

## Has Cosmetic Surgery and Its Marketing Had A Damaging Impact on Beauty Standards?

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

This study explores a range of different factors and their influence on beauty standards in the east compared to in the west. A detailed literature review has been carried out, as well as a primary survey of 100 participants. The results indicate that the media and the marketing for cosmetic surgery and procedures had the most significant impact.

**Keywords:** Cosmetic, Social, Colonialism, Media, Impact.

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## INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards are the individual qualifications women are expected to meet to present themselves as feminine, and as an ideal beauty. We are indirectly told through different ways, such as the media, fairy tales, and films, that this will allow us to succeed in life, whether it is personally, such as in relationships, or professionally, for example when applying for jobs. One of the reasons why it is difficult to extinguish these standards is because they have been ingrained into us. Children are given indirect messages right from early years, either from the media they are exposed to or the words they hear from parents, teachers, relatives, and friends. In this report I will explore how different factors have affected the beauty standard, and I will weigh how much influence each one has had. The factors that I will be analysing are colonisation and racism, marketing for cosmetic surgery and procedures, and the media, as well as looking at smaller factors such as the influence of celebrities and social media platforms.

### The effect of beauty standards on society

To this day we still see examples of bias and prejudice against people of colour and other minorities in the workplace, despite there being laws to prevent this. Job interviews and training opportunities are highly biased and discriminatory, and surveys have shown that more attractive-looking people are more likely to get job offers and to also be paid higher

salaries. Employers are expected to select people based on performance and skill, however, there is always a subconscious bias that leads to the more attractive or better-presented candidate being chosen, and this results in skilled and talented workers losing the opportunity to progress further in their careers. The effect of the beauty standard leads to a greater prejudice against women, as those who don't fit the "mould" are fundamentally prevented from succeeding into higher positions in the fields they work in, and if fewer women are seen to be thriving based off talent and ability alone then we will never be able to destroy the idea that not looking a certain way or not being conventionally attractive will stop you from succeeding. This happens too often in society, and this vicious cycle that has been created is preventing talented women from progressing.

The ideal standard in this case is decided by employers and those who have power, so those who don't fit these criteria are at a massive disadvantage. This bias is often the result of internalized racism and ableism, and it further implements the idea that not fitting the beauty standards will prevent you from succeeding in many aspects of life. While the discrimination and bias people face in the workplace don't explicitly set any specific beauty standards, it certainly contributes to enforcing them by setting unrealistic expectations that people, especially women from minority groups, are expected to meet.

One of the factors that prevent society from moving towards acceptance and love towards ourselves is the beauty industry. These are corporations led by people who feed off our insecurities and build multi-million-dollar companies just from making customers, particularly women, feel dissatisfied with their bodies. They profit off making solutions for problems they created, and it is the way they sell their products that brings in buyers. Having body hair, acne, cellulite, and stretch marks- in other words, being a human- is presented as being flawed and undesirable, and the psychological impacts this has on the consumers are difficult to undo.

I chose this topic because, as a woman of colour, I have never felt I fitted into any of the beauty standards that are upheld in society today. Having lived in both India and the UK, I have had first-hand experience of the racism and colourism that is used against women, as well as seeing the negative effects of trying to maintain the impossible female body ideals on the mental health and self-esteem of those around me. I am interested in exploring how the different factors I will mention in my report have impacted the beauty standard, and how significant they are in different countries and societies.

### **Cosmetic surgery and its impact on the perception of beauty**

Plastic surgery is a surgical specialty that involves the restoration, reconstruction, or alteration of the human body. It can be divided into many different categories, with one of the main ones being cosmetic surgery. Many of the techniques of modern facial surgery were developed during the First World War, and since then surgical procedures have advanced and changed in many ways. Technical procedures, instruments, and products are now a lot more reliable and safer, and this has resulted in more and more procedures being performed every year. From 2000 to 2019 there has been a 169% increase in the number of cosmetic procedures taking place each year, with there being 18,160,785 performed in 2019 (Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, 2019). Office-based plastic surgeries are any surgical or invasive procedure, accompanied by general anaesthesia or deep/ moderate sedation, where the procedure is performed in a location other than a hospital. They began in the 1960s and have expanded exponentially since then (Ersek, 2007). Many plastic surgeons now have their office-based facilities, and this has aided in making cosmetic procedures more accessible to the wider population.

The advertising for plastic surgery has played a massive role in promoting and selling these procedures, and the rapid growth in popularity for things such as rhinoplasty and tummy tucks has lessened the taboo surrounding plastic surgery, and to an extent has almost normalised it, particularly in South

Korea where it has been reported that over 7.5 million people as of 2019 have had double eyelid surgery. In 2011, South Korea was ranked as having the most cosmetic procedures performed (Plastic makes perfect, 2013). Some of the most common procedures include double eyelid surgery, skin whitening, and epicanthoplasty, (Silva, 2020) and because plastic surgery has been so normalised, more and more people are trying to adapt their features into the ideal body image to fit the beauty standard. Plastic surgery had its roots in India when Shushruta started reconstruction of the nose for people who had the punishment of their nose getting chopped off and has now grown into a billion-dollar industry by sales and marketing techniques.

From east to west, millions of people of different age groups are driven to invest in age-defying and contour correction procedures. And some of the top reasons for cosmetic surgery include vanity and boost self-esteem, and this is based on the false belief that people will feel more confident and happy in their skin if they could just change a few things, and many people argue that these procedures are worth undertaking if it will improve someone's self-image and self-esteem as this could result in increased body positivity overall.

Another reason is the influence from celebrities, and the desire to look more like them, and I will discuss the influence from celebrities later in my report.

However, one of the most prominent reasons people, particularly women, are undergoing these procedures is to try to reverse the process of aging. The cause of this issue is mainly due to the media's portrayal of ageing and old people in a negative light that has fuelled the desire to look young, and because of this the thought of ageing gracefully is very off-putting to many people.

Many people are against cosmetic surgery, with one of their main arguments being that there is not enough information regarding the dangers/ side effects of the procedures available to the public, so people are prevented from making fully informed decisions before their surgery. In terms of medical ethics, another issue is that surgeons always need to carefully evaluate the physical and emotional maturity of the patient, and the desired outcome. With more and more people young people requesting cosmetic procedures, it is difficult for doctors to assess the capacity of certain patients to make informed decisions.

Despite that, it must be noted that one of the four pillars of ethics in healthcare is autonomy, which is the idea of self-governance, that an individual has the right to decide and act under a self-chosen plan. This means that patients are in the right to ask for and

undergo cosmetic surgery if it's in their best interest, such as if they think it will help with their self-esteem and make them more confident.

Cosmetic surgery is also very expensive, with the cost of procedures ranging between £5,000-£25,000.

Many people argue that cosmetic procedures are essentially only available for those of higher incomes and that it isn't fair that the option to have surgery to change certain parts of their bodies that they don't like is only available to the upper classes, while the lower classes have to live and cope with their insecurities.

COSMETIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES			
	AGE 40-54 2019 TOTAL	AGE 40-54 % OF TOTAL PROCEDURES	AGE 40-54 % CHANGE 2019 vs 2018
Breast augmentation (Augmentation mammoplasty)	86,555	29%	-4%
Breast implant removals (Augmentation patients only)	14,074	4%	1%
Breast lift (Mastopexy)	44,203	15%	-4%
Breast reduction in men (Gynecomastia)	3,236	1%	-3%
Buttock implants	377	0%	2%
Buttock lift	1,864	0%	-9%
Cell augmentation	90	0%	-9%
Cheek implant (Malar augmentation)	6,232	0%	-1%
Chin augmentation (Mentoplasty)	4,226	0%	1%
Chemabrasion	29,602	1%	-4%
Ear surgery (Otoplasty)	3,388	0%	1%
Eye lift surgery (Blepharoplasty)	90,757	3%	1%
Facelift (Rhytidectomy)	39,539	1%	1%
Forehead lift	14,967	0%	-5%
Hair transplantation	5,088	0%	2%
Lip augmentation (other than injectable materials)	11,339	0%	3%
Liposuction	100,884	3%	1%
Lower body lift	3,738	0%	-5%
Nose reshaping (Rhinoplasty)	43,765	1%	-3%
Pectoral implants	130	0%	-5%
Thigh lift	4,914	0%	3%
Tummy tuck (Abdominoplasty)	51,585	2%	-5%
Upper arm lift	7,694	0%	3%
<b>TOTAL COSMETIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES</b>	<b>548,207</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>-1%</b>
COSMETIC MINIMALLY-INVASIVE PROCEDURES			
	AGE 40-54 2019 TOTAL	AGE 40-54 % OF TOTAL PROCEDURES	AGE 40-54 % CHANGE 2019 vs 2018
Botulinum toxin type A (Botox®, Dysport®, Axosym®)	4,363,758	57%	3%
Cellulite treatment (e.g., VelaSmooth®, Endermologie)	8,865	0%	-4%
Chemical peel	572,748	7%	-1%
Laser hair removal	380,711	5%	-2%
Laser skin resurfacing	250,072	3%	-1%
Laser treatment of leg veins	66,240	1%	-7%
Microdermabrasion	303,919	4%	-3%
Sclerotherapy	154,054	2%	-1%
Soft tissue fillers	1,247,877	16%	1%
Calcium hydroxylapatite (e.g., Radiesse®)	86,960	1%	-3%
Fat-face	16,169	0%	3%
Hyaluronic acid (e.g., Juvederm Ultra®, Juvederm Ultra Plus®, Perlane®, Restylane®, Prevelle Silk®)	1,075,433	14%	1%
Poly lactic acid (Sculptra®)	69,315	1%	0%
<b>TOTAL COSMETIC MINIMALLY-INVASIVE PROCEDURES</b>	<b>7,348,241</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>TOTAL COSMETIC PROCEDURES</b>	<b>7,916,448</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>1%</b>

Fig-1: Shows the statistics for the number of cosmetic surgical procedures (invasive and minimally/ non-invasive) for women between the ages of 40 and 54 in the USA. (Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, 2019)

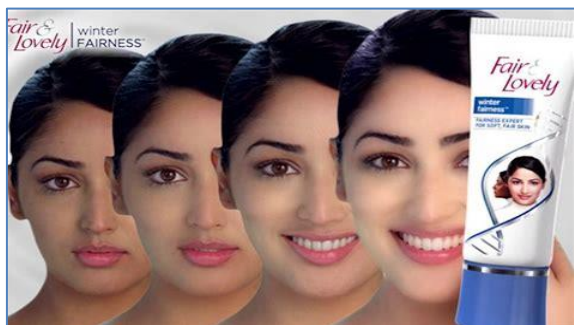
Non- surgical cosmetic procedures do not require surgical incisions to be made and are usually considered minimally invasive. The most common ones include microdermabrasion, chemical peels, and botulinum toxin injection, which involves injecting the Botox directly into the muscles to block signals from nerve cells and this prevents the muscles from contracting and smooths the outer appearance. This is commonly used to prevent signs of aging, and statistics show that 57% of all the minimally invasive cosmetic procedures in 2019 were performed on people between the ages of 40 and 54. (Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, 2019).

To conclude, the high number of cosmetic procedures that take place each year have almost normalised cosmetic surgery, and the effect this has on society is that we now only see flawless and perfect features on the faces of people around us, so we undoubtedly also want to look like them. This shows the significance of this factor in changing the beauty standard, as it has made us prefer sleek, flawless features, instead of embracing our natural ones.

**COLONISATION AND RACISM**

Janmohamad (2020) says society can often equate being born white or fair with being better looking, which is then mistaken again to denote a better person, more human, more valued in society. Skin tone has always held class connotations, dating back to early Egyptian, Roman, and Greek societies, where having lighter skin was associated with being of a higher class. This was fuelled by the fact that labourers had darker skin due to the long hours spent working outside in the sun, while the wealthy and those of higher status had fairer skin. Colonialism took this concept that the colour of your skin determined your worth, and applied it across races (Defino, 2020). This ideology was also seen during slavery in the United States, where slaves with lighter skin were favoured by the slave owners above the people with dark skin and were allowed to work in homes rather than the fields. Because of these ideas, Eurocentric beauty standards have essentially become global beauty standards. This colonizer mindset is built into the beauty industry in Asia, particularly in India, where skin-lightening creams are still being sold. The glorification of fair skin is associated with beauty,

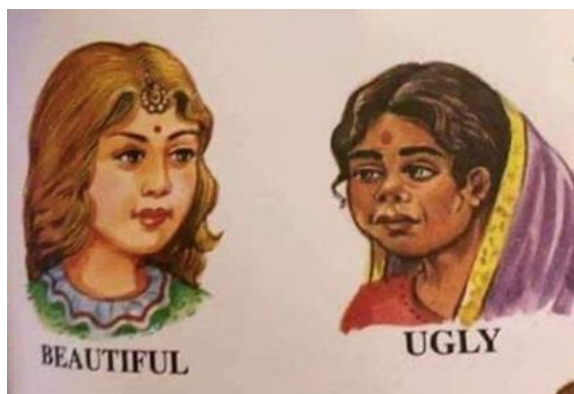
but also greater status and privilege, and it shows itself in colourism, a systematic way of evaluating people with dark skin, in Indian society (Iyer, 2016).



**Fig-2: Shows an advertisement for Fair and Lovely skin lightening cream (Buchet, 2019)**

In India, the most common procedure is skin whitening. The world's most famous skin-lightening cream is called "Fair & Lovely". The global market for such products was estimated at over \$4 billion in 2017 and is set to grow to nearly \$9 billion by 2024 (Janmohamad, 2020).

The woman in the picture is shown to look miserable with darker skin, but as her skin gets lighter, she becomes happier and more confident. The marketing for this cream reinforces the idea that being fair is what will make you happy, and that the only way to feel beautiful and wanted is to be light-skinned. This psychological manipulation is subtle, but it highlights the role the marketing for cosmetic procedures plays in convincing people that they need them to achieve happiness, success, etc. when it will most likely result in people finding another issue with their bodies to obsess over.



**Fig-3: Is an image from an Indian textbook for young children (Jigarius, 2020)**

This colourism can be attributed to institutions that equate whiteness with power, privilege, and status. British colonialism reinforced the hierarchy of the Indian caste system and often equated higher castes and higher power status with lighter skin. This put whiteness on a pedestal, and in post-colonial India, the closest way for Indians to attain that whiteness is by

celebrating fair skin. This has led to a society where, each year, over 233 tons of skin-whitening and skin-bleaching products are consumed (Iyer, 2016).

The invaders and colonizers who entered India starting in the 1400s were light-skinned, including the Dutch, French, and British. The British occupied India from the 17th century until India's independence in 1947 (When and Why did the British choose to invade India?, 2019), and it was during this empire that the prejudice based on skin colour became ingrained into Indian society. The colonisers were able to build on the caste system that already existed in India, a system that originated in Hinduism that divides Hindus into hierarchical groups based on their karma (work) and dharma (duty) (What is India's caste system, 2019), but is now seen across all of Indian society. The upper castes were traditionally powerful, wealthy, and fair-skinned, while the lower castes were darker skinned and performed manual tasks, holding positions such as labourers and street sweepers. The people of lower castes had darker skin due to being subjected to physical labour every day in the sun, and this was passed down the generations. Caste and class are interconnected, so fair skin is regarded as proof of better financial and social status (Dixit, 2019). The colonizer mindset is still present in society today, from the faces in the pages of fashion magazines that, up until quite recently, were almost always white. While companies are now trying to have more diverse models on the cover of magazines, their features are still being whitewashed and changed to fit the more Eurocentric beauty standards. To this day, we still see images of celebrities such as Rihanna, Lupita Nyong'o, and K-pop idols, people who are already considered the beauty standard in their respective fields, being edited to resemble Caucasian features. This is a deep-rooted issue that stems from internalised beliefs and ideas, and this makes it difficult to stop.

In this way, colonialism gave capitalism a business model to follow it demonstrated how easy it is to profit off insecurities that stem from a lifetime of being treated less than (Defino, 2020). Many of the negative thoughts we have about our bodies are a result of the marketing the beauty industry utilises to present normal body features such as scars, acne, and wrinkles as flaws, and to convince us to buy their products to put it "right". An example of this is Helena Rubenstein, who was the first beauty specialist to classify skin as "dry", "normal", and "oily" in the early 1900s, and used these categories to sell her face cream, Valaze. This was when women started to see their normal body functions as flawed, and has led to a global skincare market valued at \$201.656 billion in 2019 (Global Skin Care Market Size, Share & Industry Reports, 2025, 2020). Another example is Eugène Schueller, the creator of L'Oréal, who introduced the brand's shampoo in 1938. In the 1930s, he summed up his approach to marketing

as "Tell people they're disgusting, they don't smell good and they're not attractive" (Tungate, 2011, p.56). This shows how the marketing for cosmetic products and procedures was used as a tool by beauty brands and companies to make people feel worse about their bodies and the way they look, and this psychological manipulation is the foundation upon which beauty marketing is built (Defino, 2020).

### The doll tests

In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed and conducted a series of experiments known colloquially as "the doll tests" to study the psychological effects of segregation on African American children (Brown v. Board: The Significance of the "Doll Test", n.d.) They used four dolls, all identical except for their colour, and showed them to their subjects, African American children between the ages of three and seven. The children were asked to identify the races of the dolls and to say which ones they preferred, with the majority answering that they preferred the white doll and assigning positive characteristics to it, such as it being "pretty" and "nice" while the black doll was "ugly" and "bad". This experiment was done to test the racial perceptions of the children.

The Clarks concluded that "prejudice, discrimination, and segregation" created a feeling of inferiority among African American children and damaged their self-esteem. (Brown v. Board: The Significance of the "Doll Test", n.d.)

### Bollywood

Colourism is prevalent in the film industry in South Asia, especially during the 90s and early 2000s almost all the actresses were made to look much paler than they were. Young adolescents would be exposed to a superficial version of their role models, which led to the accumulation of subconscious negative impact in the minds of the younger generation. They grew up feeling less worthy, and this was fuelled by the way darker-skinned people, particularly women, are only ever presented in the media as side characters, while all the heroines who found love, happiness, and success are light-skinned. The psychological impact of this colourism has had a detrimental effect on the self-esteem of the younger generation, particularly those of darker skin, and has contributed greatly to the feelings of inferiority many people of colour struggle with to this day.

*"These standards are often measured along with Eurocentric, white standards of beauty so narratives and ideals of beauty are heavily racialized."* (Kuo, 2017).

As I mentioned before, the issue of racism and colourism is deep-rooted, and it is only recently that more people have started speaking about it. This makes

it difficult to dismantle as these ideals are already ingrained into the minds of people of colour, so this particular aspect of the beauty standard that favours Eurocentric features will remain, and it is only with better education for the next generation that we can try to remove these perceptions.

### The media

One could argue that the body image presented to us in the west is that of a thin ideal. It is a western concept that implies a person, especially a woman, is more attractive if she is slim or underweight, and is pervasively present in the media presented to us today. The exposure and consumption of these ideas have been detrimental to women's health, with even the shortest amount of exposure leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Stice *et al.*, 2005), and is associated with a "drive for thinness" (Jucker *et al.*, 2017). This massively contributes to eating disorders and other mental health issues.

Up to 50% of women in western and industrialised countries have a negative body image (Jucker *et al.*, 2017), with there being 97,557 young women in the UK between the ages of 11 and 34 being diagnosed with bulimia, and 29,267 with anorexia. (How Many People Have an Eating Disorder in the UK? 2012). These alarming rates are correlated to the media, as research taken from 77 experimental studies showed that media exposure was linked to a stronger internalisation of the thin body ideal (Jucker *et al.*, 2017). This highlights how big of an impact the media has on shaping the beauty standard, especially in the west.

However, this ideal is not the beauty standard in other countries, particularly in countries where the population has limited media access. A study was done to examine the physical attractiveness preferences of different cultural groups within Europe, with the main comparison being between the preferences of a group of Sámi, and ethnic Finns in Helsinki and Britons in London, both representing a relatively urbanized background.

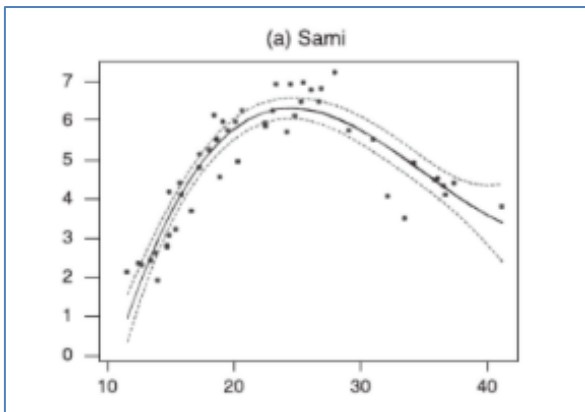
The Sámi people belong to the indigenous Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic family, inhabiting Sápmi, which today encompasses large northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula within the Murmansk Oblast of Russia. They have their language, culture, and way of life, as well as maintaining a distinct political and socio-economic institution (Swami and Tovée, 2007), which makes them a good sample to use to compare the preferences of different groups of people. The study therefore consisted of three groups with varying levels of media access, each consisting of men from their respective areas. The participants were shown images of 50 women (all wearing the same pieces of clothing, and

with their faces hidden so their ethnicities could not be identified, and to make sure that facial attractiveness wouldn't influence the opinions of the participants. This was all done to ensure there were no factors, other than body shape and BMI, would be included in the subject's ratings) and were asked to rate their attractiveness.

**Analysis of results from Sámi group**

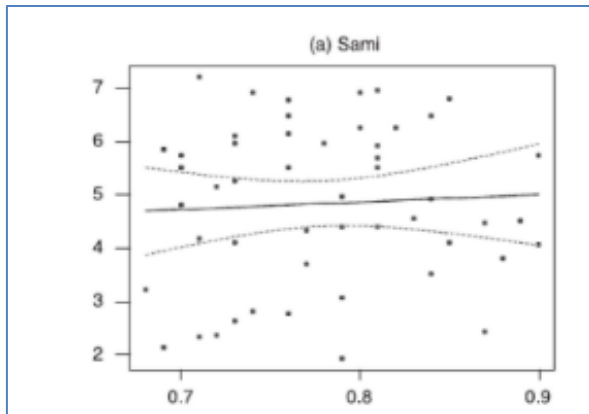
**Figure 4** shows that the attractiveness function is shifted towards higher BMI values, and gradually declines with the highest values.

**Figure 5** shows that the attractiveness function is not significantly correlated to the waist-to-hip ratio.

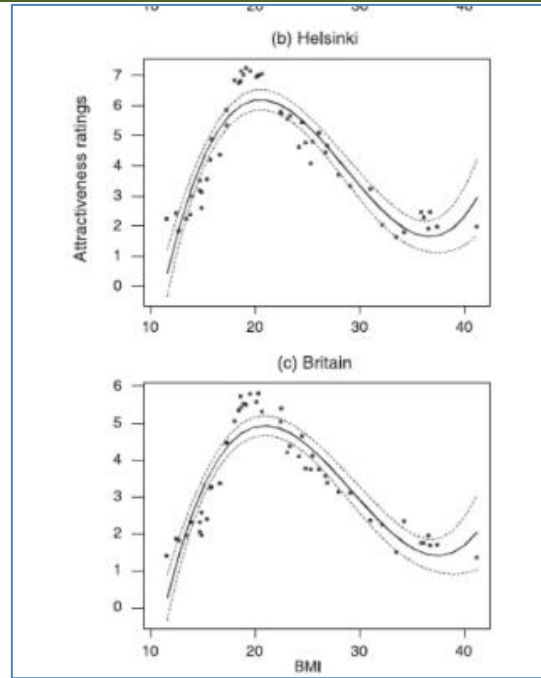


**Fig-4:** shows the plot of attractiveness as functions of BMI (Swami and Tovée, 2007, p.46)

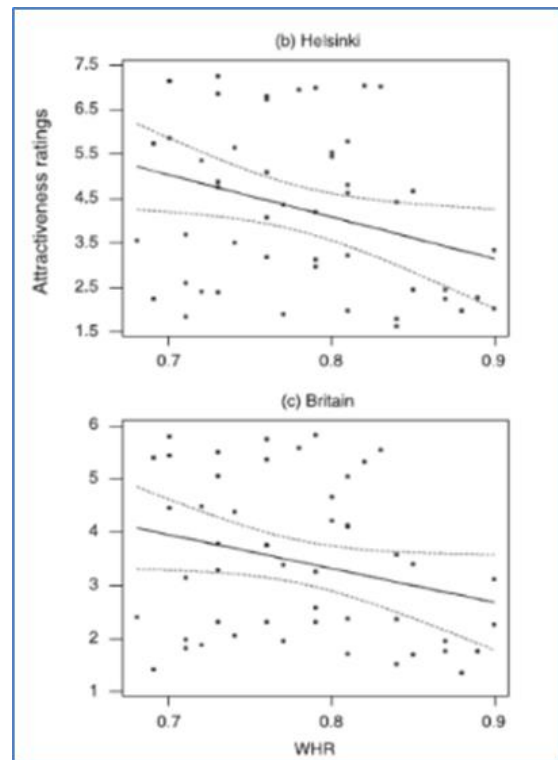
The results of the ratings for the three groups are shown below:



**Fig-5:** Shows the plot of attractiveness as functions of the waist to hip ratio (WHR) (Swami and Tovée, 2007, p.46)



**Fig-6:** Shows the plot of attractiveness as functions of BMI for the Helsinki and British groups (Swami and Tovée, 2007, p.46)



**Fig-7:** Shows the plot of attractiveness against WHR for the Helsinki and British groups (Swami and Tovée, 2007, p.46)

Analysis of results from the Helsinki and British groups **Figure 6** shows a roughly inverted shape- the attractiveness of the lower and higher BMIs is low, but higher for the middle BMIs.

**Figure 7** shows that attractiveness and WHR are significantly correlated, particularly for the Helsinki

group. The graphs show that attractiveness is higher for the lower WHR.

Overall, there were significant differences in the judgements, as when compared to the participants from Britain and Helsinki, the Sámi people selected a body size that was significantly higher in BMI as their preferred, and were also more "tolerant" of heavier figures (Swami and Tovée, 2007).

Some psychologists have argued that the existence of a "universally shared criteria of attractiveness" (Swami and Tovée, 2007) is related to a person's potential reproductive success, meaning that males and females are believed to select partners that will enhance their reproductive success. There is a concurrent emphasis on the attractiveness of salient morphological features, and these are meant to signal whether an individual is desirable or not.

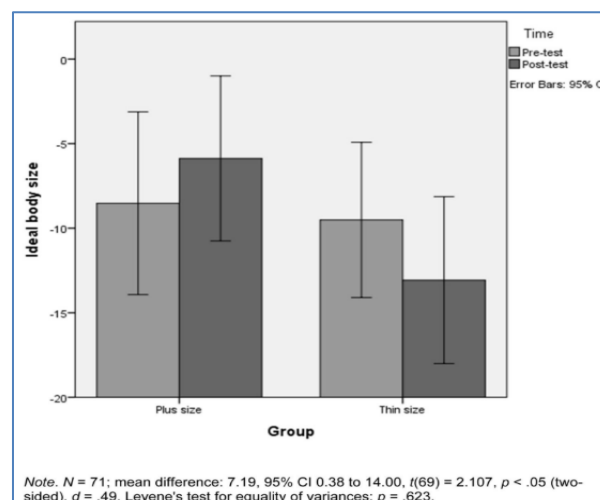
As the Sámi people have limited access to the media, their opinions on beauty and which factors influence how attractive a person is suggesting that for non-industrialized societies, BMI is an indicator of health, and therefore "ideal" body shapes and weights are different for different racial groups based on the optimal BMI (Swami and Tovée, 2007). Another study was done in 2005 that used participants from Malaysia, China, and India, countries which are all known to have different optimal BMIs. This would suggest that the people from the different ethnic groups have different preferences for body weight and shape, but the results from the experiments showed that all participants preferred a more "slender" figure (Swami and Tovée, 2007). The differences in preference could be linked to exposure to and consumption of western media.

However, some limitations of these studies are that they don't specifically show that the media displaying a thin ideal can directly influence body size ideals in a non-western, non-industrialized, "media-naïve" population (Jucker *et al.*, 2017) and that exposure to it will decrease the female body size ideal.

The first study to experimentally "induce a shift in female body size preferences using thin ideal stimuli in a non-western media-naïve population" (Jucker *et al.*, 2017) was done in 2017. This study used 80 male and female participants from two villages in Nicaragua, the largest county in the Central American Isthmus. The population had little to no access to grid electricity, and therefore no access to visual media.

The subjects were split into two groups and were asked to describe their ideal female body size before and after seeing photographs of either thin or plus-size models. This second stage was called the manipulation phase and involved the subjects being exposed to models from catalogues or magazines that

varied in age, ethnicity, and clothing, the only difference being the size of the models. This was to ensure that there was only one factor affecting the outcome.



**Fig-8: Shows the changes in ideal body type for the two groups before and after being exposed to either the thin or the plus-size models. (Jucker *et al.*, 2017, p.12)**

### The results from this study are shown below

The graph shows that the subjects that were shown the plus-sized models showed a preference for larger bodies, while the subjects shown the thinner models showed the opposite pattern. This data is crucial in highlighting the role of the media in affecting the beauty standard as it demonstrates that even the smallest amount of exposure to certain kinds of images can heavily influence a person's perception of body ideals. In this case, people with no prior knowledge of the thin ideal the western media portrays were tested, and only 15 minutes of exposure resulted in them changing their female body size ideals.

The last study I researched was done in 2017 and used 49 women with an actual-ideal self-discrepancy. The women were randomly shown 12 images of fashion models with varying body types, and their heart rate was recorded during image exposure. Social comparisons and body satisfaction were measured after exposure to each image, and the results indicated that the women reported the greatest body satisfaction and the least amount of social comparisons were when viewing plus-size models, but body satisfaction decreased and social comparisons increased when viewing average-sized or thin size models (Clayton *et al.*, 2017). Jessica Ridgway, one of the people who conducted the study, said "there is a clear psychological advantage when the media shows more realistic body types than the traditional thin model" (Heller, 2017), and this highlights how seeing average to plus-sized models in advertisements has a positive impact on women's cognitive resource allocation and body satisfaction.

These studies show how significant the impact of the media is on influencing the beauty standards and also demonstrate the correlation between the thin size models presented in the media with the thin ideal that is prevalent in society, especially in western countries where media consumption is extremely high.

### Beauty standard in America

The advent of Social media one of the most popular methods of media exposure is through social media, which has increased in popularity over the past twenty years. While the various platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were created as a means for people to communicate with others, they have now progressed into presenting people, particularly women, with their definition of what is "perfect" and beautiful.

Statistics show that there are 2 million Instagram advertisers per month and that between 2016 and 2018, Instagram usage doubled (Robinson, 2020). Instagram has a potential advertising reach of 1.16 billion users as of 2020, and these advertisements can reach a youth audience of 83 million. Another UK survey showed that 15 percent of the 18 to 24-year-olds surveyed in a 2000 people poll, believed that the models that are used in mass communication accurately depict what the human body looks like. According to the same survey, over 650 of the survey's participants were "unconfident or extremely unconfident with their body." (Safronova, 2015).

The industry uses these platforms as a huge marketing base, and with a few clicks they can reach their target audience with significant impacts, however, with poor government control and lack of regulations; children are being exposed to the marketing strategies of the cosmetic industry as well. This results in a negative impact on the mental health of the younger generation. A study done by Dove showed that 61% of girls between the ages of 10 and 17 have low self-esteem and that 9 out of 10 girls would not participate in activities outside of their homes (Chandler, 2017), as well as a rise in the number of cases of eating disorders each year. Statistics also show that eating disorders affect at least 9% of the population worldwide and that 26% of people with eating disorders attempt suicide. This highlights how detrimental the impact of the unrealistic beauty standard is on the mental health of the population, and how important it is to regulate the images presented in the media so the younger generation is less vulnerable and exposed to the negative ideas and harmful beauty ideals that are portrayed.

Photoshopping is another major issue when it comes to social media. Photograph manipulation involves the transformation or alteration of a photograph using various methods and techniques to achieve desired results. When looking through social

media, it is likely that the majority of the pictures you will see have been edited in some way or another, especially pictures of models, whether it is their skin being smoothed over to remove the presence of acne, scars, wrinkles, and cellulite, or their bodies being morphed to have impossible proportions and curves. This is problematic as it adds to the unrealistic standards we are expected to maintain, as it implies that we are supposed to look perfect and flawless at every moment in our lives. People begin to assume that these highly edited images are real, and this greatly contributes to consumers having lower self-esteem and more negative thoughts about their bodies. When doing research, I couldn't find any reliable statistics about photoshopping, e.g. how many images are photoshopped, etc., and this could suggest that this issue isn't spoken about enough, so no research has been done relating to it. If people are unwilling to admit they have edited their pictures on social media it will create a taboo regarding it, and it makes it unlikely that anything will be done about trying to prevent it from happening.

### Celebrities

Over the past century, the ideal beauty standard in the USA has drastically changed from decade to decade. They are built off what is popular during that time, and particularly for the last two decades, the largest influence has come from the rise of the media and celebrities.

Nowadays, celebrities hold a huge amount of power when it comes to influencing the public on how they should look. From award ceremonies to reality TV shows, celebrities are used to showcase the new trends in beauty, and within minutes social media, magazines, and TV are flooded with images of these glamorous stars, and this indirectly sends a message to us that this is what we should look like too (The Influence of Celebrity Culture on Beauty Procedures | VIVA Skin Clinics, 2017).

Some of the celebrities that have had the biggest influence in changing the beauty standard are the Kardashians, an American family that is prominent in the fields of fashion design, entertainment, and business. They are known for popularising many beauty trends such as contouring and popularising "curvier" figures after undergoing plastic surgery. One positive of this is that it was the start of when the beauty ideal started to move away from thin and underweight, and this helped give women the freedom to embrace curves. Another example of the influence of the Kardashians is how they popularised big lips and made it mainstream. "Once a Kardashian does it, it becomes socially acceptable (or accessible) to ordinary people. Then, once they create the demand, they launch a makeup line of products. The demand for Kylie's first round of lip kits was so big, they sold out in a minute." (Bosley, 2018).



While these factors haven't directly changed the beauty standards, they have played a massive role in enforcing them. This is since many people can access the many different social media platforms every day, and through this, they are exposed to new trends. The popularity of many celebrities means they are involved in lots of different projects, such as reality shows or advertisements with different brands or companies, and this means that we are exposed to them and their lifestyles more. Seeing their glamorous lifestyles subconsciously makes us want to be like them, so they hold a lot of power in deciding what is trendy and what the ideal standard for beauty is.

### Primary Research

Aims and Objectives of primary research, after reviewing other studies and statistics, I couldn't find any information that was specific to investigating the different factors that affect the beauty standards, and what the other people think the most significant factor is. I wanted to gather specific information regarding the general opinion on which factor people think has had the biggest impact, and I did this by conducting primary research. This helped me to get first-hand opinions on prevailing thoughts that people have, and whether there are links to this, and the demographic of the sample I used.

### METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, I did primary research to collect my data. I wanted a large variety of people to be able to take part, so when planning my questions I included many different options for each answer to make it as inclusive as possible, for example, the different age groups that could take part ranged from 11 to 99 years.

Some of my main arguments included the impact of the media and celebrities, so I included questions that would allow me to assess how much exposure the participants had to these factors. This would allow me to be able to make links to identify

whether influence from certain factors correlated to overall opinions.

I wanted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data would allow me to make interpretations from the results that I could link to my topic, as well as quantitative data, which I could then analyse. I needed both sets of data to identify trends in the usage of electronic media, and to be able to draw conclusive arguments from this.

### DATA COLLECTION

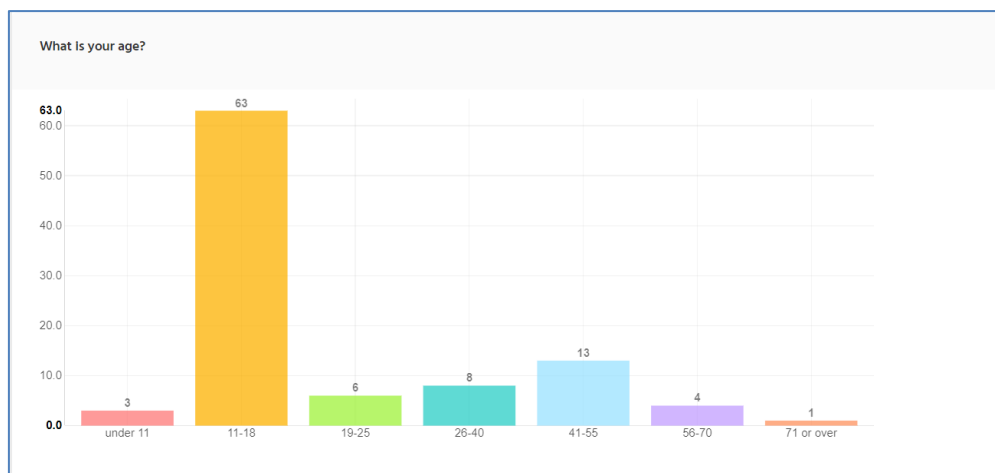
To conduct this primary research, I created a survey using the website Survey Legend. I compiled a list of questions that were relevant to my topic, but more specific to the factors that I investigated for my report.

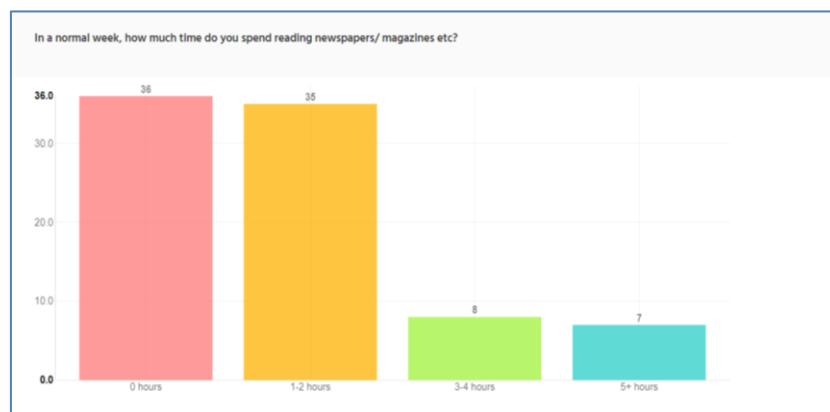
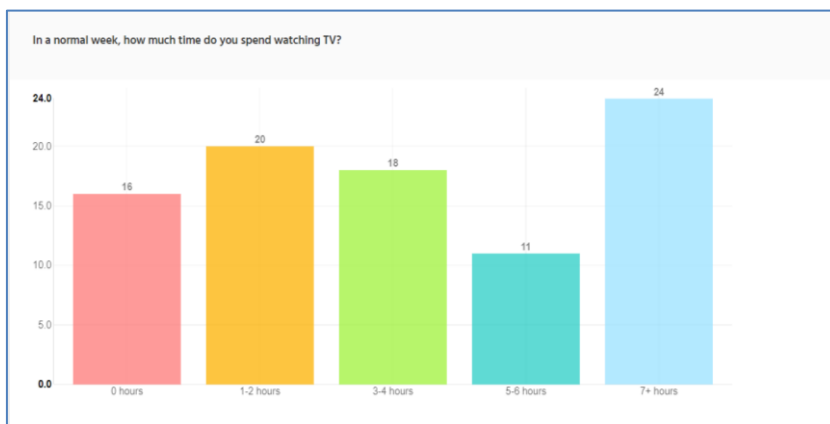
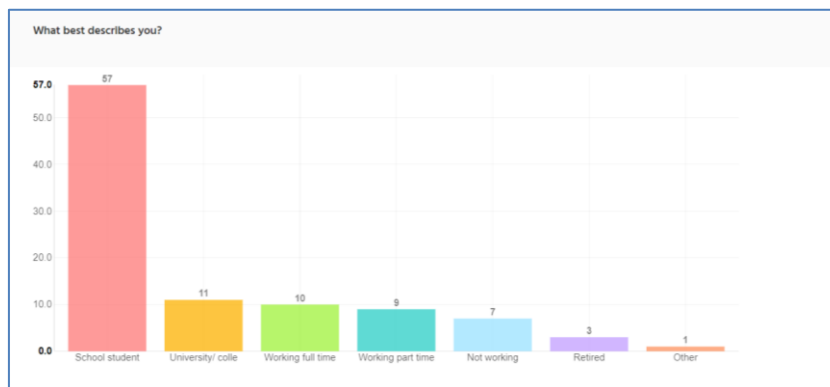
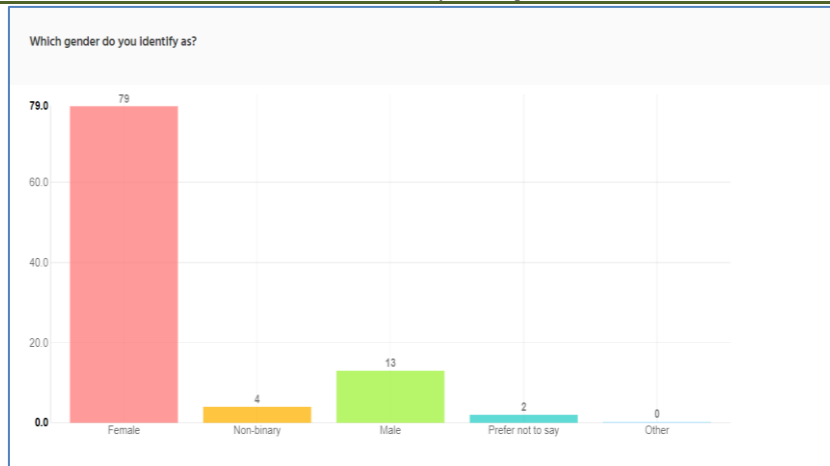
The questions ranged from the demography of participants, including age group, gender, and occupation, to closed-ended questions that would provide the quantitative data. These questions focused on understanding the behaviours of the participants in terms of media consumption, so data was gathered relating to the number of hours spent on social media, watching television, etc. per week. As well as this, I included questions that inquired into the participants' exposure to celebrities and influencers, and how much weight held into the cosmetic products they then buy monthly.

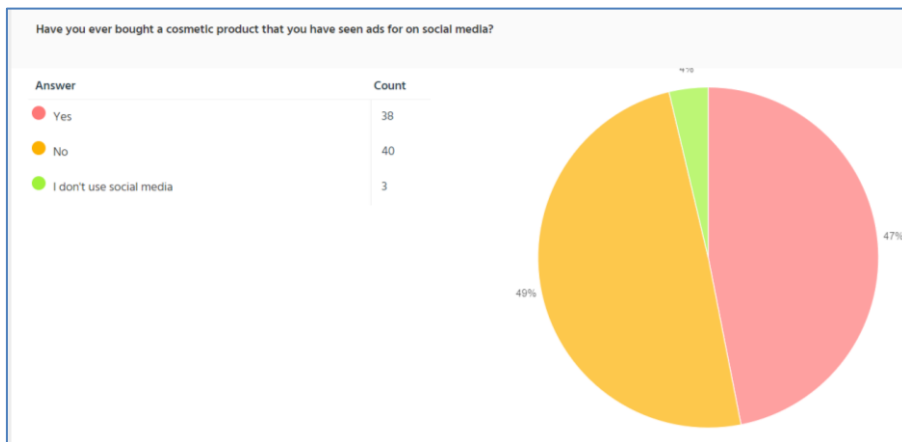
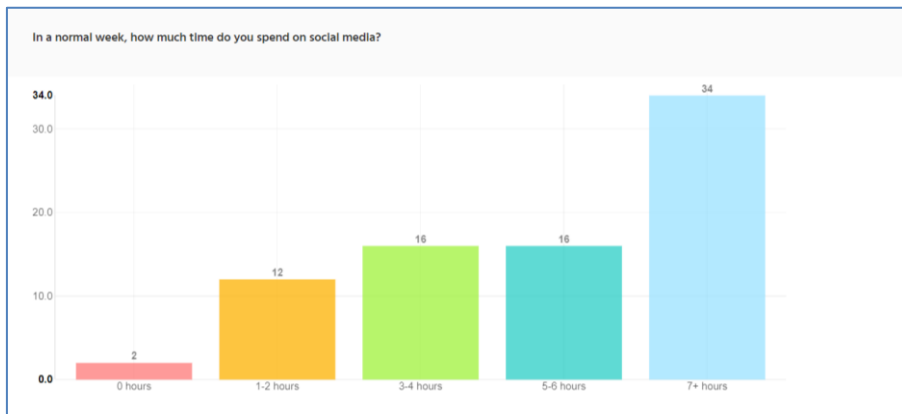
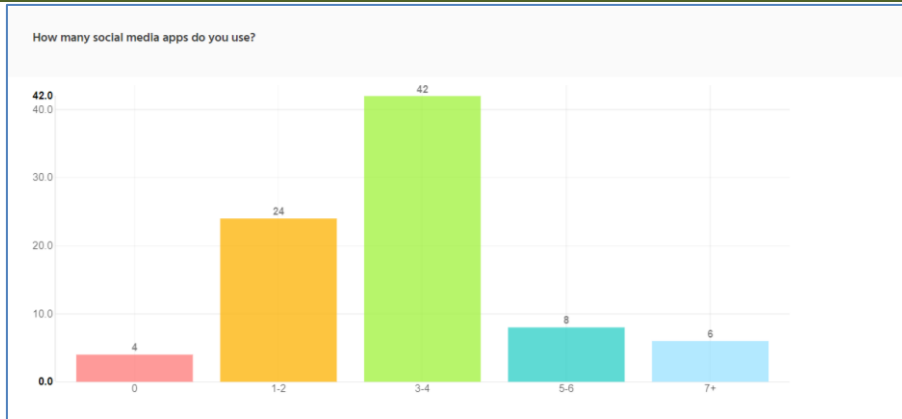
The questionnaires were distributed electronically, via email, social media, and WhatsApp links. The data was collected in real-time, and the survey was stopped after 48 hours.

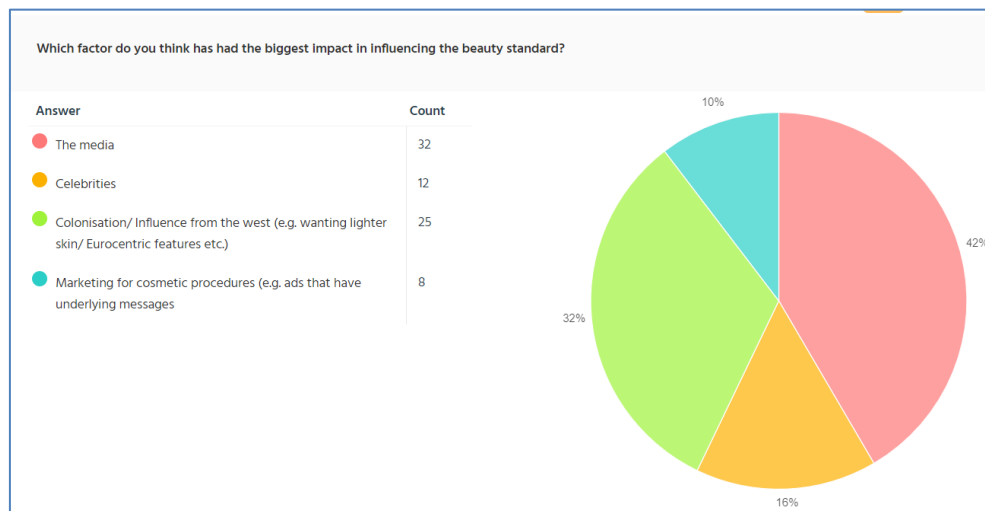
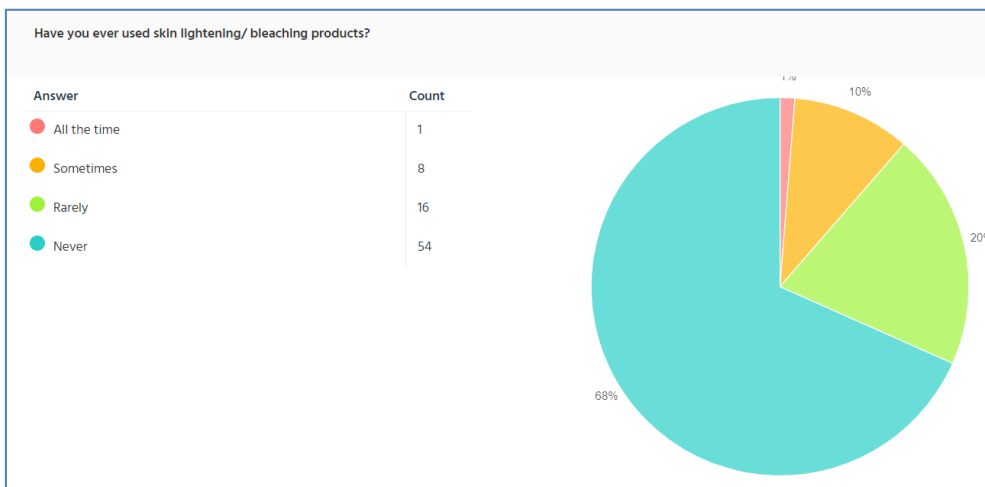
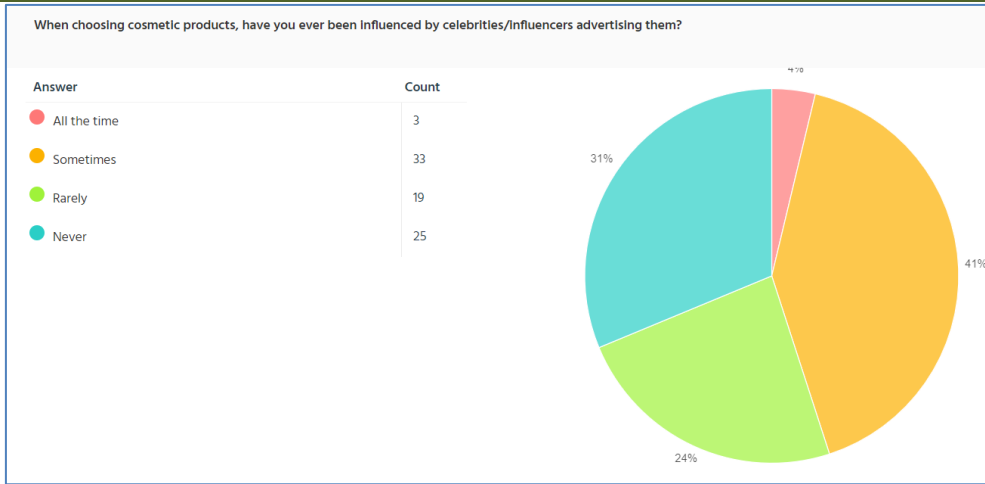
### RESULTS

In the survey 100 participants took part, and the age range of participants was from 11-74 years. As expected, most of the participants were female (n=79) and from a younger age group (n=57).









### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The data shows that most of the participants (42%) thought the media had the biggest impact on influencing the beauty standard. This could be because most spent 7+ hours (n=34) watching television and using social media every week on average, so their consumption of (media), particularly western ideals, is extremely high. Many of the participants described

themselves as school students and being between the ages of 11-18, or older, so they would likely have been educated about the implications of presenting images of models, etc. that have undergone photoshop or editing to society's opinion of what is "beautiful" or "normal". This also suggests that they understand the negative effects of the media on beauty standards.

The data also shows that 47% have bought cosmetic products based on ads they have seen, and 69% of participants have bought products after seeing celebrities use/ advertise them. This demonstrates the influence that these factors have on which products the participants buy. 79% of the participants identified as being female, so the results allow us to see how the different factors impact women.

Some limitations of this study are that it was aimed at English-speaking people, so the participants were mainly from western countries. This makes it highly probable that their exposure to things such as the media and celebrities would be very similar, and also could perhaps limit their knowledge of the extent of the impact that British colonialism had on the beauty standard in other countries. Many of the participants identified as female and between the ages of 11 and 18, and this caused the results to be more skewed. Therefore, there are too many outliers that will affect the statistical model.

### CONCLUSION OF MY PRIMARY RESEARCH

The results from the survey show that the time spent consuming different aspects of the media, influence from celebrities, and the exposure to advertisements relating to cosmetic products and procedures, etc. do have an impact on the participants' opinion on which factors influence the beauty standard. While the results are slightly skewed as most of the participants fall under one demographic (i.e. female, school student, and between the ages of 11 and 18), they allow us to see how these factors have affected this demographic in the same way.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of my report was to understand how significant the impact of the marketing for cosmetic surgery is on the beauty standards, while also exploring the other factors that had a significant role. The marketing for cosmetic surgery is a factor that many people wouldn't typically consider to play an important role in the creation of beauty standards, so I decided to explore this factor in detail to shed light on its significance and the detrimental impact it can have on individuals, particularly women.

After weighing up the importance of each factor, it is clear that the marketing for cosmetic surgery and procedures has had a large impact on changing the beauty standard. The subtle connotations of the advertisements are what instil in our minds that certain body features are "flawed", and through this, we are convinced we need to spend lots of money to "fix" them. The cosmetic and beauty industries are essentially using the marketing for their products to create solutions for problems they initially devised. This factor is evidently intertwined with other factors, such as the way the results of skin lightening creams are presented

on ads, to the way celebrities are used to advertise and sell different products and procedures. This makes the marketing aspect highly significant, as it is a tool used by the cosmetic and beauty industries to influence people, and we can see how effective it is.

Colonisation and racism also played a part in influencing the beauty standard as they shifted the ideal standard to resemble more Eurocentric features, such as lighter skin, smaller noses, double eyelids, and more. In my report I discussed how the westernisation of media and film has had detrimental impacts on the perceptions of beauty for people of colour, and this is significant as we see it being implemented all around the world, from the production of skin-lightening creams in India to the number of South Koreans that have undergone double eyelid surgery. However, it must be noted that if the marketing of cosmetic products allows for these ideals to be circulated globally, which goes to show the significance of its impact on beauty standards around the world.

The studies that I analysed in my report further demonstrate how the media directly influences our opinions on ideal body shape and size, particularly for women. Through further analysis, the differences in the ideal standard in different countries/ societies became clear, and influence from different aspects of the media, such as celebrities and social media, had varying effects depending on the amount and the type of exposure. They showed that the images and ideals we are exposed to are what enforce the thin ideal that society holds, and as I mentioned previously, we can see how detrimental the psychological impact of only seeing thin models is on women.

In addition to the studies I analysed, the results of the survey that I conducted allowed me to visualise the correlation between the amount of time the participants spent watching television, on social media, etc., and what their opinion was on the biggest factor. The data mentioned above reinforces the impact of marketing of cosmetic products on our beauty standards, and I believe that we, as a progressive society, must challenge and question these ideals to avoid further damage to the mental health and self-esteem of future generations.

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