

▲ study of the representation of women in magazine beauty advertisements, with close reference to Dove and Chanel

The extreme focus on beauty and desirability is very apparent in today's media, with almost every beauty advertisement looking "perfect". However, what some women fail to realise, is that these adverts have most definitely been re-touched, therefore making that level of beauty impossible to attain. The media world that we live in constantly presents us with the perfect woman. Women sell everything from food, to cars, to music, but it is usually their bodies which really attract the audience. Popular film and television actresses are becoming younger, taller and thinner, putting even more pressure on today's young girls. Women's magazines are full of articles urging readers that they too can be thin and attractive. Standards of beauty are being imposed on women, when, in fact, the majority of women are naturally larger and older than any of the models we see. However, this perfect image ensures that the cosmetic and diet industry are constantly in profit, as the ideal is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. Women compare themselves to other women, and compete with each other to gain male attention.

The ancient proverb, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is difficult for teenage girls and young women to grasp. Every day, they are faced with false images of perfection, whether it be on television, the internet or magazines. The media paints a clear picture of what society believes to be beautiful, and magazine beauty advertisements are the worst examples. These advertisements are usually about the appearance of the face, or the face and body. The image of the face is shot as a close-up, meaning that the model has to look flawless if the brand or company want the consumers to purchase their product. This thought-to-be perfect image of beauty is clearly heavily airbrushed, as the skin is blemish, line and shadow free, the lips are full, and the eyes are brightened with long, thick lashes. The face is manipulated by technology, clearly representing a false depiction of today's real women.

Women's magazines can be broken down into three types; all-age general (e.g. heat) over-eighteen glamour (e.g. Vogue) and teenage (e.g. Bliss). Women's general magazines consist of famous people, clothing, babies and children, home improvement, food, diet, and exercise. Some may also include problem pages and travel sections. The over-eighteen glamour magazines usually follow the same formula; fashion and style, celebrities, beauty, travel and occasionally relationships with men. This type of magazine is popular with young girls, as they desire to live a lavish lifestyle, with some girls hailing them as "bibles". Teenage girls' magazines are similar to over-eighteen glamour, but with more of a focus on celebrities. They also contain music news, problem pages, boy issues and fashion.

Women's magazines have faced criticisms for the importance attached to good looks. Every photograph is carved to accentuate sexual allure and is composed with awareness of men's reaction. Women put pressure on themselves to look like the super-skinny model, and the images seen in the magazines are seen as damaging to a women's well-being. Women's magazines are also criticised for promoting clothes which most women can never afford.

However, women's magazines also have positive aspects. Some magazines put forward messages to encourage women to live their life. They are also praised for putting all the pieces of a female's life into one, at the ease of the reader. Some magazines also encourage hobbies, such as knitting and DIY, and should be valued in the magazine industry.

▲Advertising is the most potent message in our culture. It is toxic for women and young girls' self esteem, as it forms the basis of what we believe women should look like. Girls are desirable for advertisers, as they develop brand loyalty that can last a lifetime. The representations created within the adverts are completely unreal, in terms of conforming to social and male expectations. Young women are represented differently to middle aged women, as girls in their 20s have more appeal to target audiences for cosmetics brands. Women's representations in the media revolve around the appearance of physical beauty, even though these images are extremely artificial in their portrayal.

The way in which the media represent women is done in a particular way for a reason. The images produced form an ideal which is evidently unrealistic, so the companies and products are constantly in demand, "There are lots of young girls who are beautiful and spends lots of money on fashion, but they're not thin enough to be in Vogue. We are promoting the fantasy to sell the products." (Plum Sykes, Vogue Executive). They are particularly vulnerable because they are new and inexperienced consumers, therefore being the target of many advertisers. The pressure on teenagers means they find it difficult to resist or question the messages given to them by the mass media. This mass communication has created a national force that erodes personal and public standards of beauty.

Women as a whole are the most lucrative audience for advertisers. Beauty advertisements embody women as thin, young, "pretty" girls. This has always been apparent in this form of advertising, but nowadays, heavy amounts of retouching occur in almost every advertisement. This manipulation reinforces that perfect image. It is widely believed that ideology has some kind of impact in and on our society. Ideology refers to ideas and beliefs, but more significantly, systems of beliefs. There is a negative view of ideology, which suggests that people would never obtain a true picture of the world unless the false images and "idols" we are exposed to are eradicated.

Using real-life characters in advertising get unsatisfactory results for businesses. The media use stereotypical characters as they impact on the audience and are convincing. ▲Advertisers, such as Saatchi & Saatchi, and Bartle, Bogle & Hegarty believe it works much better to get models who fit the stereotype to pose in completely make believe scenes. Stereotypes, such as the dumb blonde, allow an advertisement to communicate instantly with the audience. Some argue that advertising as we know it could not exist without the use of stereotypes. The metrosexual male is a common stereotype used in today's advertising for high fashion and perfume products, although it is exaggerated heavily from the realistic representation of the metrosexual. In adverts for John Paul Gaultier and ▲bercrombie & Fitch, the male models are extremely feminine-looking, tanned and groomed. This type of model attracts both men and women. ▲Another example of stereotypes in advertising is the typically beautiful woman that appears in cosmetics advertisements. They are not necessarily stereotypical in

general appearance, but the big eyes, lips and tanned face are repeated so many times that when turning to a beauty advert, we expect to see the same type of model.

Women who fit this type, such as ▲Adriana Lima and ▲ishwarya Rai, model continuously for brands Maybelline and L'Oreal Paris.

The current advertising trend of retouching women and churning out flawless images has led to models such as Gisele and Kate Moss fast becoming stereotypical. Now, when we turn the pages of a magazine, we expect to see flawless imagery of supermodels and the products they are trying to sell. Repetitive imagery has led to the model's appearance becoming familiar and therefore stereotypical.

The "Hypodermic Needle" theory suggests that the media "injects" messages into its audience, a message in which the audience cannot resist. This theory can be applied to beauty advertising, such as mascara advertisements, as they are so powerful in their messaging that the audience succumb to it. These mascara adverts have so obviously been manipulated to make the lashes look thicker, longer and more glamorous, yet we, as the audience, believe the supposed "power" of a mascara tube! More recently [2007] audiences have latched on to the techniques of advertisers. ▲ L'Oreal advert for "Telescopic Mascara", featuring Penelope Cruz, was condemned for producing "misleading" advertisements. It was revealed that the advert used false lashes to enhance the natural lashes, and the ▲ASA (▲Advertising Standards ▲Agency) has now ordered L'Oreal to add a disclaimer to future adverts whenever models are wearing false lashes.

Cosmetics companies such as Maybelline, No7 and Rimmel have continuously produced adverts showing attractive, flawless women, whereas in recent years, these brands have faced a backlash from Dove, another cosmetics brand. The brand has fought against the media's typical stereotypes, by creating advertising campaigns featuring "real women", with natural body shapes and sizes. These campaigns created women which the public can relate to, and the campaign was launched to inspire women to have confidence and be comfortable with themselves. The advertisements used in this campaign featured normal women of all different shapes and sizes. Their philosophy was not to retouch or airbrush any of their advertisements; it was merely to portray the realness of today's average woman. The advertisements that Dove create are relatively clean and simple, merely advertising the product with a clear, straightforward approach. The generic conventions of basic but effective designs reappears with the adverts Dove produce. They all feature normal women from the general public, with "real" body shapes and sizes.

In a print media advert for "Dove Firming" body cream, the colour used is predominantly white. The background is white, and the underwear worn by the model is also white. This colour connotes innocence, purity and cleanliness. This colour is also used on the bottle of the products, which allows connections with the advertisement and the product. ▲As with Chanel, these colours are generic conventions of Dove and its advertising techniques. ▲As the model is dark skinned, this means that her and her shape is in sharp focus due to the contrast against the background. She is located slightly left of the page, but she is in a full body shot, showcasing her natural curves. The smile is that of "super-smiler" which is friendly and inviting, whilst her eye contact is connecting with the audience. Her head is resting on her shoulder, tilted towards the camera,

which connotes a sense of innocence and genuineness. Her legs are bent and her arm is resting softly on her leg, which also connotes a sense of relaxed and carefree enjoyment. The model is of average weight and height, not the stereotypical "Size 0" supermodel. This strategic choice of model relates to the majority of the target audience; women who are most likely to be of natural weight and size. Her hair is pulled back into a ponytail which shows off the true beauty of her face, and she is wearing just underwear to boast her natural feminine figure. She is shown with natural blemishes on her skin, such as the dark patch on her elbow or the flecks on her leg. She clearly has some make-up on, but it is not over the top. Her face is spot free, and her teeth are bright white. This unlikely pristine look of the teeth could possibly mean that the model has been slightly retouched. However, Dove has been leading a campaign called "The Campaign for Real Beauty", and the aim was to inspire women to have confidence and be comfortable with themselves. The advertisements used in this campaign featured normal women of all different shapes and sizes. Their philosophy was not to retouch or airbrush any of their advertisements; they merely wish to portray the realness of today's average woman.

"New Dove Firming. ▲ tested on real curves." is written in a clean, sans serif font which connotes a modern and fresh style. The use of full stops denotes that this is a statement, and is matter-of-fact. "New" is a buzz word, meaning that the product appeals to more people as it is a new product which audiences will want to purchase. This phrase is written in a soft grey font, so is therefore not too harsh of a colour and connotes tranquillity, similar to what the woman is with her body shape.

Dove is the only company of its type to challenge the norm in beauty advertising. They [arguably] represent women in a fair way. The target audience for the "Real Beauty" campaign is obviously young and middle-aged women, who are typical British females. The strategic choice of model used in the campaigns relates to the majority of the target audience; women who are most likely to be of natural weight and size.

▲ Although the campaign presents more realistic role models for women than is the norm, the central message remains the same. Beauty is not something that comes naturally to women: it requires endless effort, as well as the purchase of various products designed to change or hide women's problem areas. The campaign was hit by other controversy. The ground-breaking adverts which featured "real" women and told British women to be proud of their bodies, regardless of their shape or size, were, according to reports, actually retouched. Pascal Danguin, a well-known retoucher of fashion pictures who does regular work for fashion magazines and fashion brands including Dior and Balenciaga, says that it was a "challenge to keep everyone's skins and faces showing the mileage without looking unattractive". However, Dove immediately issued a statement, reading; "Dove's mission is to make more women feel beautiful every day by widening the definition of beauty and inspiring them to take great care of themselves. Dove strives to portray women by accurately depicting their shape, size, skin colour and age".

In contrast to Dove, Chanel's advertising is very different- in style, target audience and budget. Firstly, their style of advertising is much more "high quality". The generic

conventions of Chanel advertising is to use; monochrome colours, super skinny models and expensive clothing (if any)!

Advertisements from premier brands such as YSL, Estée Lauder and Chanel generate adverts using the same, typical generic conventions of beauty advertising. The budget in which they have borders on extortionate, meaning money is no object. Choosing the amount of airbrushing and digital manipulation proves to cost just "pennies" for these companies. However, it is not just healthy finance that is on their side. Brands such as these gain positive reputations of being luxurious and high quality, a status which they cannot afford to lose.

One way in which the definitive contrast between the two brands' advertising is shown in their budgets. For example, the most expensive advert ever made was created by Chanel. Although this was not a magazine advert, it nonetheless shows how much this company spends on its advertisements. The advert was for the famous fragrance Chanel No.5, was two minutes long, (three including credits) and cost £18m to create. It was shown on television and in cinemas before the screening of Bridget Jones' Diary and featured Hollywood star Nicole Kidman and Rodrigo Santoro, a Brazilian actor.

The extortionate budget Chanel has means they are able to produce top quality, memorable adverts continuously. The most recent Chanel advertisements that caught attention were for the fragrance "Coco Mademoiselle". Along with a television campaign, Chanel produced an eye-catching, controversial -sparked magazine advertisement. Starring Keira Knightley as the late Coco Chanel, the advert was heavily criticised for excessive airbrushing and manipulation of Knightley's natural body shape.

Looking at a print media advert for Chanel, the colour scheme of the advert is classic Chanel – black and white. These colours are generic conventions of Chanel and their adverts. The majority of Chanel advertising and products feature monochrome heavily. Behind the model, Keira Knightley, is a black background, with two white spotlights featured just behind her head. The contrast of the black against the model means that she stands out, and attracts the audience's attention. The familiar Chanel logo is located in the top right, in a bright white sans serif font to stand out against the black background. It is classic and clean, so it is easily recognizable. The name of the perfume being advertised, "Coco Mademoiselle", is in a handwriting style, sans serif, edgy font, thus giving the advert, and effectively the perfume, originality and style – much like Chanel. "Coco Mademoiselle" is in black, on the centre of the left spotlight. It is in line with the model's head, in prime position so it is obvious to the audience. The advert also promotes the website, which therefore involves the audience to explore the brand and product further. The word "Shop" (in "Shop at Chanel.com") attracts audiences further as they can purchase Chanel products online, which acts as a convenient alternative for busy consumers.

The element of the advert that first catches the audience attention is the model, Keira Knightley, a popular British film actress. She is in a suggestive position, as she is naked, apart from a white shirt and a black hat covering her breasts. This erotic arrangement is seductive and sexy, therefore catching male's attention, as well as the obvious female audience. Her shoulders are hunched forwards, and she is kneeling with her hand in an elegant position to the floor. Soft lighting hits her from various angles, flattering certain

parts of her body. The curve of her breast is shown under the hat, and the slim appearance of her body uses the classic media technique: sex sells.

The model is also wearing one significant piece of jewellery, around her neck. The simple addition of the necklace connotes luxury, wealth and again, has a sexual feel about it, as that is all she is really wearing. Her arm is long and thin, as are her legs and her torso. Her whole face is in focus, and is the part of the advert with the most lighting. She is looking directly down the camera lens, inviting the audience. Her lips are chocolate box, which adds more seductiveness to the advert. Her cheekbones are highly defined, and her skin is totally without blemish. Her hair is classically dark and voluminous, placed over her left eye, which suggests roughness, as not everything is in place. It provides a sense of rebellion, which could connote the style of the perfume.

Keira Knightley is here posing as the late Coco Chanel, using intertextuality to familiarise with audiences. The style of this fashionista is apparent in the advert, and the classic look that the model portrays is that of Coco Chanel.

The target audience for this advert is those who are interested in fashion, fans of Keira Knightley or of the brand, elite or glamorous women and those who can afford luxurious products. The flawlessness of the model also appeals to young girls, as they look up to her as a role model. Young girls wish to look like the "perfect" models featured in the advertisement.

The model is stereotypically thin and attractive, and has near-to-perfect skin, hair and figure. It may be clear to some that this picture has been re-touched, even going as far as enhancing the shape of her breast. Her arm appears to have been lengthened and slimmed, same with her torso. With her face, the cheekbones look to have been defined, her eyes whitened and her hair perfected with every strand in place. As Chanel is known as a "premier" clothing and cosmetics company, the adverts therefore need to live up to the high quality of the brand. The recurring form of the adverts formulates Chanel's style of producing top quality products, shown with the high-status style of their advertising. The models featured in the advertisements all follow the same pattern; thin, beautiful and flawless. However, some audiences do not realise that these adverts are literally not real, as so much image manipulating takes place that they are miles away from the original photographed image.



