The Ugly Beauty Standard: What can Fashion Industry Do?

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Abstract: The ugly beauty standard is caused by the fashion industry as people tend to pay more attention to being skinny and achieving the perfect body. More and more people are sacrificing their health and choose to do plastic surgeries. The fashion industry can also take some measures to get rid of the beauty standard by spreading the different brands that design clothes for different body types, and making the brand that is inclusive for all body size. The future fashion industry should be inclusive and diverse, and help people find the beautiful side and love themselves.

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The existing beauty standard damages humans. Young girls are distressed continuously because of their bodies; women are busy changing their appearances to upgrade their values; the overtly sexual advertisements and games fill young boys; men are expected to be masculine and take all the humans' responsibilities. All in all, in the game called the beauty standard, no one wins. Indeed, the fashion industry is the cause that leads to the creation of an unhealthy beauty standard.

Chiefly, it is crucial to recognize the downsides of the ugly beauty standard. Firstly, self-objectification is one of the most known harmful effects that is caused by the beauty standard. People who self-objectified tend to perceive themselves "as a collection of body parts, displayed for the gaze of others"^[1]. Therefore, this group of people tends to pay more attention to achieving the perfect body and eventually suffers from

mental illness, such as eating disorders and depression. After that, the ugly beauty standard generates a series of untrue stereotype about different body shapes. On the one hand, people often associate obesity with laziness and poverty.

On the other hand, being skinny is usually connect described as "unrealistic", "abnormal", and "unhealthy" in the documentary Embrace^[2]. People should not only choose one body size as standard and attack another one. The core of body positivity is inclusive for all body sizes and admitting the fact that there are multiple definitions of beauty.

At the same time, although the body positivity movement in America helped women accept their body and provided different sizes of clothing for women. Being skinny is still a considerable pressure for women in Asia. Women are only considered pretty if they have twigs like legs and a body weight that is less than 50 kilogram. The illegally produced diet pills became viral in China, some influencers will sell the medicine through social media and gain millions of revenues per year. For instance, according to the South China Morning Post, an arrested actress who sold the fake pill by using live streaming and gain 1.1 million yuan^[3].

Moreover, it is only a tip of this numerous iceberg. Both female and male stars always keep spreading the idea of losing weight. The videos about adopting an extreme diet for losing weight in a short period are receiving billions of views. Over-edited photos started to take over social media. Plastic surgery industry starts to gain numerous revenues. More and more people are sacrificing their health to get unrealistic body images.

However, some people might state that having the characteristics of standardized beauty benefits them. In their opinion, they are willing to risk their health to get the perfect body. For instance, some people are

obsessed with plastic surgery, because they think their body is an “ongoing project” that can be “modified for the purpose of construction of self”^[4]. Especially in Asia, plastic surgery actually “is seen as a way to improve standing in the academic, social, and economic spheres”^[4]. Although plastic surgery has the effect of elevating people’s social status, it still “leads to women focusing on beauty instead of character and intelligence as the symbol of socioeconomic success”^[4]. As a result, women are dehumanized and valued solely by their appearances rather than their achievements. All in all, fitting into the beauty standard may be able to bring people short term benefits, but it still damages people unconsciously and in the long term.

The fashion industry is the primary cause of this beauty standard instead of skinny people. Therefore, how can we get rid of the devastating beauty standard? The solution is simple. The best way is, indeed, to get rid of standardized beauty, and the fashion industry can achieve this solution in the real world. Firstly, the fashion industry should use neither shape of models excessively. Instead, they should invest their energy on spreading the different brands that design clothes for different body types. In other words, they should not only promote the designers who design clothes for one single body type but also support multiple designers who create outfits for different body types. The fashion industry needs new voices, and mainstream brands are too bland and similar. The designers of these brand are designing clothing only for skinny bodies, and the fashion industry should accept the new designers who are designing clothing for other body types. Although it is inevitable for the fashion industry to create some beauty standard, they should change this standard to a whole subject that incorporates different genres.

At the same time, make the brand that is inclusive for all body sizes is also a insightful concept that will help the brand establish a positive image and expand the potential customer. Specifically, Dove has a campaign that encourages women with different body types come together and speak up for the misrepresentation of women in the media. By introducing this campaign, Dove re-established its positive brand image in people’s heart after the racist campaign^[5]. At the same time, the British clothing band Pretty Little Things started to use the Plus size model on its website and it also added a new category Plus to specifically serve the people who have larger bodies. This clothing brand not only attracted a new group of customers but also constructed

a positive brand image in customers’ minds. On the other hand, the women’s lingerie brand Victoria’s Secret is losing profits partially due to ineffective advertisements. This brand is still using skinny perfect model girls in its commercial. Although this kind of commercial was popular a couple years ago, a survey reveals the fact that people are losing interests on this brand and its commercial. According to Forbes, the company behind Victoria’s Secret, L Brands “has lost more than two-fifths of their value this year, declined more than 4% in after-hours trading after the company reported earnings late Monday”^[6]. In the past years, Victoria’s Secret has always been a popular brand, especially among teenage girls. And this brand also always holds the Victoria’s Secret Show annually to promote their products. In the previous years, this show is popular globally. After watching this show that filled with skinny perfect models, people start to compare themselves with those models. The exercise video and diet plans start to use Victoria’s Secret Show to promote themselves. However, after the body positivity movement, less and less people are attracted by this kind of perfect body campaign. Indeed, the declining influence of Victoria’s Secret Show is actually the indication that the future of the fashion industry should be inclusive and diverse. Moreover, the concept of body positivity movement is what should the fashion industry do - help people find the beautiful side and love themselves.

All in all, the existing beauty standard is putting pressure on women who have different body shapes and dehumanizing them. Society should not encourage this phenomenon. Instead, it should value women by their intelligence as opposed to their looks. Girls should not only be pretty and caring; they also can be bright and fierce. The fashion industry also should not resist their skinny tradition and start to embrace the fact that beauty is not a standard but a category that incorporates different body sizes and styles.

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