Filtered Perfection: How Social Media Shapes Modern Beauty Ideals

Table of Contents

Introduction

The power of social media to influence beauty standards among teenage girls and the need to conform are concurrent issues in today's society, largely due to the profound impact of technology on viewers of all ages. Trends show that social media exposure among all age groups has increased, but what are the harmful effects of this macro-level exposure to young adolescents?

My Personal Interest Project (PIP) focuses on uncovering the actual impact of social media's influence on beauty standards among teenage girls and the pressure of conformity resulting from factors such as popular culture, collective identity, stakeholder power, Westernisation, and social change. It examines how macro-level forces impact micro and meso levels within society.

Growing up as a girl, it was always valued to look 'pretty,' I remember. My mother would teach me makeup and fashion before I was even able to ride a bike. When I was in high school, I quickly learnt how men would treat women differently based on their looks. By the age of seventeen, I had come to understand the toxic nature of beauty standards in today's modern society.
Social pressures of beauty trends are consistently placed upon women. It is a never-ending battle to fit the beauty expectations of the time. Social media has perpetuated this value and has severe implications on a young woman's sense of beauty, self-identity, and behaviours amongst a group on a micro to meso level. Questioning the ethicalities of social media's role in contributing to beauty expectations and social media's impacts on women.

This topic contributes to a better understanding of society and culture, particularly in light of the rising popularity of technology and social media at the macro level, the dangers of consuming these platforms among young girls, and the nature of materialism driven by the influential power of stakeholders. Over the past 25 years, the continual nature of social media has led to changes in societal values and behaviours. Thus, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the societal constructs of beauty imposed on women through social media.

I have incorporated the use of primary and secondary research methods, including a questionnaire and focus group. I have utilised these research methods because they provide both qualitative and quantitative data to further understand the topic. Both were helpful, as I was able to delve deeper into how influential social media is on beauty standards and the aspects of change and continuity present throughout both primary and secondary research.

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I chose this topic because it raises many thought-provoking questions about the impacts of beauty archetypes on young people. I decided to explore the role of social media in influencing conformity to social media's portrayal of beauty standards. This was important because social media is deeply ingrained in many people's daily lives, and acknowledging the power social media holds over beauty values in terms of influencing and reinforcing stereotypical beauty norms was crucial, as physical appearance played a significant role in both personal and collective identity throughout my adolescent upbringing. Many times, my friends and I have struggled with self-esteem and insecurities due to social media. Thus, I was inspired to explore the intricacies of beauty portrayal over time and its impact on conformity for teenage girls and the broader societal impacts. Afterwards, it was vital to acknowledge the environmental impacts of the mass-consumption of beauty products, as I value sustainability and wished to express how small choices in consumption can have larger consequences for the broader society and environment. Shedding light on these issues allows readers to reconsider materialistic notions and gain a better understanding of the current climate crisis. Lastly, I wanted to explore the impacts of Westernisation on beauty and its long-term effects. This was relevant as showcasing how beauty stereotypes aren't long-term and are rapidly evolving and subject to change, brings a sense of comfort for individuals who may be conforming to dangerous ideals.

The process of secondary research was complicated to complete, as I had lost motivation to complete the work as I lacked motivation to analyse and evaluate the information. The primary research process consisted of a focus group and a questionnaire. I had started a content analysis but was having difficulty completing the activity. The use of a questionnaire and a focus group was effective in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Uncovering deeper social behaviours that teenage girls conform to and experience. The process of completion was enjoyable and helped develop organisational skills. However, difficulties arose, such as analysing the data and interpretation, which was time-consuming.

The PIP journey had its obstacles. I had challenges in creating my questionnaire, creating questions, and the ability to gather relevant information was a challenge. Throughout the process, I struggled to translate the results into written form and unpack ideas in an understandable way. Additionally, it was challenging to meet deadlines and stick to the original plans and topics, as my knowledge of the topic broadened during the research process, leading to changes in chapter topics. The PIP process was beneficial as it enhanced my social and cultural literacy, enabling me to understand different perspectives and expand my worldview and understanding of societal constructions, such as environment, time, and gender. Additionally, it allowed me to engage with topics that I hadn't previously had the opportunity to explore, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Central Material 1

The power of conformity amongst young girls due to pop culture and collective identity

The power of social media in influencing beauty standards among teenage girls and the need to conform is prevalent due to the mass dissemination of popular culture on social media outlets from the 2000s to the present. Driven by globalisation on a macro level. Social media stakeholders, as a macro-level institution, include individuals who exert power in the online space and have emphasised the importance of beauty standards, products, and expectations across all age groups. Among these age groups, audiences feel obligated to conform to beauty ideals due to collective identity, the power of social media groups, and individual factors.

The accessibility of technology has increased the power of conformity amongst younger generations. In 2023, 95% of young people aged 13 to 17 will have access to smartphones[1], so it was essential to investigate the impact of social media on this audience as it increases the importance of group conformity on individuals. The focus group results indicate that 100% of respondents from Generation Alpha and Generation Z reported that the portrayal of beauty on social media is harmful to online viewers[2]. In the primary research method, one of the respondents in the focus group quoted: *"You feel belittled when you don't fit the standards. People can feel bad if they don't fit it."*[3] In response to social media beauty filters, they are heavily accessible to audiences due to the widespread adoption of technology from the 2000's to the present. Within these technological devices, social media apps such as TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram can reinforce the beauty standards portrayed to viewers by stakeholders, including influencers. Stakeholders have the power to influence individuals, as they can hold significant influence; stakeholders can include individuals, family, peer groups, influencers, celebrities, and government officials in all aspects of micro to macro interactions. The impacts of beauty portrayal being promoted on social media create social exclusion amongst teenage girls due to the power of conformity, which is reinforced via technology. This is evident as 48.7% of respondents commented that social media influencers influenced their perception of beauty the most in the questionnaire.[4]

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[1] M. Anderson, M. Favourio and J. Gottfried (2023) "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2023"

[2] Primary Research: Focus Group
[3] Primary Research: Focus Group
[4] Primary Research: Questionnaire

Popular culture has an impact on conformity to beauty standards as popular culture symbols of beauty can inclue social media influencers and celebrities, with 48.7% of respondents on the questionnaire agreed that social media influencers influences their perception of beauty the most, and 48.7% of respondents agreed that celebrities influenced their perception of beauty, therefore popular culture idols have an effect on beauty expectations as many portray the 'ideal' appearance. Due to this, popular culture has a significant impact on conformity to beauty standards, primarily attributed to the widespread accessibility of technology among younger generations. These influencers of beauty, which wield power over others, are the stakeholders of beauty. Hence, many respondents agreed that these particular stakeholders shaped their perception of beauty. A respondent of the questionnaire wrote, *"It depends on the approach of the influencer. Some are more realistic and have a positive approach to flaws but if they present themselves as perfect it can increase insecurities that I have about my own beauty."*[5] Therefore, stakeholders can hold a variety of power amongst online users.

Social exclusion is a term used to describe disadvantaged groups in society, typically directed towards those who do not fit into the prevailing social milieu and are unable to conform to societal norms. Social exclusion has been concurrent within younger generations, such as Generation Alpha and Generation Z, towards those who may not fit societies idealised beauty standards due to socialisation and many underlying factors such as technology, conformity, and group identity. Many girls choose to follow societal beauty standards promoted via social media. Hence, Many girls may mirror other peers' behaviour, which further reinforces the narrow beauty ideals perpetuated amongst peer groups and group identity. Collective identity is perpetuated within adolescence; this can be explained by the social identity theory (SIT) created by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, which suggests that individuals obtain a part of their identity from their group members[6]. Within these groups, people will impact the individual's behaviours, relations, and perceptions of certain things. This theory can reinforce the conformity of beauty archetypes, as many young girls felt the need to adjust their appearance to fit the group's identity. A questionnaire respondent noted, "Yes, humans naturally want to fit in and be admired, which causes the negative ideas of beauty standards," demonstrating the influence of group identity in beauty standards amongst audiences. This correlates with questionnaire results, 56.4% of respondents agreed that peer groups influenced their perception of beauty. Therefore, the research suggests that beauty standards are perpetuated due to group identity, societal conformity, and the process of socialisation. Thus, conformity to beauty expectations was evident through peer groups, family, and social media. The broader impacts include social exclusion and expectations on a meso level.

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[5] Primary research: Questionnaire
[6] T. Dixon , (2017) , "Tajfel and Turners Social Theory", IB Psychology,

NESA NUMBER: 38356437

However, conformance to these beauty ideologies affected self-identity, as evident in both the questionnaire and focus group, with 38.5% of people stating that they feel the need to conform to societal beauty expectations presented on social media, thereby highlighting how many women feel pressured to conform to beauty expectations[7]. This can affect self-identity on a micro level, as many women feel undervalued and insecure based on their physical appearance. This is evident as in a Teen Vogue website where Amanda Kloer quoted, *"Spending hours a day on these platforms with just a constant barrage of images that fit this very specific mould, and that are entirely unrealistic to obtain."*[8] Therefore, many women's self-identity was impacted negatively. This is relevant as 51% of teens in the U.S. spend a minimum of four hours on social media daily, according to a 2023 Gallup survey[9]. Child Psychology and Development teacher Julie Coopet quoted, "The fact that it's on social media makes kids feel that if they don't have what everybody else has, they're a lesser human being."[10] Therefore, highlighting the negative impacts of social media's portrayal of beauty on children, as many feel the need to conform to idolised beauty standards. The long-term impacts of conforming to beauty expectations for children and young audiences are that it can affect their sense of self and how they perceive themselves and others, due to the social construct of beauty.

Overall, conformity to beauty expectations among teenage girls is influenced by the accessibility of technology on a macro level, as young audiences can access popular social media sources that promote beauty trends and standards, and produce media that perpetuates these expectations. This impacts group identity on a meso level, as many young girls will collectively aspire to look a certain way, fueled by these powerful influencers. Additionally, the long-term impact on self-identity and perception is significant, as many young audiences' self-image will be shaped by the forces of social media, which is usually a long-term application of use. Thus, social exclusion can occur if a girl does not meet the profound criteria of beauty on a meso level, hence impacting their self-image on a micro level, as girls may feel excluded, isolated and helpless considering the situation. Popular culture idols and outlets have significantly influenced conformance to beauty among generations, as many individuals view popular culture through an idolised lens.

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[7] Primary research: Questionnaire
[8] T. Russel, (2022), Social Media Filters Are Changing How Young People See Themselves, Teen Vogue.
[9] V. Yang, L. Yangberg, M. Peacock, L. Akkin, S. Sharif, (2024), "The rising trend of overconsumption", Viewer.
[10] V. Yang, L. Yangberg, M. Peacock, L. Akkin, S. Sharif, (2024), "The rising trend of overconsumption", Viewer.

Central Material 2

Conformity to beauty standards and the rising implications of consumerism on the beauty industry

Social media influencers have the power to influence people's consumer behaviour and is often used as a marketing tool to encourage engagement with products. Karishma Borkakoty wrote, "*An influencer's endorsements and authentic reviews on social media can heavily influence purchasing decisions. When an influencer vouches for a product, their followers often listen*"[11].Thus, there is a great opportunity for influencers to gain a profit from social media endorsements. 17.5% of respondents from the questionnaire agreed that they feel pressured to buy certain beauty products to fit in with the trends they see on social media. Hence, consumerism has taken hold in the beauty industry among younger generations; this trend has been evident online via the viral phenomenon of 'Sephora Kids', a sensation that emerged in 2020, where young children purchased expensive and high-end makeup products that many deem as 'mature makeup'. This trend inevitably harms children as young as eight[12] as many purchase products that can damage their youthful skin. Many people agree that younger children and tweens are conforming to beauty trends and notions. When asked about 'Sephora kids' examples in the focus group, everyone agreed that younger children and tweens nowadays online have conformed to social media beauty expectations more than they did in their younger selves. The participants were Generation Z and Y. The rising trend of younger children using makeup or skincare products has increased over the past few years. This viral social media sensation has sparked numerous opinions due to the young age at which individuals consume beauty products. This worrying trend is evident in an article, *as Alyssa Wang wrote, "Many children lack media literacy and are easily influenced by product reviews or promotions from popular makeup influencers on social media."*[13] demonstrating how vulnerable demographics may be influenced to purchase products without knowing their impact on them. The implications of beauty standards and conformity amongst the younger generation have been negative based on the primary research methods conducted and secondary research, as 67% of questionnaire respondents strongly agreed that social media sets unrealistic beauty standards for teen girls, this can further lead to long term consequences such as poor mental health, overconsumption and financial difficulties due to the overexcessive expenditure on cosmetic products.

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[11] K. Arora, K. Borkalkoty, "Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behaviour", (2024)
[12] T. Osborne, C. Matthews, "Tweens, teens dveloping complex skincare routines as 'Sephora Kids' trends on TikTok", (2024)
[13]Y. Wu, A. Wang, "Beauty influencers increase consumer culture", (2024)

Poor mental health rates have increased from 20% in 2007 to 22% in 2022[14], especially in females, with an increase of 3% for 12-month long-term mental health disorders from 2007 to 2022. Some connections between beauty expectations and mental health, are evident as a 2017 survey completed by Dove Self-Esteem Project found that 5 in 10 young females feel medium to high pressure to look "beautiful"[15], additionally the survey identified that 70% of the young female respondents felt there is too much importance placed on beauty in defining happiness for females[16]. Thus, it is apparent that conformity to beauty standards can affect an individual's mental health, which can lead to severe outcomes such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders and social isolation[17]. Therefore, it is increasingly important to be aware of the implications of social media's portrayal of beauty to young audiences, as their emotional and mental well-being can be affected.

The consumption of beauty products has increased over the years due to globalisation and the opening of markets for cosmetics and beauty products worldwide. This is evident, as according to the State of Beauty, 40% of Generation Z buy a new beauty product they find online every two months[18]. However, the real question is, what is causing consumers to purchase beauty products? Social media beauty portrayal encompasses influencers, advertisements, and marketing strategies within the online space. Social media has had a significant impact on consumer behaviour as 40% of Generation Z audiences purchased cosmetic/beauty products due to social media influencers[19]. The power of the social media influencer is significant, as many teenage girls will purchase products based on what is being advertised by these influencers. Stakeholders have a considerable influence on the consumption of these products. Social media advertising is becoming increasingly effective for businesses in promoting their products and generating profits through targeted marketing. This was confirmed in the questionnaire, as 32.5% of respondents answered that they view beauty-related content often on social media, and 27.5% responded that they always view beauty content on social media. This encapsulates how the rise of social media has shaped the beauty industry, as previous generations didn't have social media; thus, beauty standards and conformance to purchase products were presented via magazines, popular culture, and movies. Aspects such as sociocultural, socioeconomic, and lifestyle factors may influence consumers to purchase these goods, affecting their choice and behaviour.

Through the questionnaire, key consumer behaviour trends concerning makeup products were identified, with 40% of respondents saying that 20 to 30 cosmetic products per person would be considered 'overconsumption'. It is evident that many individuals will purchase moderate amounts of beauty products because it has become the new norm within society on a meso level. They may buy these products due to materialistic notions. Excessive consumption and production will inevitably lead to environmental issues.

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[14] "Australian Governement; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare", (2024).

[15] B. Juby, Beauty standards and mental health. "What is the connection between beauty standards and mental health?" (2024)

[16] B. Juby, Beauty standards and mental health. "What is the connection between beauty standards and mental health?" (2024)

[17] B. Juby, Beauty standards and mental health. "What is the connection between beauty standards and mental health?" (2024)

[18] J. Patterson, "Gen-Z, Skincare And Social Media; The Dangers of Skinfluencing" (2024)

[19] J. Patterson, "Gen-Z, Skincare And Social Media; The Dangers of Skinfluencing" (2024)

An individual's behaviour towards others is socially constructed and influenced by social expectations. This can be linked to conformity to beauty expectations due to socially constructed values and ideals of beauty, which impact an individual's perceptions and self-esteem. Influencers concerning them, such as family, peer groups and stakeholders, will shape an individual's perception of beauty, contributing to their self-concept as their values can be transformed due to beauty standards. Morton Deutsch and Harold Gerard, two American psychologists, identified normative conformity. Normative conformity is a theory that suggests that the desire to fit in refers to when an individual joins a group and matches their attributes to be accepted within the group[20]. This heavily relates to acquiescence as the individual may morph their public behaviour to conform to the group. This correlates with the power of perception, as peer groups, families, stakeholders, and individuals conform to beauty portrayals due to the influences surrounding them, such as social expectations. Therefore, an individual's perception of beauty is influenced by their surroundings at the meso level of society. Secondly, Self-esteem relates to an individual's sense of self-worth. High self-esteem is characterised by a positive view of oneself, in contrast to low self-esteem, which is associated with feelings of worthlessness. Many people choose to conform to collective behaviours due to the risk of disapproval from group members and the desire for social acceptance, as individuals who experience a sense of powerlessness and lack of self-confidence may conform to group norms and beauty standards on a micro to meso level. This trend is particularly evident among younger teens, as 90% of focus group attendees agreed that younger girls are conforming to beauty standards due to social media[21]. Additionally, a respondent noted that *"Now I've grown, I don't copy friends"[22],* which can demonstrate how maturing through adolescence can create opportunities for independent behaviour on a micro and meso level for individuals.
Factors that influence conformity to beauty standards among teenage girls can include social media pressures, such as trends like '*S*ephora Kids', which sparked interest in young girls conforming to beauty standards, secondly, how social expectations and normative conformity influence an individual's behaviour.

The environmental impacts of the rising materialistic nature of consumption on a macro level, due to globalisation, will influence deforestation and pollution. Overconsumption is a macro-level issue within modern society, primarily driven by materialism and the overproduction of goods by businesses. Access to technology has created a new market for online shopping as individuals can easily purchase products online. This can be helpful for people with physical and mental disabilities, as it makes the online shopping process more accessible, as mentioned in the focus group[23]. Globally, online shopping has created a significant surge in sales, as online shopping has taken up 36.1% of all beauty sales in 2021[24]. Therefore, a future and expanding market has been created due to technology and globalisation, which is why the trend of consumerism is likely to continue in the future. Deforestation has been significantly impacted due to the growth of the beauty industry

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[20] S. McLeod, (2024) "Normative and Informative Social Theory; Understanding Conformity: Normative Vs. INformational Social Influence"
[21] Primary Research: Focus Group
[22] Primary research method: Questionnaire
[23] Primary Research: Focus Group
[24] L. Gjorgievska, (2024) "20+ Australian Beauty Industry Statistics (2024 edition), Take a Tumble

worldwide. Experts have found that around 70% of beauty products contain some element of palm oil[25] This is highly harmful to the environment, as some experts believe that an area the size of 300 football fields is cleared every hour to make room for palm oil farms[26]. Therefore, it is apparent that the beauty industry has a significant impact on the environment on a macro level, primarily due to deforestation. Secondly, pollution has impacted the environment as the beauty industry produces at least 120 billion pieces of packaging each year[27]. Most packaging materials involve non-biodegradable substances, which can contribute to environmental microplastic pollution. Generating plastic waste is a macro issue, as pollution has increased due to the growing production of cosmetic products. These are the social costs of macro conformity towards beauty, as consumer behaviour impacts the environment and the overconsumption and materialism of goods.

The reason for the overconsumption of cosmetic products among young people between Generation Alpha and Generation Z is due to social media, which can be attributed to new strategic business marketing efforts that sell products via social media, and consumer behaviours, which are at the core of the consumption of these products. Lastly, the social and environmental impacts of consuming beauty goods are apparent on a macro level.

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[25] Retail Beauty, (2024) "The environmental impact of the beauty industry",

[26] Retail Beauty, (2024), "The environmental impact of the beauty industry", Retail Beauty,

[27] T. Davidson, (2024) "What is the Environmental Impact of the Beauty Industry" , Clean Hub,

Central Material 3

The progression of beauty standards is influenced by globalisation and the shifting interpretations of beauty ideals, driven by movements like Westernisation, technological advancements, and societal changes.

The macro-level causes of beauty expectations stemming from social media are rooted in the growth of Westernisation within communities, coupled with globalisation. Furthermore, the continuity of beauty standards across generations has influenced what many individuals consider beautiful, as notions of what is considered 'attractive' have evolved over time. Additionally, social media has introduced significant differences for younger generations as people are increasingly more exposed to technology; thus, beauty portrayal is more prevalent. The changing nature of beauty standards has evolved over the past 25 years due to the globalisation of technology, and changing values and norms of what individuals consider 'beauty'. From the 2000s to the present, changing beauty expectations have been apparent. As beauty norms were once portrayed in magazines, movies, and pop culture, and 'natural' body features were celebrated, the shift in these beauty values has occurred within society, reflecting a slow alteration of social roles. Social roles relate to the behaviours, expectations and responsibilities individuals have within a meso level in society, many young girls feel that their behaviours may shift when asked how beauty content is on their social media, as a questionnaire respondent noted, "Shapes my own personality"[28], thus social media portrayal of beauty will impact social roles on a micro to meso level in society, resultin gin evolutionary change over time.

Changes have been due to technological innovations and globalisation.
Others have adopted Western beauty standards from other nations, known as acculturation[29]. Social media has facilitated global social interactions through mass media. The results of this are that different cultures may adopt the behaviours of other cultures and groups due to the mass adoption of social media on a macro level. The social media portrayal of beauty has had a significantly impactful effect on social media viewers. Therefore, it is likely that other cultures, ethnicities, and groups with different worldviews, beliefs, and ideologies may be influenced by what is considered 'Westernised' beauty. This is showcased in social media

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[28] Primary research: Questionnaire
[29] Migration Translators, "Eastern vs Western Cultures", (2019), The Migration Translators, Experts in translations in Australia.

trends, which outline how many Eastern countries have adopted beauty standards and appearances from Westernised countries. Change has occurred due to shifts in beauty standards throughout history. In the 1950s, the curvy Marilyn Monroe body type[30] was idolised; however, in the 1990s, a shift towards extreme thinness became popular, recognised in the 'heroin chic' fashion trend, which originated from pop culture icons such as Gia Carangi, Kate Moss, and Jamie King. In the 2010s and 2020s, the hourglass figure was heavily promoted through pop culture figures such as Kim Kardashian, Nicki Minaj, and Sofia Vergara[31]. This shift in beauty over time has evolved in response to pop culture idols, the influence of media on mass audiences, and what may be considered 'beauty'.

Currently, social media is a massive outlet for what can be defined as 'beauty'. Examples of how social media influences beauty standards include trends such as 'glass skin', 'latte makeup', and 'minimalist makeup looks', which have all had an impact on everyday looks, pop culture makeup looks, and what many people define as beauty expectations that many in Generation Z want to achieve. However, a shift has occurred within the last decade, moving away from idolising hourglass figures to social media influencers, pop culture figures, and influential figures promoting the new 'healthy' body archetype. Uplifting a healthy, muscular and emphasising mental health and physical wellbeing. In an article by 'The Conversation', it noted how the University of Birmingham and University of Örebro conducted primary research of focus groups, and wrote how a participant noted,
"Social media can help young people live healthier lives", [32] which stated how many participants discovered that promotion of healthy lifestyles valuing physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing from social media influencers was influential upon young participants aged 13 to 18. Therefore, there has been an increase in importance placed on the quality of life among young people over the last couple of years. Thus, younger audiences are increasingly engaging with healthy content that promotes realistic beauty standards. This can have a positive impact on an individual's sense of self on a micro level in society, as valuing a balanced diet, health, and exercise has been proven to have a positive effect on mental health, physical health, and overall wellbeing for many individuals.
According to the Health Direct article (2024), *"Exercise may cause your brain to release 'feel good' chemicals like endorphins and serotonin. Research suggests that these can help improve your mood."[33]* This reflects the positive attributions of healthy beauty ideologies for

[30] LoneStarPinup, Blogger, (2023) "Marilyn Monroe: A Timeless Icon of Style and Beauty", Photography
[31] Library of Congress, (2024) "History of the Beauty Business",

[32] V.Goodyear, "Social Media can help young people live healthy lives", (2021), The Conversation

[33] Health Direct, "excersize and mental health", (2024), Health Direct

individuals. Therefore, teen girls adopting healthy eating, fitness, and exercise values can improve individuals' health, mental health, and physical well-being on a micro level in society. However, due to the influential impact of beauty on collective identity, peer groups will likely have an effect on this notion at the meso level in society. It was evident in the questionnaire that many people valued exercise and beauty notions surrounding health and wellbeing. "I feel inspired by the fitness experts that I follow." It is credible that beauty standards have evolved over time, progressing in response to factors such as technological advancements, globalisation, pop culture icons and influencers, and social media. Generational differences surrounding the conformance of new beauty standards is evident in the questionnaire, as more Generation Z and Generation Alpha respondents indicated how they conformed to beauty expectations frequently, "*I think that as someone in your social circle does something, the rest of the group is more likely to follow along with it, especially if they're more "influential" in the friend group. Group identity is a significant aspect (especially during adolescence). That's why you see so many friend groups with similar styles or acting a certain way"*[34] As many respondents in Generation Y and Baby Boomers didnt feel the urge to conform to certain beauty standards. Evident in the questionnaire respondent, *"It affects the younger generation more than mine. I think a lot of the time, the younger generation are naturally more naive and believes more content on social media, opposed to those over 25 years of age and therefore shapes their identity more."* Thus, generational change towards conformity to beauty standards has decreased on a micro- to meso level. These changes may be due to maturity levels among age groups, social media influences and impacts, and technological advancements over the past 60 years; thus, change has occurred on a macro level in response to technological advancements. However, continuity of beauty standards and progression of beauty expectations have evolved over time.

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[34] Primary Research: Questionnaire

Conclusion

During the process of understanding the power of social media on beauty standards and its impact on teenage girls and the broader society, it has become evident that social media has significantly influenced current beauty standards among younger audiences, primarily due to the widespread exposure to technology on a macro level in society. Thus, leading to an impact on teenage girls' personal and collective identity at the micro to meso level in society. The reasons why many young people conform to beauty standards are due to social expectations at both the micro and meso levels. This, in turn, impacts consumption on a macro level, conformity, materialism, and societal changes due to Westernisation and globalisation of technology.

My primary research findings, which included a focus group and questionnaire, supported my original hypothesis of 'The power of social media on beauty standards and its impacts on teenage girls and the wider society'. By analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected, which unpacked the broader significance of beauty standards within the community, such as environmental impacts, Westernisation and changing social roles. Secondary research findings helped uncover the behaviours of groups and individuals that were impacted by social media's portrayal of beauty. Additionally, understanding the broader effects, including environmental issues, technology, and the influence of online stakeholders. Concepts that were illuminated in the PIP included globalisation of technology, conformity, identity, group identity, popular culture, materialism, consumerism, Westernisation, and social roles. Continuity is evident in how conformity to beauty standards persists due to the influence of stakeholders, thereby perpetuating materialistic and overconsumption notions that inevitably impact the environment. The change is apparent in how beauty standards are not consistent and are continually evolving. As noted throughout history, beauty ideals have changed based on aspects such as popular culture and shifting interpretations of beauty.

The power of conformity amongst young girls due to pop culture and collective identity established that conformity to beauty standards was influenced by pop culture and collective identity. Understanding the principles of beauty standards and how they are conveyed to younger audiences via technology has had a profound impact on individuals and groups on a micro to meso level. Uncovering the shift in beauty standards from the 2000s to now, and how pop culture idols and social media influencers significantly influence beauty standards among teenage girls has been crucial in understanding the continual nature of beauty standards. The continuity aspects of conformity have continuous impacts on group identity and social inclusion and/or exclusion, thus beauty influencers have impacts on individuals and social groups. This was relevant in understanding the stems of standards and expectations surrounding physical appearance online and the impacts it has on the wider community.

The progression of beauty standards is influenced by globalisation and the shifting interpretations of beauty ideals, driven by Westernisation, technological advancements, and societal changes. The PIP beauty ideals have evolved, and the causes of these changes. Understanding the globalisation of technology and the influence of social media in transforming beauty standards. Westernised beauty archetypes have been promoted globally through movements like acculturation, conformity, and technology, leading to shifts in societal norms.

Resource List

Primary Research Method: Questionnaire

The use of a questionnaire was significantly crucial for gathering both qualitative and quantitative information from Generations Alpha, Z, Y, X, and Baby Boomers. The main focus was on the usage of social media apps and beauty-related content. Additionally, investigating the emotional impacts that the social media portrayal of beauty has on viewers and their perceptions of beauty after viewing such material. Uncovering the main factors that influence conformity, knowledge of beauty and how it impacts personal and collective behaviour. This was incredibly beneficial in understanding the impacts of beauty standards on individuals. The results were moderately reliable, as the respondents may have had personal biases that impacted the validity of the findings. Concepts included conformity, technology, stakeholders of power, individual identity and collective identity. The primary research method's overall use was to help unpack the specific influences and factors that promote beauty standards and their impact on viewers. Therefore the use of a questionnaire was prevalent as gaining qualitative and quantitative information helped develop the understanding of the topics and interpretation of the findings.

Primary Research Method: Focus Group

The use of a focus group was extremely beneficial for gathering qualitative information and responses from Generation Y and Generation Z respondents. The main focus was to explore how familiar teenage girls are with social media trends, beauty influencers and how they felt towards the shown material. Additionally, unpacking their thoughts and opinions on individual and group behaviours, environmental impacts and their views on social media. Including statistics, video material, and images of popular beauty products and influencers helped strengthen the evidence and provide real-life examples for the respondents to identify and recognise. The use of a focus group held moderate reliability as the implementation of evidence strengthened the topics. However, naturally, respondents had their personal biases, which may have skewed the results and opinions. My overall view on the primary research method was that it was significantly helpful in uncovering personal ideas and beliefs surrounding the material. Additionally, the answers helped expand my future topics and broaden my questioning about the PIP topic. Thus, the focus group was useful for the overall interest project as it developed additional qualitative data to analyse and interpret throughout the central material.

Wu Y, Wang A, (2024) "Beauty influencers increase consumer culture",
https://lhsepic.com/50678/in-depth/beauty-influencers-increase-consumer-culture/

Authors of the document include Alyssa Wang and Yvonne Wu, published in 2024 they are both journalists. The arguments include how beauty influencers increase consumer engagement and sales, due to conformance from customers. The intended audience is any potential entrepreneurs interested in the beauty and cosmetic industry. Secondary research sources included statistical analyses conducted from other sources, as well as case examples of businesses and influencers. The conclusions drawn are that beauty is deeply ingrained in society, and individuals are becoming increasingly interested in the entrepreneurial opportunities that beauty can create. The text is moderately reliable as it was published in 2024, and included valuable information such as quantitative and qualitative data, thus the document held moderate validity.

Osborne T. ,Matthews C. , (2024), "Tweens, teens dveloping complex skincare routines as 'Sephora Kids' trends on TikTok",
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-21/sephora-kids-should-tweens-teens-use-adult-skincare-products/103488660

The authors of the news article includes Cale Matthews and Tegan Osborne, the article was published in 2024, as it describes the recent social media trend of 'Sephora Kids'. The main arguments include how younger children are purchasing lots of cosmetic and skincare products and how social media has promoted overconsumption and influenced young children to buy products that are deemed 'too mature' for their skin. The intended audience is parental figures. Research methods include secondary statistics from beauty companies including Sephora, SHEIN, Drunk Elephant etc, to show business performance. Additionally they conducted an interview with 'Grace' a young child who interacts with makeup products, and explored her opinions on the viral trend of 'Sephora Kids'. The article holds reliability due to the recent publication date, additionally the use of an interview and statistical analysis held reliability and validity. The article relates to concepts such as technology, conformity and stakeholders who influence consumers.

Gjorgievska L. (2024), "20+ Australian Beauty Industry Statistics (2024 edition), Take a Tumble" https://takeatumble.com.au/insights/lifestyle/australian-beauty-industry-statistics/

The writer, Ljubica Gjorgievska, published in 2022, lists numerous statistics regarding the cosmetic industry, including popular brands, products, and trends that have gained popularity in Australia over the last five years. Demonstrating how, since the coronavirus pandemic, online shopping has risen in sales and growth. The intended audience is anyone interested in the purchasing habits of Australian consumers and the frequency of beauty product purchases. The author's conclusions include the development of the beauty industry and business success, as evidenced by the revenues generated by Australian firms. Bias is not found, as it is all statistical data and analysis of what the data means, and its economic impacts.

LoneStarPinup, Blogger, (2023) "Marilyn Monroe: A Timeless Icon of Style and Beauty", Photography https://lonestarpinup.com/marilyn-monroe-a-timeless-icon-of-style-and-beauty

The blog writer is Lonestarpinup, an article published in 2023 explores the historical changes of beauty standards and icons throughout the 1950s to 2020s. The main argument is investigating what each era of beauty valued and perceived as 'attractive' and desirable. The text is only partially reliable as it would include bias, as the author shares her own perspectives and opinions, thus, validity and reliability is limited. Society and culture concepts include continuity and change of beauty standards over time, technology and its use in shaping modern societies.

Health Direct, (2024), "excersize and mental health", Health Direct, https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/exercise-and-mental-health

Health Direct's information page holds moderate reliability and validity, as it gives professional advice on the impacts of exercise on mental health. It resources and secondary research involved includes reliable documents from reputable sources. The website showcases the links between exercise and mental health and how to manage both physical and mental well-being. The statistics used helped strengthen the arguments in Chapter 2, as they discussed how narrow beauty standards can impact mental health issues. The intended audience is for people of all ages, genders, demographics, etc., as the advice can be universal and helpful for many. The research methods employed secondary research from journals and medical professional advice, resulting in a moderate level of reliability. The website shares society and culture concepts such as self-identity, as mental health impacts self-identity; additionally, technology is mentioned and time. This source was relatively helpful for the research and writing aspects of the project; however, it lacked both qualitative and quantitative data, which would have been beneficial for further developing ideas and topics.

Patterson J., (2024), "Gen-Z, Skincare And Social Media; The Dangers of Skinfluencing"
https://luxiders.com/gen-z-skincare-and-social-media-the-dangers-of-skinfluencing/#:~:text=S
KINFLUENCING%20IS%20DANGEROUS%20FOR%20THE%20PLANET&text=The%20rate%20in
%20which%20viral,industry%20is%20still%20dealing%20with.

Jemina Patterson is the author of the article, which explores the impacts of social media on conformity, beauty expectations, and stakeholders of power, such as social media influencers. The intended audience is anyone who is exposed to beauty materials online, and potentially individuals who conform to beauty standards. Research methods included the implementation of secondary research to gather quantitative information about popular social media apps and how influencers promote their products online on these platforms. Additionally, the article examines consumer behaviours and the rise of materialism within the beauty industry over the past decade. Social media and technology can drive this. The text was published in 2024, and the data is valid; however, the article had points of bias, thus the article's reliability would have been skewed. Society and culture concepts involved is technology, conformity, stakeholders, power and time.

Library of Congress, (2024) "History of the Beauty Business",
https://guides.loc.gov/business-of-beauty/history

The educational document, created by the Library of Congress, examines the evolution of popular beauty standards from the 1920s to the present, as well as the businesses that perpetuate these standards. The intended audience is anyone interested in the evolution of beauty standards and the influences behind these changes. Special features include historical photographs that encapsulate the significance of beauty standards for women. Societal and cultural concepts encompass changes over time. Therefore, aspects of change and continuity are included. The overall view of this document is that it was relatively helpful in understanding the changes in beauty expectations over time.

Arora K, Borkalkoty K, (2024) "Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behaviour",
https://www.sprinklr.com/blog/social-media-customer-behavior/

Authors include Karishma Borkakoty and Kunal Arora, they are both journalists. The article involves how social media shapes consumer behaviours, social media influencers and their impact on consumerism and how businesses utilise social media to maximise profits and sales and conformity. The intended audiences can include entrepreneurs, and social media users. Research methods involved includes secondary research based on other business's findings and successful strategies used to maintain a consumer base. Conclusions made by the authors is that social media is a useful tool to engage potential consumers for businesses. It was published in 2024, thus it is reliable as the information is relevant timewise. Special features include examples of businesses using social media to promote their products, and influences who have advertised products to social media users. Society and culture concepts include the power of stakeholders, technology, and conformity. The overall usefulness of this was helpful

nental health. (2024), "What is the connection between beauty standards and mental health?"
https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/beauty-standards-and-mental-health

The author is Mandy French, and was medically reviewed by Dr Bethany Judy; thus, it holds reliability as the article was reviewed by a professional in the field of psychology. Additionally, publication was in 2024; thus, it is moderately reliable in providing credible evidence, data and information to support the thesis. The main topics of the article is how mental health is affected due to beauty standards and can lead to severe issues such as eating disorders, poor mental and physical health, negative self-esteem and how beauty is exposed to people. The intended audience is anyone who is affected by negative body image and would like to know more about mental health. Research methods include secondary research information and case examples which further proved their thesis. Society and culture concepts evident are conformity, time and technology.

Yang V, Yangberg L, Peacock M , Akkin L, Sharif S, (2024), "The rising trend of overconsumption", Viewer.
https://www.mvviewer.org/spread/2024/06/18/the-rising-trend-of-overconsumption/

The authors of this article include Mara Peacock, Via Yang, Lillian Landberg, Lale Akkin and Suha Shariff. Publications took place in 2024, thus the article is fairly reliable as it is relevant. The main arguments of the article include understanding the rising trend of overconsumption within the online space, which included cosmetic and beauty products. Additionally, highlighting how younger kids have been influenced to purchase beauty products at a young age, the impact of online trends and how to reduce personal waste and be more environmentally aware. The intended audiences are environmentalists and conscious consumers who care about sustainability, and the macro issue of overconsumption. Research methods include case studies of popular companies that mass-produce non-degradable products and the environmental impacts of consumerism and materialism, including secondary research and statistics. Conclusions involve how online shopping has had a macro level impact on consumer behaviours and overconsumption, additionally the trend of younger children purchasing and conforming to online beauty trends, lastly the environmental impacts of these choices. Society and culture concepts in the article include the environment, gender, technology, overconsumption and materialism.

ttfried F (2023) "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2023"
Pew Research Center.
https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/

The authors are Monica Anderson, Michelle Favourio, and Jeffery Gottfried they collectively conducted primary research into the topic of understanding social media's impacts on teenagers. The use of statistical analysis, and research was used to identity certain patterns of the impact social media has on audiences. The main arguments include what social media apps are the most popular, and how often teenagers interact with these platforms, additionally understanding if gender, race and ethnicity, household income, and age has an influence on usage. The intended audiences will be anyone interested in the impacts technology has on young adults, thus potentially parental figures may be an intended audience, additionally young persons who use social media. Main conclusions made include how females generally use social media more than males, that the majority of teens have access to technology and social media. Society and culture concepts involve time, technology, gender and conformity. The text is significantly reliable as it contains conducted primary research, secondary data and was published in 2023, thus it holds reliability and validity. Special features involve graphs, data analysis and charts. This document overall helped advance my understanding of the usage of social media amongst teenagers.

Goodyear V, "Social Media can help young people live healthy lives", (2021) The Conversation
https://theconversation.com/social-media-can-help-young-people-live-healthy-lives-157190

The authors of the media article are Mikeal Quennerstedt and Victoria Goodyear, both qualified experts in physical activity and health, based on their previous academic qualifications. The writers hold moderate validity. The article's main arguments included the positives and negatives of social media promotion of physical activity and wellbeing for young people. The intended audience is younger people who use social media platforms and are influenced by social media trends. The primary research methods employed included content analysis of 1,300 students aged 13 to 18, which was used to understand the impacts of social media on health and wellbeing principles among younger audiences. Additionally, focus groups were conducted to understand further the extent to which users conformed to social media's portrayal of physical activity, health, and wellbeing. The conclusion is that promoting physical wellbeing, health, and mental health has positive effects on teenagers. The article was published in March 2021; therefore, it is moderately reliable and valid for research methods. It was useful for the expansion of research and widening the PIP research and understanding. Concepts related to society and culture include identity, group identity on a micro to meso level, technology, globalisation, and conformity.

McLeod S, (2024) "Normative and Informative Social Theory; Understanding Conformity: Normative Vs. INformational Social Influence"
https://www.simplypsychology.org/normative-informational-social-influence.html

The writer is Saul McLeod, a specialist in psychology. This article describes the theories of normative and informational social influence on conformity. The theory of Deutsch and Gerrard particularly helped in developing the research and understanding the roots of conformity and behaviours. The intended audience is anyone interested in conformity and psychological theories. The article included secondary sources, such as an explanation of the social experiment conducted by the theorists. The text is reliable as it provides examples of information and accurate social theories. Society and culture concepts within the article include conformity, social roles, technology and group identity. Overall view on the article is that it is significantly effective in understanding social conformity and behvaiours.

Davidson T, "What is the Environmental Impact of the Beauty Industry", (2023), Clean Hub.
https://blog.cleanhub.com/beauty-industry-environmental-impact
The author is Tamara Davidson, who wrote the article explaining the influence of the beauty industry in perpetuating environmental issues. Examples included the large amounts of plastic waste, pollution and deforestation. The intended audience is anyone interested in ecological sustainability. The text is somewhat reliable, as it presents the author's opinions on various issues, which means bias will be present. Published in 2024, thus quantitative data would be relevant today. A statistical pie chart illustrated the sources of emissions within the beauty industry. Helpful in understanding the macro and environmental impacts. Society and culture concepts linked involve the environment and how, over time, the environment has been affected, thus linking to continuity and change aspects.

Davidson T, (2024), Retail Beauty, "The environmental impact of the beauty industry", (2024)
https://retailbeauty.com.au/the-environmental-impact-of-the-beauty-industry/
Tamara Davidson is the author of the document that explores the environmental impact of the beauty industry. The main argument encompasses the macro-level ecological negative effects of depleting natural resources, including microplastics, and the risk to wildlife due to the global accumulation of plastics, as well as their impacts on the environment. The intended audience is environmentalists who want to understand the harmful impacts the beauty industry has on the planet. Secondary sources are prevalent throughout the document as statistics and business case examples. The document has limited reliability, as the author may have been biased on the topic, thereby skewing its reliability and validity. However, the journalist specialises in sustainability and reporting environmental issues, thus the information would hold strong validity. The publication date was 2024; therefore, the information is generally accurate. Society and culture concepts throughout the document include consumerism, environment, and change over time. Overall, the document helped develop the understanding of environmental impacts present due to overconsumerism, overproduction of goods and societal notions of materialism.

ners Social Theory", IB Psychology
https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html

IB Psychology's documents on Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory were significantly reliable and useful for the research processes, as the author Travis Dixon Encapsulated relevant background information upon the theory and how it was developed It was additionally helpful as the theory explains group behaviour and conflict between groups and how it can impact interpersonal behaviour amongst conformity which was a key part of the research process as the topic links to conformity to beauty standards The intended audiences anyone who is interested in the theory and social identity social comparison and positive distinctiveness. The author's conclusions are helpful as they link to societal and cultural concepts, such as socialisation, conformity, social inclusion and exclusion, and time and continuity. Special features of the document included the use of photos and drawings, which helped to clarify the material. The overall view of the material is that it was substantially helpful in understanding the deeper meaning of conformity and how people's behaviours may shift when in a collective group situation.

Migration Translators, "Eastern vs Western Cultures", (2019)
https://www.migrationtranslators.com.au/east-vs-west-cultural-differences/#:~:text=Western%20culture%20places%20a%20greater%20emphasis%20on%20personal%20freedom%2C%20democracy,duty%2C%20and%20respect%20for%20authority.

The document was created by "The Migration Translators", an Australian non-governmental organisation, explaining the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western cultures. Aspects included beliefs and values, communication styles, lifestyle aspects and education. The intended audience is anyone moving to a new country and seeking to explore the customs and etiquette of their new surroundings. The text is limitedly reliable as it was published in 2019 thus, data is not present and may not reflect current trends. Additionally, there wasn't a lot of useful information within the document.

Australian Governement, (2024) "Australian Institute of Health and Welfare"
https://www.aihw.gov.au/

This is a government website; therefore, authors aren't stated. The website includes information surrounding mental health and factors that influence mental cognition, health, and wellbeing across Australian demographics. The intended audience is anyone interested in gaining national data and information on mental health. The text is significantly reliable, as the government conducted primary research methods, such as statistical analysis, to uncover demographics, including age, gender, types of mental health disorders, and how they differ across Australia. Thus, the use of quantitative data was useful for developing my research and understanding of the impacts of beauty standards on mental health. Howver publsihed in 2025, thus data is reliable and relatively accurate as information was documented recently.