “How Much is Too Much?” Their poll results showed that 78% opposed slimming a body to look lighter and 60% did not want advertisements to mislead them. A photograph was created by *Glamour* to show the effects of Photoshop (See Figure 2)

Figure 2

http://www.creativepro.com/article/glamour-magazine-limits-photoshop-use

It’s images like these that stir negative thoughts into women. They see a girl with a very slim waist and perfect skin and immediately begin to compare themselves to the image. If only knew that the image produced in front of them was far from reality.

The website Huffingtonpost.com has several articles regarding the use of Photoshop. When I began browsing the site I immediately noticed the multiple links to articles mentioning Photoshop gone wrong or listing a celebrity’s name and stating how their image looks a bit too perfect on a specific advertisement. What I found interesting
was a slideshow displayed on the website titled, “Photoshop Fails.” As you view each image there is a description that points out the mishaps that may occur with Photoshop. Many of the images are so obvious it made me question why they were even made available for millions of people to see. For example, an Ann Taylor add seems to have amputated a model’s arm. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3

[Image of an Ann Taylor ad with a model's arm missing]

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/06/lane-bryant-photoshop-disaster_n_1862452.html?utm_hp_ref=style#slide=594124

The main focus of the discussion is how Photoshop allows the creation of images that are simply not real. Instead, the images produced are false representations of what the women initially photographed look like. It is important for viewers to decipher the
realism in the images on their own since the use of Photoshop is not mentioned. How women perceive images is a factor in how they perceive their own body satisfaction.

Photography - Reality vs. Fantasy // “Real” Beauty?

Creating an image with a camera involves in some way, subjective choice by way of selection, framing and personalization. “All camera generated images, be they photographic, cinematic, electronic, or digital, bear the cultural legacy of still photography, which historically has been regarded as a more objective practice.” (Sturken, 17). Ever since the mid-nineteenth century they have been multiple points of view on the idea that photographs are “objective renderings of the real world that provide unbiased truth.” (Sturken, 17). In today’s world with all of the new technology available, the debates have become even more intense due to digital imaging processes. Through photographs we can invest deep emotions as well. For example, we may remember an event, or experience longing for someone we desire when in fact we may have never seen or met. According to artist and theorist Allan Sekula, “Photographs achieve semantic status as fetish objects and as documents. The photograph is imagined to have, depending on its context, a power that is primarily affective or a power that is primarily informative. Both powers reside in the mythical truth-value of the photograph.” (Sturken, 18).

Denotative & Connotative

We can figure out varying levels of meaning in all images. Roland Barthes describes this with the terms denotative and connotative. “The denotative meaning of the image refers to its literal, explicit meaning. The same photograph may connote less explicit, more culturally specific associations and meanings. Connotative meanings are informed by the cultural and historical contexts of the image and its viewers lived, felt
knowledge of those circumstances – all that the image means to them personally and socially.” (Sturken, 20). Denotation and connotation are helpful when analyzing images in magazines because they attempt to show literal or denoted meanings as well dig deeper into those images to connote culturally and contextually specific meanings. According to Barthes, views the myth of photographic truth in terms of cultural values and beliefs expressed through connotation. As he sees it, “myth is the hidden set of rules and conventions through which meanings, which are specific to certain groups, are made to seem universal and given for a whole society.” (Sturken, 20). This can be applied to magazine images used in fashion and beauty magazines today. What people see makes them feel that everybody needs to look that specific way or do some specific task in order to fit in and be accepted in society. For example, advertisements can often produce a myth or stereotype about women being viewed as sensual and sex objects. In figure 7, Halle Berry is featured in an advertisement that denotes women always wanting to have fun. In addition, having Halle’s body showcased in the image creates the stereotype that makes women in society feel that they need to achieve a perfect body with perfect skin. This advertisement suggests that women will be viewed as desirable by men if they look like Halle and smell like the perfume she is posing for.

Figure 7
Contemporary representations of beauty through images showcasing ultra-thin bodies suggest to women that certain body shapes and types are universally attractive which can effect a women’s self-esteem if the body type is too hard to realistically achieve. Barthe’s refers to this as the feminine beauty myth because the images used in magazines are not natural but instead culturally constructed. When women view images of models they come to terms that the body is a standard of beauty because “the connotative message has become so widely incorporated as to seem obvious and natural.

**Cultural Meanings and Expectations of Digital Images**

Technology enables digital computer images to be manipulated in a way that does not represent something in the real world. Digital imaging software programs can change an image by erasing elements or adding features that were not there before.

**Photoshop Parody**
It seems as though even if women try to avoid images and advertisements in media, it is becoming increasingly harder to successfully do so. I came across a Photoshop parody commercial on YouTube. Throughout the commercial I heard “Transform your look the way celebrities do” “Get ready to experience a whole new you – it’s you perfected” “Say hello to full lips, sparkling eyes, and lashes that never end” No wonder women feel pressured into looking a certain way for society. The advertisement was for “Photoshop by Adobe called Beauty Regimen.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmxymvJBjRk

Pressures That Distort How Women Think And Feel

Jo Swinson is known for campaigning to raise awareness of the pressures society create for women and the harmful effects unrealistic images have on their overall well-being. In February of 2012 the Huffington Post release an article about a L’Oreal advertisement being banned after a complaint from Swinson. The advertisement was for an anti-wrinkle cream that featured actress Rachel Weisz. However, Advertising Standards Authority noted that the advertisement was “misleadingly exaggerated” because Weisz’s skin was retouched for the advertisement. "With the volume of images that contain women as well as men, there is arguably a greater pressure on women but it's not purely a feminist issue. Along with this idealized images there is also a very pervasive message that what matters for women is how they look," said Swinson. Figure 8 shows the banned advertisement.

Figure 8
In a presentation, Swinson cited research from a documentary by Jennifer Siebel Newsom called *Miss Representation*. The documentary was about the under-representation of women. The research found that “airbrushing” or photoediting yields severe self-esteem problems. In fact, “half of all 16 to 21 year old women would consider cosmetic surgery. Additionally, eating disorders have doubled in the previous 15 years. Newsom’s research also showed that 69% of women wished they looked like someone else which effected their lives not because of how they look, but because of how they feel about their appearance. One reason for this is due to Photoshop. Images that have been Photo shopped change women’s standards of comparison (Wiseman, 2012).

**Should Retouched Photos Have Labels?**

In 2009, a rally occurred by legislators in France and the UK to require photos that
have been digitally retouched to have a label saying so. “The label should read, ‘Retouched photograph aimed at changing a person’s physical appearance’.” Said Valerie Boyer, a member of the French Parliament. She went on to say “These photos can lead people to believe in a reality that does not actually exist and have a detrimental effect on adolescents. It’s not a question about public health, but also a way of protecting the consumer.” (Willingham, 2012).

A short time later in 2011, software was created by image specialists at Dartmouth College that revealed how much an image was retouched. This was quite interesting in that it can be used to show women how far from reality many of these pictures showcased in magazines truly are. Hany Farid was involved in creating the software and commented on how retouching photos has become very extreme by stating, “They are making impossible human beings. They are moving us, slowly and surely, in the direction of an over-idealized notion of beauty.” (Willingham, 2012).

Magazine images seem to have one thing in common, they show an impossible ideal of the perfect body. Jamie Lee Curtis disagrees with images that have been retouched or Photoshopped. In 2002, she did a photo shoot for More magazine that made a big statement. The first photo displays Curtis in her underwear without the help of any stylists, makeup, or fancy camera angles. The next page features Curtis in a black dress that elongates her torso. In order to transform into “Glam Jamie” it took 13 people three hours. Susan Crandall, editor in chief of More Magazine commented that a 23-year-old assistant at the Today Show said that the article made her feel better about her body. When asked if Curtis was scared of doing a photo shoot with out any makeup on she replied, "What I'm scared of is that that's what women have become accustomed to
needing to feel good about themselves. And show business and media and magazines
don't help by promoting these images of women that are completely airbrushed, that are
completely altered, to then give you, the unsuspecting buyer, this fake sense of that that's
what people are supposed to look like.” (Ryan, 2002).
Today the standards for women’s beauty are extremely strict. When women look at cover models on magazines many of them interpret that image as how they are supposed to look; impossibly beautiful and dangerously thin. These thin models have an effect on other women’s self-image and self-esteem because average everyday women are not naturally thin. As a result, women feel that they need to meet society’s standards of beauty and success by altering their appearance. Cultivation theory supports the notion that images promoted in magazines are powerful. This theory applies to women’s beauty portrayal in magazines because “viewers and readers see television and magazines are representing real people, and fail to realize what goes into making the models look the
way they do” (Thompson, 1990.) Through this theory, women begin to think that if models are able to achieve a certain look, it is possible for real women to achieve the look as well. As a result retouching photographs has become very blatant and somewhat bizarre. Images are now starting to resemble ‘bodies that defy the natural boundaries of human anatomy” (Wilson, 2009).

According to Peter Lindberg, a famous image maker, “My feeling is that for years now it has taken a much too big part in how women are being visually defined today. Heartless retouching should not be the chosen tool to represent women in the beginning of this century.” There have been several debates on the issue of retouching images such as in 2003, when Kate Winslet accused the British edition of GQ of altering one of her photographs to make her appear thinner. A few years later in 2007, Glamour was accused of making American Ferrera slimmer. This particular issue was geared towards ways for readers to flatter their figures.

Phil Poynter shoots campaigns for Tommy Hilfiger and editorials for Love and Pop said, “The big discussion in the fashion business has always been about should we retouch girls, should we create a portrait of a girl that is not achievable by a real girl.” (Wilson, 2009).

**Inappropriate Manipulation with Digital Photos**

“The ability to create with software an image that a researcher ‘knows’ is a true representation but just hasn’t been able to capture can lead down a dangerous and slippery slope” (Hames, 2008). Years ago images for publication were submitted as photographs. If these images were to be altered it was quite difficult and a high skill level was needed. However, we have certainly come a long way now with the affordability of
all the image-processing and image-editing software like Adobe Photoshop. Due to this we are now able to alter images much easier.

**Photoshop Discussion on Websites**

There is a blog that I have been following for almost one year now called Bexlife. The website is dedicated to health and fitness among other things. Just recently the author wrote a post on her page that I found very interesting and felt fit right in with the research I am doing. She was talking about how her husband is a celebrity photographer and even though the models/celebrities are beautiful the way they look naturally, Photoshop is still used to make them look flawless. She mentioned that the topic of Photoshop on models and celebrities has been “done to death” and raised a good point when saying, “Magazines still do it, and we still hate it but do we? Why do we keep buying into it?”

In her blog post she included a v-log where she talks more about this subject. In the video she confesses of only touching up zits and under eye circles in her professional photographs. Other than that what you see is what you get. At the end she linked a photo to her Facebook page where she is photographed just 5 months after giving birth to her fourth child. The photo did not get altered in any way. I give her a lot of credit for posting the image and I think it was a good way to remind girls, especially young girls to be happy and accept their own natural beauty.

The caption under her photo reads “Me - 5 months post baby #4 - no photoshop. I'm talking about photoshop on my blog today, which led me through old pics of myself BEFORE Justin erased stretch marks and dark under-eye circles. I don't know if it's right or wrong for fashion magazines to alter images of models, but I do know that in the fitness world, we need to get honest... so here you go. (Can you feel me cringing on the
other side of my screen?) xo” The post received 65 “likes” and had 32 responses. As I read through each of the comments I was blown away with all the support and positive comments Bex received.

One comment that caught my attention in particular was “You look fantastic! Not even for "just having a baby" but period. As far as photoshop for magazines: I think it's one thing to edit out things that are temporary (stretch marks, zits, rashes, puffy eyes, etc) but to alter the appearance completely is crap! I've seen YouTube videos of high speed editing in photoshop and they can take an overweight person and make them a size 0. It's unrealistic image for people to look up to. Why can't women just be beautiful the way they are? I'm not advocating the "big is beautiful" because of health reasons but if a woman happens to be striking a pose why not just leave the natural roll that everyone has? Or put *this photo has been edited so girls see how much of those perfect women aren't so perfect, but still beautiful.” Some other points made in comments were how the photograph helped inspire other women who have been in a similar situation after giving birth. Some women are uncomfortable with their body changing due to childbirth and stated how they found her picture to not only be inspiring but one that sets a wonderful example for women all over the world (Borucki, 2012).

I think that the Facebook picture Bex posted opened a lot of women’s eyes to the fact that we should all embrace our natural beauty. Sure any one can be Photoshopped and look glamorous, but that’s not really them. Those women don’t look like that on an everyday basis. Take away the fancy hair, layers of makeup and of course digital editing and they look just like you and I.
Facebook can be considered a door to a make-believe world. With the increase in technology and the creation of several social media tools, Facebook has become quite popular lately. However, as great as this social media tool is, there can be several negative influences Facebook has on people’s lives. A new university study found that “one in three people felt worse.. and more dissatisfied with their lives” after they viewed their friends’ profiles on Facebook (Chianca, 2013).

Facebook can be viewed as creating a life one pretends or dreams of living rather than what one’s life is truly like. One finding from the study found that “women were more likely to envy physical attractiveness.” (Chianca, 2013). What is important to keep in mind is that today we live in the age of the digital photo. In other words, with special lighting and the use of Photoshop, people can enhance their appearance to depict them in a more beautiful and flawless manner.

There is no secret that social media has a powerful hold over consumers. As with many social media tools, Facebook has several benefits. However, there are also some negative effects. According to Alice Walton, Facebook has the ability to “Mess with our minds, drawing us into dependence and luring us to make unhealthy comparisons between ourselves and others.” (Walton, 2012).

A study conducted in Sweden even showed how using Facebook can become an addiction. Out of a total of 1,000 people surveyed, 85% said that using Facebook was something they do everyday. The study also found that women were on Facebook 30% more than men. In addition, devoted female Facebook users had a greater risk of being unhappy and less content with their lives than others.
Facebook may very well be responsible for body image issues women experience. Viewing images on Facebook can add to women’s body-consciousness. One study involving 600 women found that they compare themselves to others after viewing images or status updates. Furthermore, slightly under half of the women wished that their body or weight were that of the person they viewed in the image. A third of the women felt sad after comparing their pictures to their friends. A new feature that was introduced on Facebook recently is Timeline. Timeline is simply just a new configuration of how one’s Facebook page is displayed. Half of the participants admitted that this new feature allowed them to assess their body weight and size over time much easier.

According to Dr. Harry Brandy, director of The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt, “Facebook is making it easier for people to spend more time and energy criticizing their own bodies and wishing they looked like someone else. In this age of modern technology and constant access to Smart phones and the Internet, it’s becoming increasingly difficult for people to remove themselves from images and other triggers that promote negative body image, low self-esteem and may ultimately contribute to eating disorders.” (Walton, 2012).

Here Facebook can be compared to what fashion magazines are often criticized for; creating means for people to compare themselves to others. The only difference is that with Facebook people are comparing themselves to friends and acquaintances, whereas with magazines they compare themselves to models.

Social networks are beginning to get bad press due to the harmful effects they have in terms of body image. A Ohio State University study outlined that “socio-cultural factors are considered a strong influencer when it comes to body image issues.”
Billboards, movies, and advertising were the main factors that contributed to body image issues until social networks came about. Although these are still part of the problem, social networks have increased the amount of exposure people have to the perfect body image.

- **Comments** –

The whole premise of social networks is to engage and share with others. Facebook users have the ability to make comments to one another. Since the comments are visible to others, those viewers that are more vulnerable may be more likely to be at risk if the comments make body image references and in turn be very damaging to that individual.

- **Friends and Likes** –

“Social media may have a stronger impact on body images than traditional media,” according to Dina Borzekowski. The majority of the messages, comments and likes created on Facebook are made by friends. Therefore, the individuals reading those comments are more likely to take them personally and value what is said (Lop, 2012).

Susan Albers, a Psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic stated, “For people who struggle with ups and downs in their weight, seeing posted pictures of themselves can be very difficult (Vartanian, 2012).

Michael A Stefanone, PhD, University at Buffalo Researcher and colleague’s study revealed women that based their self worth on their appearance share more photos online and also have larger networks on online social networking sites.
As a result, it is suggested that women identify stronger in terms of their image and appearance. Facebook is then used as a platform for them to compete for attention.

The study consisted of 311 participants, 49.8 percent of which were female. Participants were given a questionnaire intended to measure their contingencies of self worth. In addition, questions were asked about their behavior on Facebook.

Stefanone stated, “Those whose self esteem is based on public-based contingencies (defined here as others’ approval, physical appearance and outdoing others in competition) were more involved in online photo sharing, and those whose self-worth is most contingent on appearance have a higher intensity of online photo sharing.” He also noted that the women that based their self worth on appearance were the most prolific photo sharers (Donovan, 2011).

The Center for Eating Disorders created a public survey for Facebook users ranging in age from 16-40. When asked if they ever thought about how Facebook use is affecting their relationship with their body the results were very eye opening.

- 51% of respondents said that seeing photos of themselves on Facebook makes them more conscious about their own body and their weight
- 32% said they feel SAD when comparing Facebook photos of themselves to their friends’
- 44% spend time wishing they had the same body or weight as a friend when looking at photos on Facebook
- 37% said they feel that they need to change specific parts of their body when comparing their bodies to a friend’s body in Facebook photos
The frequency in which users log on to Facebook can impact the intensity of negative body image thoughts that could potentially harm one’s self-esteem. There is a self-esteem website called Proud2BMe.org that displayed quotes from teenagers in reference to their use of Facebook and body image. One example of a quote taken from the website is as follows: “When looking at images of girls in a magazine almost all of us know that they are altered electronically to appear perfect. When it comes to social media such as Facebook, most believe that they are looking at raw pictures, or ‘real girls.’ Whether this is true or not, they are ultimately used as a standard of comparison.” (Clemmer, 2012).

Many of the quotes were very similar to the previous quote revealing that social networking sites such as Facebook are creating a new platform that publicizes body insecurities and at the same time magnifies society’s obsession with dieting and weight loss. Dr. Steven Crawford is The Center for Eating Disorder’s associate direction and commented on the survey results, “As people spend more time thinking about what’s wrong with their bodies, less time is spent on the positive realm and engaging in life in meaningful and fulfilling ways. When people become more concerned with the image they project online and less concerned with holistic markers of health in real life, their body image may suffer and they may even turn, or return, to harmful fad diets or dangerous weight-control behaviors. We hope the results of this survey encourage people to really look at how their online behavior affects their outlook, and we caution them against being overly critical of their own bodies or other people’s bodies while on Facebook and other social networking sites.” (Clemmer, 2012).
The results from this survey are quite interesting. The Center for Eating Disorders is not trying to indicate that there is a positive correlation between Facebook use and negative body image per say. However, the study does show that Facebook is certainly capable of providing the fuel for obsessing over one’s weight and criticizing one’s body (Clemmer, 2012).

Facebook changes how we communicate with one another as well as how we view ourselves. Users become extremely focused on comparing their bodies to others. This obsession has increased with the introduction of the new timeline feature as well. Users can now see pictures of themselves overtime which can trigger negative thoughts because they can see how they used to look over a period of time.

"A significant percentage, maybe half the people are using their Facebook interaction as ways to compare themselves to other people and looking at photos and coveting the bodies of other friends or the weights of other people and not feeling good about their own bodies," said Dr. Crawford (Kuebler, 2012).

Social media networks are becoming a big part of many people’s lives. Several studies have been conducted in order to determine whether or not social media like Facebook for example, helps or negatively impacts one’s body image and self-esteem. Today the amount of exposure one has to unattainable beauty has increased due to social networking. Aside from the exposure to the images, the interaction with the images can be just as harmful. For example, people may feel pressured into having the perfect looking profile picture as a result of personal comparisons one makes, as well as the judgment from others. An article by CNN asked young adults
how they felt about themselves and to explain how social networking sites impact their lives. When asked what it takes to be liked one response was “‘People get positive attention in the world by losing weight. And you can do it to an even greater extent on Facebook.’” Under the category fantasy, reality, and painful comparisons one respondent said, “‘When looking at images of girls in a magazine almost all us know that they are altered electronically to appear perfect. When it comes to social media such as Facebook, most believe that they are looking at raw pictures, or ‘real girls.’ Whether this is true or not, they are ultimately used as a standard of comparison.’” (Kuebler, 2012).

Social media allows our every move to be analyzed by the public eye which often times can make individuals more critical of their body image. The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt conducted a study that looked at Facebook and how social media influences body image and hyper-awareness of body size. The survey involved 600 participants. According to the survey results, 75 percent of Facebook users are not satisfied with their body. In addition, it was revealed that 51 percent of the participants felt social media sites such as Facebook increased their awareness of their body and weight.

The director of The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt, Dr. Harry Brandt stated, “Facebook is making it easier for people to spend more time and energy criticizing their own bodies and wishing they looked like someone else. In this age of modern technology and constant access to Smartphones and the internet, it’s becoming increasingly difficult for people to remove themselves from images
and other triggers that promote negative body image, low self-esteem and may ultimately contribute to eating disorders.” (Darnell, 2012).

Information found on Facebook status updates could also cause one to compare the joy and success of other’s to that of themselves. According to Digital Buzz’s Facebook statistics in 2012:

- Facebook has over 800 million active users
- An average Facebook user has 130 friends and likes 80 pages
- Each week on Facebook more than 3.5 billion pieces of content are shared

With such a high number of users it’s no wonder why there have been so many studies conducted to evaluate Facebook use and the effect it has on people’s lives. (Daniells, 2012)

**Advertising by way of the Internet**

Internet advertising is used on social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, magazine Websites and television network Web sites. By doing so it is very cost-efficient. Advertisers can also customize and target their advertisements. An increasing number of people are dedicating more of their time to the Internet which is another reason advertisers seek social networking sites as a way to reach out to more consumers (Babu & Kamur). Since the Internet is a platform for advertising, it opens a new door for marketing the thin ideal body image.

In 2011, approximately seven million people had Internet access worldwide (Internet Word Stats, 2012) The U.S. average for household having Internet access in
there homes was 75.9 percent in 2010. According to Newspaper Association of America, in 2011 $207 million was dedicated to online advertising industry-wide (Edmonds, 2012). With companies devoting so much money to online advertising, it is safe to say that this form of advertising is very influential and a vital way to communicate with consumers. Several weight loss companies such as Jenny-Craig and Weight Watchers use the Internet to form communities where they are able to market their products. They also use blogging, personal diary entries, online commercials and recipe downloads to showcase some of the services they provide.

With a rise in online dieting Websites, media have another way of exposing consumers to the promotion of the thin ideal body image. Consumers use the Internet to gather health information. According to Bing, Microsoft’s answer to Google, the two top health-related search terms among Diets were “Weight Watchers” and “diet/obesity” in 2011 (O’Connor, 2011). The Internet is so easily accessible to consumers that advertisers are able to reach a large quantity of people.

However, when one attempts to use search terms such as “diet”, they will be introduced to thousands of online sources. I put this to the test on Yahoo.com and typed “diet” into the search engine. I immediately saw links to several diet trends currently out such as the South Beach Diet, Dash Diet and Sensa Diet. I also saw links to top fat burners, diet pills, and ways to lose pounds fast. This is all due to the fact that companies are paying search engines to generate their advertisements when people use certain key words.

Celebrities and weight is a popular topic that the media cover and can be found all over the Internet. Advertisers pay search engines so that when consumers search for a
particular Hollywood celebrity, their search results lead them to their weight loss products. A search for Marie Osmond brought up Nutri-System. Nutri-System uses Marie Osmond as their spokesperson and is featured in numerous print advertisements as well.

Being able to research diet and health information on the Internet can pose as a problem for consumers. The reason for this is because quality control is missing in the content posted. Sometimes it can be hard to tell whether or not something posted online is reputable. However, the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) helps consumers recognize and avoid deceptive claims made by fake news sites. In September 2012, FTC charged the Coleadium, Inc. affiliate network with using fake news sites to market Acai Berry weight loss products and colon cleansers. The defendants made claims that when using the Acai and colon cleanser products they would notice rapid and substantial weight loss promising as much as 25 pounds in four weeks. In addition, the marketers that were recruited by the defendants promoted free trials of the products. Consumers were tricked into signing up for additional shipments and billed monthly (Lordan, 2012).

Some companies truthfully do promote a healthy way to weight loss but the ever-present advertisements featured on television, magazines and the Internet adds to the media’s marketing of the thin ideal body image. Another popular tactic of weight loss companies is to use consumer’s insecurities to convince women they need to use their products. This is most commonly used for New Year’s resolutions. For example, Atkins has a “New Year, New You: Five Tips for Weight Loss Success.” Weight Watchers encouraged women to write a “New Your Resolution.” Jenny Craig offers a “Resolution Refresh for Abandoned Weight Loss New Year’s Resolutions.” One side of analyzing these titles seem like the weight loss program websites make it look like the have all the
answers to women’s weight loss dilemmas and are doing you a favor by saving them from gaining a few extra pounds over the holidays. However, you can also look at it as the fact that the diet industry is simply exploiting women and their emotions for pure profit (Rizvic, 2012). All of these advertisements make women feel that if they change their body appearance, then they in turn can change who they are as a person, when in reality weight loss will not make anyone more likeable, interesting or funny.

Companies use a variety of tactics to showcase their advertisements on the Internet. One of the most popular ways is to form a Web site to promote a particular service or product. Blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter and message boards are also a way to build a relationship between companies and their consumers. Companies guide consumers to their Website by using various tactics. Some popular techniques companies use when advertising on other Websites are banners and side-bar advertisements. In addition, in-text-advertising is a new way of advertising online where advertisers purchase key words found in news stories to be linked to their Website.

Target marketing is used all over the Internet. Advertisers use social networking sites and search engines to collect information about possible consumers and therefore create advertisements that specifically target their demographics. On December 20, 2007, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released proposed principles as a way of guiding the development of self-regulation in terms of online behavioral advertising. The four guidelines were as follows:

1. “Every Web site where data is collected for behavioral advertising should provide a clear, consumer-friendly, and prominent statement that data is being
collected to provide ads targeted to the consumer and give consumers the ability to choose whether or not to have their information collected for such purpose.”

2. “Any company that collects or stores consumer data for behavioral advertising should provide reasonable security for that data and should retain data only as long as is necessary to fulfill a legitimate business or law enforcement need.”

3. “Companies should obtain affirmative express consent from affected consumers before using data in a manner materially different from promises the company made when it collected the data.”

4. “Companies should only collect sensitive data for behavioral advertising if they obtain affirmative express consent from the consumer to receive such advertising. FTC staff also seeks comment on what constitutes “sensitive data” and whether the use of sensitive data should be prohibited, rather than subject to consumer choice.” (The Federal Trade Commission, 2007).

These guidelines are a popular topic in terms of social networking groups such as Facebook. Facebook is a very profitable demographic for many marketers. There are over 500 million people who are registered Facebook users. Facebook is a source for advertisers to reach a large range of consumers. According to Facebook’s Website, they collect user’s personal information such as likes and interests, as well as they sites traveled to outside of Facebook by using cookies. Cookies are stored data containing information about a user’s past browsing history. All of this information is then shared with third-party advertisers (Facebook, 2012).

Many marketers use social media for advertising purposes. In fact, they place a high value on social media since 83% of marketers indicated that social media is
important for their business. In terms of popularity, the top five social marketing tools/sites used by marketers are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, and Youtube. There are also several benefits to using social media. 85% of marketers felt the number one benefit was the ability to generate more business exposure. Increasing traffic (69%) and providing marketplace insight (65%) (Cox, 2012).

**Hypothesis**

The main question I was interested in finding was why some images get more likes than others. I also was interested in looking at the relationship between likes and sexualized scores.

Based on previously mentioned theoretical perspectives in the literature pertaining to exposure effects, identification, social comparison, social construction of reality, and cultivation effects, as well as prior research about media effects on body dissatisfaction, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Images that receive a high sexualized score will receive more likes than images with a low sexualized score.

H2: Images with a high sexualized score will also have a higher number of shares.

H3: Fashion magazines promote the “thin-ideal” through their Facebook pages.

**Methodology**

This study was quantitative. Prior research has shown a direct correlation between the way a woman is advertised in magazines, television and the Internet with body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate
the way magazines portray women on their Facebook pages to see if in fact the same truth holds for new media.

The three magazines that were selected for this study were Elle, Glamour and Vogue. Google Docs was used to record all of the data to be analyzed. To begin I went to each of the magazine’s Facebook pages to record the number of Facebook likes as well as number of people talking about each magazine’s Facebook page (shares). Next I selected 40 images from each magazine to gather a total of 120 images for evaluation. I selected the images by clicking on the ‘photos’ tab. From there I went selected the first 40 images that were of women.

As I selected each of the images I made sure to scrapbook all of them to capture the pages live. Next I used Google Docs to create a spreadsheet to host all of my data. I had a separate column for each of the following headlines: magazine, image number, time stamp, likes, and shares.

I also created a coding scheme to use while analyzing each of the images. My categories were Expression, Body Pose, Weight, Clothing, and Percent of Skin Showing. The scale was created to help analyze the degree of sexuality each of the images were. Each of the images were coded with a number from zero to three. Where 0 = not at all sexualized, 1 = a little bit sexualized, 2 = somewhat sexualized and 3 = very sexualized. Once this was determined I then created definitions for each of the categories to correspond to each of those numbers, which is displayed in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Body Pose</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Skin Showing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

44
Once this chart was created I selected a sample of 3 images from each magazine to test everything and have a practice run in coding the images. After I was happy with the coding scheme I then began coding my data for the study. Once all of the data was collected I then calculated the mean, median, mode and standard deviation for each column. I then decided to break down the magazines into their own charts and calculate mean, median, mode and standard deviation for the magazines separately as well. I chose to do the calculations as an entire group to get an overall feeling of the types of images magazines display on their Facebook pages. However, I felt it would be interesting to also look at the magazines separately to see if some showed more sexualized images than others. In addition, I calculated the average for each of the 120 images to determine their individual sexualization score. Once this was determined I then went ahead and calculated the mean, median, mode and standard deviation for that column as well.

Next I recoded the likes into low (below mean) and high (above mean). This process was also repeated for the sexualized scores.
Data Analysis

The highest possible score each image could receive in terms of their degree of sexualization was a 3. The average score for all 121 images was .70. The most common average was .60. This somewhat surprised me because I expected a much higher number. I assumed that the magazines would be displayed much more sexualized images on their Facebook pages. However, I will argue that it all depends on the images selected. Everyday several images are added to their Facebook pages. Perhaps if this study were to be conducted again, the results would yield a higher level of sexualized images. It all depends on the images loaded on the day that the images are selected.

Results

H1: I predicted that the higher the number of likes an image received the more likely that women with high levels of exposure to fashion magazines Facebook pages would exhibit higher degrees of liking an ultra-thin fashion model.

As a result, I did find that the images with higher likes received higher shares and scored higher overall in terms of the degree of sexualization the image was coded as. For example the image with the highest number of likes was image number 207 in Vogue Magazine with 22,771 likes and 1,176 shares and had an overall sexualization score of 1.00. However, image number 177 in Glamour Magazine had a lower number of likes and shares with 935 likes and 28 shares but scored higher in terms of the degree of sexualization with a 2.60. This image scored the highest out of all 120 images.

IMAGE #207:
IMAGE 177: Glamour Magazine
Perhaps one reason for this is because they are two different magazines and therefore attract different women in terms of age, gender, and interests.

H2: I predicted that the more women are exposed to fashion magazine images on Facebook the less satisfied they will be with their physical appearance.

I measured this by looking at the number of shares the images received since shares represent how many times a particular image has been circulated. I predicted that the more shares an image got, the more likely it is that women will have a higher rate of
exposure to thin and sexualized images. Out of all 120 images on average there were approximately 83 shares. Again image 207 received the highest number of shares with a total of 1,176. A total of 10 images did not have any shares. These images were also associated with a lower number of likes as well as low sexualization score. For example, image 123 from Elle Magazine received 7 likes, 0 shares, and a sexualization score of .25.
H3: Fashion magazines promote the “thin-ideal” through their Facebook pages. I wanted to see whether or not the same “thin-ideal” that was strongly portrayed through
traditional magazines was the same as magazines being represented online through social media and Facebook.

I was surprised by my findings that the overall sexualization scores were on the rather low spectrum. For example the average of all 120 images was 0.72 out of 3. The most common score was 0.60. I was expected the numbers to be quite higher; more along the lines of 2.5 or higher. One image was close to a score of 3 with a 2.80. This was image number 125 from Elle Magazine.

IMAGE 125: ELLE MAGAZINE
The following images scored between a 2.6 and 2.0:

2.6: image 177 from Glamour:
2.2 image 173 from Glamour:
2.0 image 103 from Elle:
2.0 image 166 from Glamour:
Another feature I wanted to test was that sexualization causes likes. In order to accomplish this I created an additional column to my spreadsheet. This column was titled sex category. The column was based on a scale of one to three. Where one was low and three was high. Next to the sex composition column was the sex rank column. In this column number 1 to 120 were assigned. To determine where the sex category would begin as low and move to medium and high, I looked at where the sex composition scores changed and in a sense broke up each section into thirds. Numbers 1 through 44 were assigned a 1, numbers 45 through 86 were assigned a 2, and numbers 88 through 120 were assigned a 3.

Next I created a table demonstrating the average of likes and shares for the magazines. According to my hypothesis I predicted that a high-sexualized score will cause a high number of likes. This was held true in Elle magazine and Vogue magazine. However, in terms of shares, the chart revealed that highly sexualized images also
yielded a higher number of shares. I then removed the feature of grouping the likes and shares by magazine and just did the averages as a whole out of the 120 images. As a result, the hypothesis I predicted which was: Sexualized images will cause a high number of likes and shares was true. On average, out of 120 images, those that received a highly sexualized score had 1,782 likes and 112 shares. On the other hand, out of 120 images, those that received a low sexualized score received on average, 1,035 likes and 64 likes.

**Conclusion**

The following study presents a number of valuable findings. The media still sexualizes women even through Facebook; just as women were sexualized and images portrayed a thin ideal through magazines and television. Overall, it was found that women’s exposure to new media such as Facebook has an impact on body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and drive for thinness. This is proven through the images presented in Elle, Glamour and Vogue’s Facebook pages. The body shapes and sizes of the women in the images are also very similar which show that each of the magazine’s display a thin-ideal that is typically depicted in the media.

The images posted on Facebook may also be related to current trends and life styles. Perhaps one reasoning for sexualized images to have a higher number of likes is related to how women interpret the way they are to look and be accepted into society. Taking a deeper look into this, I conclude that if women spend a great deal of time exposed to these images on Facebook, they can begin to perceive what they are exposed to online as reality in terms of what they should aspire to in order to create happiness and acceptance not only to others, but to themselves. The problem with
this is that it creates a false identity. This is not who they truly are but what they perceive other people think they should be.

By looking into the social comparison theory a connection can be made between the types of media and the effect of body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and the drive for thinness. However, with the change in technology, reading magazines is almost becoming obsolete. Sure, women still buy magazines and read them today; but the content in magazines is now able to reach more women in more ways than just the physical copy of a magazine. Women can access magazines on their smart phones, download copies on their tablets, and view the magazine’s website and social media sites as well.

Findings from this study offer some interesting insights into the effects of fashion magazine exposure through social media. Many women today feel that beauty is a measure of self-worth. This study suggests that advertisers and marketers, as well as the publishing and fashion industries, should be more cognizant of their obligations related to social responsibility. Perhaps advertisers can avoid the negative effects women experience in terms of their own body satisfaction if they refrain from using images of ultra-thin models in their campaigns. In addition, another solution would be to have the publishing and fashion industries employ models of different sizes in order to represent the diversity of female bodies. The focus should be more on celebrating and accepting that we are all beautiful and different in our own way.
References:


