

Jesenia Bravo
BUF 1101: D005
Dr. Woods
Beauty Comes in All Shapes and Sizes

Hello, my name is Jesenia Bravo. I started my journey in the retail world of fashion at the age of sixteen. It began as a summer job to put some extra money in my pocket and eventually evolved into a career of more than ten years. Last August I ended that chapter in my life holding a General Manager position at a \$2 million NYC location, to pursue a higher education in the fashion world. I'm looking forward on continuing to grow and prosper in this field as I learn a new perspective on fashion. One day I hope to make an impact on our fashion world of today with all the knowledge and experience I gather along my journey.



Introduction

My topic for this assignment deals with the issue of body size in the fashion industry and the overall lack of diversity in general. The absence of not only “plus size” models, but also the vast majority of women who are not of the ideal race, shape, size, sexual orientation and those with physical disabilities has hindered the fashion world from its full potential for a very long time. Historically, fashion designers have always chosen the prototypical women to showcase their work. The beautiful, tall, skinny, attractive, able-bodied model has played the role in not only showcasing the works of these designers, but also setting the standard of how the ideal human body should look. This ideal image of the fashion world manifested from the Europeans preference of beautiful women.

This one type of beauty has been enforced and engrained into people’s lives for decades through numerous brands and their fashion campaigns, eventually setting the standard of beauty and the ideal image and body type. (Cheng, 2017) “Our standards for so long have been enforced through campaigns that were setting only one type of beauty," she says. "There’s a lot of old-guard exclusivity that’s been in the fashion and beauty worlds—standards that were set by people who were in power, and it looked pretty homogenous for a long time.” The fashion industry for along time used this seclusion and elitism to separate away from the vast majority of people. The use of this model style over the last few decades has only represented a small percentage of our population, restrictively holding barriers to sustain its exclusivity. This close-minded view assumed that these minorities and niche groups weren’t into fashion and not worth their time and attention.

Models such as Ashley Graham, Jillian Mercado and Winnie Harlow have given an extra spotlight on this topic of inclusion of the “imperfect” models in recent times and have driven society to finally accept these beautiful differences. They along with many others have given the fashion industry a transformation from its outdated systems. Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes. It doesn’t always have to be the skinniest models with the best abs on the covers of the magazines and marketing we receive, but also that, which resembles every size, color and form in our society. We

should highlight and showcase natural body images and more of what closely resembles our society, variety and diversity. Bodies of all shapes and sizes, colors and deficiencies should be celebrated not only on the runways, but also on the campaigns and marketing projects of the leading innovators and fashion brands of our world. The target consumers for marketers and the fashion industry should include and target all body shapes and sizes that are existent in our cultural world.

Diversity Issue

This lack of diversity and variety can lead to doubt and lack of self-belief when the fashion industry only highlights the perfect shape and models, while our society has much more diversity and variety that isn't exemplified and represented. Representation is key in allowing kids and adults to be able to relate and resonate with the models and the brands. (Weinswig, 2018) "In the US, more than half of women wear size 14 and above and, according to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey." This data gives us a glimpse into the huge market that's being neglected and rejected by the fashion industry. Attractive models have been used in marketing and advertisements to increase the appeal of the product on display. The issue with this statement is that the basis of what's attractive and beautiful has been skewed to victimize the "flawed" individuals. Being that fashion companies capitalize from consumer's wants and needs, the fashion world has ignored these diverse groups that better represent our populations image.

This inclusion would lead to better business not only for the advertisers growing their target groups but also for the consumers who would have an easier time connecting and ultimately being captured by the ads and the fashion. Consumers in these groups remain underserved and underrepresented in the fashion world. Everyone is a human and should be accepted and valued. Brands once used elitism to market themselves but with the recent drastic changes in fashion, now inclusion sells. The current marketing for plus-size clothing tends to suggest that those shoppers want to hide their bodies or have an unsophisticated interest in fashion has lead to a disinterest in shopping

for clothes that don't resemble or represent how they want to look. The absence of these overlooked individuals has stressed in recent times in fashion, especially high-end fashion and this needs to be changed in order for our society to progress.

The fashion industry should promote to the mass that people of all shapes, sizes and abilities are beautiful. Instead of portraying this ideal image, they instead should pursue models and people who more closely resemble our society. The mainstream marketing and media of today has started a revolutionary shift in steering away from these traditional barriers that have secluded this industry and instead have now figured out that representing and resembling the mass can unlock a greater potential for all. Promote acceptance and opportunities for everyone. The recent surge in plus size models is not merely a fad, but rather a movement that's only beginning and progressing fiercer with the times.

Impact on the fashion industry (lost revenue, brand image, etc.);

(Perrier, 2008) “Marketers incorporate young, attractive, and thin models in advertisements to help catch the attention of the viewer and showcase the product on display. As the United States population continues to become more diverse, marketers and advertisers may want to incorporate models of various sizes to appeal to a wider target market.” Niche markets such as plus-size clothing have been growing incredibly fast within the last couple of years, yet this market still has a lot of room for opportunities and growth potential. Being that half of US women are a size 14 or above, the standard and ideal model of the traditional fashion world wasn't representing today's society mix.

The old standard of fashion excluded and rejected the outcast groups entirely being that they couldn't relate with their ideal image. It engrained a mentality that “plus-sized” individuals or those from other segregated classes didn't have any interest in fashion. These groups have been conveyed and labeled as undesirable customers, but with these groups, especially more than half of female

population representing the rejected norm, a huge market is available for brands and marketers to capitalize on. If the fashion industry, specifically marketers and advertisers engaged in using models of diverse sizes, they'd appeal to a wider target audience and a great deal of success may be achieved and realized. In using only this one type of ideal thin model, advertisers have been targeting only a small percentage of our population, where if they were to partake in using models that relate more with the everyday individual and the average consumer, brands would appeal and attract a much bigger consumer base. The fashion industry has outcasted these minority groups for a long time because they believed fashion wasn't of interest to them, but in our modern world, fashion resonates with individuals of all shapes and sizes, colors and races, providing these brands with an untapped market that has

While the costs of productions, and tapping into this realized market might cause companies to reevaluate their fundamentals, the market will ultimately provide these businesses with more positive results than negatives. Brands should eliminate the boundaries between plus and straight sizing to eliminate the stigmas that have been placed on these groups throughout fashions development. The ultimate goals of companies and businesses is to create profit and wealth, the benefits of attracting and targeting this group will yield income greater than what the current small markets have provided. Brands that are inclusive can resonate and relate more with the average consumer.

Impact on Consumers

The role of the ideal model has impacted our society in far more ways than just fashion. It set the standard of how individuals should look or what they should strive for, ultimately an unrealistic aspiration. This search of the perfect body has created massive health concerns and risk to the consumers who are ultimately captured by marketers. The persistent implementation of these fashion

campaigns over time has created and imposed many health concerns and risks such as anorexia and bulimia in our society. The overexposure to this ideal thin and attractive model may cause consumers who don't relate with the model to develop a negative body image, creating feelings of discontent, anxiety and eventually unhappiness. It generates shame and embarrassments for those whose are different in our society.

These outcaste groups have been marginalized and devalued for way too long in the fashion industry. By acknowledging that every human is beautiful and acceptable, brands can resonate and relate more with the average consumer. Giving individuals, especially kids examples of people who look like them in campaigns and marketing can help in uplifting self-esteem and confidence in our world. Being able to visualize and see yourself within a brands marketing mix will empower the next generation to feel better about themselves and be more open to all the different types of beauty in our culture.

Consumers in these groups remain underserved in retail and in the fashion industry. Body positivity needs to be embraced. Brands have to promote and treasure beauty in our world in the many ways that it exists. It shouldn't be strictly conserved in this outdated way of thinking and instead should progress in fashion as our society advances in erasing these old-fashioned beliefs. With the help of social media in our recent times, I believe that the issue of inclusivity has been pushed with a great force to change the old views of fashion. The Internet and especially social media has given people from anywhere in the world the ability to relate and have an interest in this amazing form of expression. Consumers for far too long have been denied the opportunity to express themselves with fashion because they have been rejected by the old standards and views. Brands that relate and capture the mass of our civilizations will progress and prosper far more than those who still protect themselves in exclusivity.

How can this issue be resolved or how can its negative impact be minimized?

The first step in resolving this issue is for the fashion industry to open its doors to more people. The simplistic view in what beauty is in the fashion industry has long held back its true potential. Beauty is present in our society in every size and shape. The old European standards and preferences of beauty have ignored the non-thin and other disregarded groups and completely placed them outside of the fashion world. The models behind the marketing campaigns and runways of the most influential brands should promote beauty in all the ways it exists in our world. Only giving consumers one view of what's beautiful and attractive has restricted access for the majority in our society.

Brands need to truly reflect and relate with the common consumer. Marketing needs to develop and incorporate models of every size/weight and shape to exemplify body positivity for everyone. The negative impact that this limitation has caused has not only affected the fashion industry but also the health and wellbeing of those that they have neglected. By incorporating and representing different body physique and valuing its beauty, brands can increase body satisfaction and uplift self-esteem while also creating a larger consumer base for themselves. Companies should offer clothing for all sizes and shapes, at the same costs to consumers to ensure that everyone is represented and treated equal in fashion. Inclusion is essential in fashion and how it can grow and develop in our society.

Although companies might induce a higher cost or inconvenience in implementing these strategies, the returns will recoup these losses by a large amount in generating newfound loyalty and connection from its new consumers. SmartGlamour, a leading brand that's trying to fix fashion's shortcomings, provides clothing for all sizes at the same price to ensure that everyone has equal access to their apparel. (Nittle, 2018) "Our clothes are for every shape, size, weight, ethnicity, identity, and ability," (Marin, 2017) Model companies should as No Agency & Oldsushka have

specifically represented models that break the traditional mold in order to make fashion more accessible and relatable with its everyday consumer. This along with companies such as Universal Standard providing sizing from 00-40 to women all over the world is a great example of how the fashion world can be revolutionized to include all styles of beauty within it. The fashion industry can give a voice and validation to all forms beauty, establishing an influence that goes far beyond just fashion.

Conclusion

Those who simply don't fit into the fashion industry's classic definition of beauty are the vast majority of our society. In recent times, the exclusivity of the fashion industry has had its doors broken in and allowed for people of all shapes, sizes and abilities to be viewed as both beautiful and healthy. While the recent times have created progress, there's still a lot of room for these neglected groups to be exemplified and treasured. With our world progressing and pushing the fight for equality, women's rights and body positivity, the fashion industry needs to be a front leader in expanding these movements. (Perrier, 2008) "As more research is conducted regarding the use of models of various sizes in advertisements, a greater understanding of the most effective marketing strategies will emerge. As the population of young women in America changes shape and size, so should the models used in advertisements. If abundance of thin models remains the norm, marketers and advertisers will miss opportunities to attain a larger target market of consumers. It would be profitable for marketers, advertisers and retailers to realize the need for models of various shapes and the impact this type of model could have on the industry and society."

The fashion world has to incorporate men and women of all shapes, sizes, sexual orientations, races and abilities in all facets of marketing, on and off the runways. Everyone should be represented when it comes to exemplifying beauty. Body satisfaction and the way a person feels

about his/her body can affect people's life in numerous aspects. The stigmas and shame created from the disappointment of not relating with this ideal image can impact and deteriorate one's self-esteem and create possible health risks and concerns. Marketers and advertisers should incorporate models of various sizes and shapes to encourage and set a new standard in fashion that beauty does really come in all shapes and sizes. Consumers themselves will relate and recognize beauty in all varieties and differences and in turn lead to a greater acceptance of this new standard while in turn also generating new sales and income for the brands. The new consumer of today's world wants to invest and support brands that relate and resonate with themselves personally. People want to support brands that are inclusive and represent for all people of our society. The single use of this ideal body has for too long restricted the fashion industry for growing and reaching a much bigger consumer base. Inclusivity and diversity will only help in progressing fashion and the brands that promote it.

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