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09.15.2019

Inclusivity in The Fashion Industry

Talks of inclusivity in the fashion/modeling industry majorly focuses on the outward-facing stuff and it can be quite contrivernal, for example, the type of people featured on magazine covers, runways or even advertisement campaigns. For many years, size 6 and below models have dominated both the runways, magazine covers and the fashion/modeling industry in general. Although brands argue that models are their visible faces, and only the ones that are considered the “best” should be used as a brand’s face, these fashions items, for example, clothes or shoes, are being consumed with diverse consumers, from different races, nationalities with different body sizes (Mycall, n.p). For consumers to support and like a particular brand, they must feel the brand is supporting their diversity and this can be done through inclusive strategies. With inclusivity in the fashion/modeling industry, people of all body types and sizes will feel comfortable expressing themselves and they may end up supporting the brand.

One of the reasons why there should be inclusivity in the fashion/modeling industry is that exposing people to different body sizes helps in boosting body positivity (Bould et al, 2). Based on the study conducted by Bould et al, it was determined that people, especially women with eating disorders and subsequent obesity, experience cases of body dissatisfaction (Bould et al, 12). This dissatisfaction is increased with them being continually exposed to images of models or fashion gurus with body sizes they perceive to be perfect. Bould and her co-authors determined that perception of the “normal” body size seem to change in other women as they are

being exposed to more images and cases of people with different body sizes (Bould et al, 13). It was established that exposing women to overweight bodies make them see their bodies as either normal or smaller, hence changing their perception of healthy people have smaller bodies. This is a clear indication that inclusivity in the fashion/modeling industry will not only play a huge role in building the self-esteem of the models, but it will also help in making people in the society to have a positive attitude towards their bodies.

Lowering standards in the fashion and modeling industry is also another thing that should be done to consider inclusivity. Currently, many of the fashion brands consider models who are a size 6 and below. This has resulted in driving the notion that healthy people are size 6 and below. Even though there are levels of body overweight that pose health issues, for example, someone can develop hypertension as well as other cardiovascular complications (Moustafa et al, 4), it does not guarantee that having size 6 and below makes a person healthy as perceived in the fashion industry. The continuous use of people with small body sizes as models in the fashion industry has resulted in many people to equate the small body with being healthy (Moustafa et al, 4). This shows that lack inclusivity in the fashion and modeling industry may result in public miseducation, and that is reason enough why it should be embraced.

Dismantling the current standards in the fashion and modeling industry will be a positive thing. This is because, by focusing on only one type of body size, the fashion industry plays a huge role in creating unrealistic body expectations, especially for women (Mccall, n.p). This can only be changed if models of all sizes, colors, shapes as well as background are featured in the runways (Mccall, n.p). Besides, research also shows that plus-size models are good for mental health. The study which was published by the Florida State University determined that women

tend to retain the memory of plus-size models as well as experience deeper body satisfaction as compared to the rate at which they remember the imagery of thinner and average models.

This study is a clear indication that inclusivity is good and it is needed in the fashion industry. During the study, 49 women were studied, these women had actual-ideal self-discrepancy and were given 12 model images to view randomly (Clayton et al., 3). The images were of media fashion models who had different body types (Clayton et al., 3). During the image exposure, the subject's self-report social comparisons, body satisfaction, and heart rate were measured.

The researchers also administered a visual recognition test after the subjects were shown in the last image (Clayton et al., 4). The results of this study concurred with that of Bould et al. It was concluded that the least amount of social comparison, as well as high levels of body satisfaction, were showcased by the subjects when viewing plus-size models (Clayton et al., 3). On the other hand, there was a decrease in body satisfaction as well as an increase in social comparisons when the subjects viewed thin size and average models (Clayton et al., 3). The study also established that lack of inclusivity in the fashion industry results in a decrease in resource allocation, for example, plus-size ladies are likely to reduce the amount of money they spend on the dressing. This results in reduced sales and revenues for fashion brands hence making it clear that inclusivity is important.

It is okay to change standards in some industries and not others, this is because the standards set in some industries are for ensuring greater good, they also ensure both positive development and enhancement of safety, while standards set in other industries may encourage

discrimination and at times they lower self-esteem of people hence undermining the greater good. For example, the standards for becoming a brain surgeon ensure there is better health, high-quality care, as well as they ensure the safety of the patient is enhanced. These standards reduce or prevent the patient's risk of harm; therefore, they should not be lowered.

On the other hand, standards set in the fashion and modeling industry result in certain groups being discriminated and women having low body satisfaction. Also, since the industry showcase people with body size 6 and below as the ideal body size, other people consider small body sizes as healthy (Moustafa et al, 4). Therefore, lowering standard in some industries, for example, the fashion/modeling industry, results in the greater good, while maintaining standards on other industries, such as a qualification to be a brain surgeon, also results in the greater good.

In conclusion, the lack of inclusivity in the fashion and modeling industry makes the industry to miss out on more things. The rise and integration of social media in many operations have illuminated a wide range of fashion consumers who need to see a more inclusive narrative in the fashion/modeling industry. Consumers need to see the bodies and faces of models on fashion shows and runways across the world celebrating and reflecting their diverse and unique beauty. Inclusivity is significant in the fashion industry, and for brands and designers to be competitive, they need to listen and act on what many consumers want. Brands and designers have a huge responsibility as well as the platform they can use to challenge the perceptions of traditional beauty and body standards.

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