

## ATTITUDE TOWARDS MEDIA : INFLUENCE ON CLOTHING INTEREST AND BODY IMAGE

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*The study examines the attitude towards media and its influence on clothing interest and body image. The study was carried with the help of Media Attitude Scale (Dillman, 1978), Clothing Interest Scale (Gurel and Gurel, 1979) and Body Image Scale (Chouhan and Surana, 2000). The tests were administered to 200 girls from various educational institutes of Jaipur belonging to 18 to 21 years. The results reveal that girls with positive attitudes towards media results in greater interest in clothes. This could be because media puts lot of pressure on individuals consciously or unconsciously affect our thoughts, feelings, emotions and attitudes. The study further suggest that girls are significantly effected by the media celebrities appearance in the judgments of their own appearance and girls with higher degree of body dissatisfaction are more strongly effected by media exposure.*

Everyday in contemporary life, we are bombarded with images of people in films, television shows, commercials, news papers, catalogues and music videos. Media is the vehicle of communication. Media psychologically influence the behavior in two ways; one, they determine the individuals motivation to consume media, and secondly they determine how an individual understands the media message and values makes use of them.

In the content of global capitalism our everyday lives are saturated with media. Media has become a major factor in this social structure of what is right, acceptable, desirable or fashionable. In the global media market, perception of fashionable appearance has become increasingly homogenized and has influenced the perception of appearance which further influences our attitude toward apparel.

Media is linked not only to an individual self image, but they are closely linked is the projected social self of an individual (Kumar Balasubramanyu, 2004). We bring many prior experiences, pre conceptions and understanding to viewing experience. Therefore, the media do not just serve images to us. Rather, the various types of media interact with us and we shape our perception of social reality (Altheide and Snow, 1979). Media gives lot of ideas about what looks right and what symbolize connections within and across communities. Therefore, media do not just serve images to us but shape our perception of social reality. Every day people are bombarded by visual advertisements that encourage them to buy particular products or services.

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However, these images also act as socializing agents that influence our attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Kang, 1997).

A review of literature on attitude towards apparel and media has shown emphasis on brand name and type of apparel. Media puts pressure on the individual and consciously or unconsciously affects the thoughts, feelings, emotions and attitudes. Media images and central elements of appearance culture and have been identified as powerful forces shaping appearance standard (Field et al., 1999., Levine, Sonolak and Hayden, 1994). Posavac et al., (1998) found that because current media images of ideal female beauty are narrowly defined, exaggerated and emphasize thinness, exposure to media images make possible the discrepancy between female perceivers conception of her own weight and standard accepted by the society. Therefore where thinness is undeniably a strived beauty ideal, young woman in the process of establishing their identity are especially vulnerable to dissatisfaction with their body image (Senekal, Steyn, Mashego, Teresa-Ann, Nelen, 2001). Infact today's model generally weight 23% less than the average women.

External media images have impact on conceptions of self when individuals internalize these cultural appearance standards. The internalized appearance ideals come to represent personal goal and standard which judge self to others. As such, internalization has been a critical mechanism accounting for the influences of the media on body image dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Thompson and Stice, 2001).

Keeping in view the above, an attempt has been made to see the effect of media exposure on clothing interest and body image.

## METHOD

### Sample

200 girls of 18 to 21 years belonging to various educational institutes of Jaipur were considered for the study. The questionnaires were administered in a group of 4-5 after forming proper rapport with girls.

### Tools

**Media Attitude Scale** developed by Dillman (1973) was used. The scale comprises of 10 items dealing with media on five point scale. Lower the score, positive attitude towards media.

**Clothing Interest Scale (CIS)** streamlined version of Creekmore developed by Gruel and Gruel (1979) The test comprises of 15 items set on 5 response categories ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagreed. Higher the score greater the clothing interest.

**Body Image Scale (BIS)** developed by Chouhan and Surana (2000). The scale comprises of 30 items and each item has developed on 5 point scale from strongly agreed to strongly disagree. Higher score indicates favorable body image.

## RESULTS

**Table-1 : Mean, SD, t ratio of Clothing Interest in Groups Having Positive and Negative Attitude Towards Media.**

Attitude towards Media	N	Mean	SD	t ratio
Positive attitude	130	52.6	4.2	12.7**
Negative attitude	70	48.2	3.6	

$p^* < .05$   $p^{**} < .01$



Results of table-1 reveals that girls with different attitude towards media significantly differ in clothing interest. Girls with positive attitude towards media have greater clothing interest ( $m=52.6$ ) than girls with negative attitude towards media ( $m=48.2$ ) ( $t=12.7, p<.01$ ).

**Table-2 : Mean, SD and t ratio of body Image in Groups Having Positive and Negative Attitude Towards Media.**

Attitude towards Media	N	Mean	SD	t ratio
Positive attitude	130	104.2	3.9	11.30**
Negative attitude	70	119.8	5.2	

Findings of the table-2 reveal that girls with different attitude towards media significantly differ in body image. Girls with negative attitude towards media have favorable body image ( $m=119.8$ ) than girls with positive attitude towards media ( $m=104.2$ ). The difference between two groups is significant at 0.01 level ( $t=11.30, p<.01$ ).

Above results reveal that girls with positive attitude towards media have significantly greater clothing interest. The media project image through films, television shows, commercials, magazines, newspapers and catalogues. Many prior experience, pre-conceptions and understandings to the viewing are attached which makes us increase our interest in apparel as media shape our perception of social reality. They influence us so much that those who are influenced by media develop greater interest towards apparel. They further believe that they are assessed by others through their clothes.

With the result they spend a great deal of time, money and energy on activities related to appearance and is greatly interested in altering their appearance through clothing. They place greater importance on attire for accomplishing their roles (Solomon and Scholper, 1982) as they are highly concerned about what others think of them, as they are sensitive to cues about the appropriateness of their apparel. Several studies reveal that as the girls grow they try to gain their own identity and parents begin to have less influence over them, while their friends and the media gain more importance (Wilson, Mac Gillivray, 1998).

The present study shows that girls with negative attitude towards media are more satisfied with their body image than girls with positive attitude towards media. Because media puts lot of pressure on individual consciously or unconsciously and affect the thoughts, feelings, emotions and attitude. Over past 30 years, the ideal shape presented in media has become thinner while women have actually become heavy. As a consequence, many women experience dissatisfaction with their body size and shape, so many in fact, that this phenomenon has been called "a normative discontent" (Tiggemann and Lynch, 2001).

Studies reveal that magazines have been considered a central medium for shaping cultural ideas about appearance (Cusumano and Thompson, 1997; Levine *et. al.*, 1994). Analyses of appearance magazines reveal a steady bombardment of image that underscores the importance of idealized appearance (Peirce, 1990). The repeated media image of thin females and muscular males makes these idealized body shapes seemingly the standard, even though they do not reflect population norm (Thompson *et. al.*, 1999).

The relevance of appearance magazines to body image is evident in a recent survey of adolescent girls : 69% reported that magazine pictures influence their idea of the perfect body shape, and 47% claimed that the pictures influenced them to want to diet to loose weight (Field *et. al.*, 1999). Evidence suggests that gender stereotypes in advertisements also have an effect on people's psychological well-being. According to a study the effects of exposure to pictures of fashion models from popular women's magazines on young women's concerns with body weight, passive exposure to such images resulted in negative body image and increased weight concern



(Posavac, Posavac, and Posavac, 1998). Negative body image is often the result of a social comparison process, in which discrepancies are perceived between the cultural ideal of attractiveness, usually characterized in the media by a particular emphasis on thinness, and women's views of their own bodies. Negative body image is particularly problematic because it is positively correlated with eating disorders.

Recent study by Hoyt and Kogan (2001) provides convincing evidence that media images play a significant role in how women feel about their bodies. Their study revealed that women do feel more guilty, anxious, and depressed after viewing their models in the media leading to greater dissatisfaction with their bodies.

### CONCLUSION

Girls with positive attitude towards media spend great deal of time, money and energy on activities related to appearance and girls feel guilty, anxious and depressed after viewing models leading to greater dissatisfaction with their bodies.

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