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BRIEFLY ABOUT BEAUTY STANDARDS, GENDER STEREOTYPES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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Established gender stereotypes have a great influence on the beauty standards imposed by advertising industry. Beauty models are actually presented as decorative images that promote unrealistic beauty standards for the face and body; and women are four times more likely to act as passive decorations [8]. Although consumers understand that these beauties are professional models who are paid to maintain their physical shape, and modern technologies provide opportunities to “conceal” any flaws, they still try to get closer to their ideal when buying goods.

Advertising beauty ideals send a message that appearance is the only aspect that matters to women. All achievements outside this area are insignificant, which leads to the fact that women who do not meet the requirements of these standards suffer from social anxiety, stress, an inferiority complex, envy, and a feeling of inequality with conventional beauties [2; 3; 9]. Although beauty standards do not necessarily have negative connotations, however, they may generate overly simplistic concepts and expectations that devalue and limit women’s potential [5] thereby objectifying them. Quite often, women in advertisements are presented in a sexually attractive way. Such images broadcast clear non-verbal signals of their lack of authority and power in comparison with men that can lead to their perception as beings who are not capable of making their own decisions.

As N. Wolf points out, beauty takes women out of the power structures [10] returning them to where men want to see them, that is, to a private space, where their role should be limited to the classic “Kinder Küche Kirche” (an expression which described the role of the women in German Empire and Nazi Germany). But unlike any patriarchal society that glorified exactly these roles of women, the modern world hides them under the mask of another requirement – to be young and beautiful. Thus, beauty was put on the market, where capitalism and patriarchy reign – to make money and preserve the status quo [10]. Such trends cause serious concerns.

The growing popularity of social platforms has led to the shift towards digital channels. For instance, the U.S. citizens spend an average of 23,6 hours online every week, mostly on social media accounts: 73 percent of adults spend their screen time on YouTube, 68 percent – on Facebook, 35 percent – on Instagram, 29 percent – on Pinterest, 25 percent – on LinkedIn, 24 percent – on X (Twitter) [6]. The growth and expansion of social media has

given rise to a new profession known as influencer. They are the ones who promote fashion, beauty and health products and shape the lifestyle of social network consumers, especially women. Quite often, their profiles represent a certain version (often idealized) of their lives, and consumers respond to the influencers' online identities as to their offline reality [4]. Social media often acts as a lens through which users compare themselves to what they see on the screen. Given that the online identities may not reflect the real aspects of the influencers' and models' lives and be only an idealized version, people compare themselves with others not in their favor that can cause feelings of worthlessness and dissatisfaction, frustration and depression [1]. It is a mistake to use the same scale to measure two completely different "realities" – online and offline. And the cost of making this mistake can be high – a mental health decline and poor wellbeing.

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