Women's Body Image in the Media: An Analytical Study of Recent Body Image Movements across Media Platforms

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Abstract


Instagram is one of the fastest growing social networking sites with over 600 million active users to date and approximately 70 million daily photo updates (instagram.com/press). While many Instagram users archive and document fat shaming, body loathing, and unhealthy beauty ideals, including images from Pro-Anorexia groups, an increasing number of posts reflect the new popularity of the Body-Positive Movement. Body-positive groups such as Body Positivity, Fat Acceptance, and “Fitspiration” have millions of followers. This research dissects the rhetoric used in Instagram posts related to self-love and positive body image, and analyzes the emotional responses such posts evoke in young women who frequently use the social media platform. This study also examined possible correlations between participants’ personal Instagram habits and body image. The methods included analysis of body-positive Instagram posts and surveys of 128 females between the ages of 18 and 25. Participants were asked self-reflective questions about their habits and attitudes regarding Instagram, as well as questions about body image, levels of satisfaction with their appearance, and psychological investments in their appearance. Despite the uplifting nature body positivity embraces, any focus on appearance, positive or negative may trigger body-shaming thoughts. With the prevailing cultural pressures for women to look unhealthily thin to be beautiful, these findings show the effects of Instagram’s body-positive posts and suggest what is needed to further heal the body-loathing mindset of modern women.


Women's magazines pioneered public feminine reading material in the late eighteenth century however; publications geared towards a solely plus-size audience did not appear until the late 1900s. As the globalization of media has fostered thin-framed beauty ideals many of the current mainstream women’s publications endorse the promotion of a thin, lean, and toned body aesthetic. This research analyzes two current women’s magazines, a mainstream publication, Shape, and a plus-size publication, DARE, in order to compare the body image messages promoted through cover images, headlines, article subjects, and advertisements. Although mainstream publications like Shape have expanded to adding body confidence sections, the mold of the societal body ideal is mainly showcased whereas DARE embodies body confidence and addresses concerns of plus-size women that are commonly overlooked in mainstream publications. This research adds to the body of women’s magazine studies incorporating the current body image pressures many women face.

Negative Body Image Solutions: A comparative study of Body Positivity, Body Diversity, and Body Functionality through Documentary Film

The concept of body image among young women has continued to reign prevalent in disciplines of the social sciences. In efforts to alleviate the unrealistic pressures women face regarding body image the constructs of body positivity, body diversity, and body functionality are investigated through analyzing the recent body image documentary ‘Embrace’ (2016). This research aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of each construct as defined by ‘Embrace’ (2016) through descriptive statistics and visual analysis. This qualitative data investigates how each construct can serve as a solution to
women's negative body image and can be used to alleviate symptoms associated with negative body image such as self-objectification, anxiety, depression, eating disorder, and disordered eating habits. This study adds to the conversation of proposed solutions for combatting negative body image for future generations of women.

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