**Dangerous beauty standards on Social Media sells**

Social media has a big impact on today´s society. It is continuously growing and takes up a big part of most of our day-to-day life (Dixon, 2022). My theory emphasizes on how Influencers and celebrities use social media to push the marketing for the beauty industry and creates pressure for young women when it comes to beauty standards. The beauty-industry feeds on insecurities and pressure. Young women today, feel pressured to achieve the beauty standards they constantly see and that are being normalized on social media, and on apps like Instagram. In this essay I will emphasize on the influence this content has on young women, and how the beauty industry capitalizes from this. I will use both Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian as a part of my media example, as they are both seen as successful and famous influencers and celebrities, as well as entrepreneurs. They are also seen as a certain stereotype found on social media today. As they use their looks and social media as a platform to sell products for others, as well as promoting their own products. The Kardashians are seen as originals, one of the first people that started to benefit from social media, that many people in today´s society makes a living from. In this essay I will give specific examples by showing how Kylie use beauty standards and marketing from social media for her business. I will also show how Kim´s body type gives an unrealistic and unattainable beauty standard for most young women. Which consequence in pressure for young women to look a certain way, that can damage both self-image and mental health.

There has always been idols and beauty standards that affects trends and how people compare and see themselves. The difference is how Social Media has grown and now takes such a big part of today´s society (Dixon, 2022). At the same time filters, editing apps, normalizing and marketing of plastic surgery is all used on social media and on Apps like for example Instagram, this creates an unrealistic perception of beauty standards for young women in today´s society (Tiggemann et al. [2014](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6#ref-CR114)). This can damage young women´s self-image as well as creating mental health issues like eating disorders (Dutta, 2022). Influencers circulating around on Instagram and social media like The Kardashians has been applauded for normalizing a more diverse body type for women on social media. Many also argue that they have used plastic surgery to achieve their looks. They have admitted to some procedures, but many argue that they have had more work done than they admit to.

Social cognitive theory was developed by Albert Bandura a famous professor in psychology. Social cognitive theory addresses psychosocial functioning as a reciprocal interaction between self and society, personal factors (as cognitive, affective or biological), behavioral patterns, and environmental events, all interacting and influencing each other. This theory offers a framework within which to examine the effect of media (Bryant and Oliver, 2008). I have therefore chosen to use this theory to explore the possible effect Influencers and celebrities might have on young women when it comes to beauty standards.

Plastic Surgery is a big topic of discussion on Social Media platforms today. As Influencers, celebrities and patients in general now use social media to share and give reviews on the work they have had done, their surgeons, and how experienced the whole process (Domanski and Cavale, 2019). This allows others to find the same surgeons. As it is easy to look up the surgeon from for example an influencer´s Instagram post, as they often tag the surgeon´s profile. Influencers often gets a discount or gifts in return by promoting, what they use themselves, also when it comes to plastic surgery. Instagram and Social Media is now one of the easiest places to find reviews by customers on surgeons and procedures. Research shows that this may be a part of increasing the numbers of people that wants cosmetic procedures (Kubiak and Lindberg, 2012). In this matter, social media is seen as a massive platform to promote it and for marketing (Gould, Leland, Ho, Patel 2016).

Bandura´s social learning theory emphasizes on how behavior that is rewarded, is more likely to be reproduced. Likes, followers and engagement on social media platforms like Instagram, can feel very rewarding. According to Bandura, we do not learn new behavior only by trying it out, but we also replicate actions of others (Bryant and Oliver, 2008).

Kim Kardashian is a media example on how beauty standards on Social Media sells but can also be damaging for young women. She has always been known for her curves and pictures showing how she wore Marilyn Monroe´s dress to this year´s Met Gala in 2022 is all over social media. With her famous TV-show, and Social Media showing her journey to how she managed, to fit into the naturally tinier Marilyn Monroe’s dress, to wear it for the Met, as what she refers to as: “a lot of hard work”. She shows how she eats clean and does several workouts a day, but do not mention any procedures, to make it happen. The pictures can be found on for example apps like Instagram where Kim poses in Marylin´s dress at the Met, with an hourglass figure, taken to a new level. With proportions of a slim waist and a bigger bum and boobs, as never seen before. At the same time her successful business SKIMS profits from selling shapewear for women.

Instagram and social media are a big part of marketing for both Kim´s and Kylie´s businesses. Their businesses both have own accounts on Instagram which is a big part of the marketing for their brands. Their business accounts and personal accounts each has millions of followers. Marketing for their brands is shared on all the mentioned accounts and gives us an idea of how many people they can reach only by using Instagram. Kim has always been known for her bigger butt, and it has been several speculations over the years if it is “fake” and achieved by plastic surgery or if it is natural. On Skims current Instagram page COMING DECEMBER 9: “BUTT ENHANCING SHAPEWEAR” is fronted in the bio with a link attached to the website where customers can by the products.

Kylie Jenner is known for her Billion-dollar business within makeup, Kylie Cosmetics. She is another good example on how beauty standards can be used to make money. Kylie´s makeup brand was first known for its lipliner, to achieve fuller lips. Kylie was open about her insecurities around her lips, and that she overlined them with lipliner. Girls that related to her with their own insecurities, could now buy the lipliner too. Later Kylie admitted that she eventually did plastic surgery for her lips.

Research shows that after Kylie Jenner admitted having done plastic surgery for her lips the interest in procedures and terms like “lip- augmentation, fillers, injections and enhancement” rose. The same research also confirmed that after high profiles and celebrities admitted the procedures they have had done; interest rose by the public around the same procedures (Tijerina, J.D., Morrison, S.D., Nolan, I.T. Parham, M. J., Richardson. M. T and Nazerali, 2019). This shows how high profiles and celebrities can influence us. They often have a lot of followers on Social Media, where some of them even are open about their procedures and share their surgeons etc. The research shows the effect it has on consumers when high profiles and celebrities are open about their plastic surgery, in regard of this research there is no doubt that it increases the interest.

Is openness around plastic surgery on social media, positive or negative? And when social media contributes to normalize this, how does it affect the beauty standards, and influence young girls today?

Many argue that more people get tempted to do plastic surgery when it becomes more normalized on social media. Others claim that lying about the work they have had done, and say that it is natural, is just as bad or even worse. As this contributes to unattainable beauty standards, and for people to expect that they can achieve the same result with for example fitness and diet, as people who have had surgery, which is not realistic.

As I have emphasized in this essay the stereo types and trends we see on Social Media, and the content we consume influence us. The beauty standards that are being normalized on apps like Instagram, where plastic surgery, editing apps and filters are behind many pictures that are being posted daily, creates unrealistic expectations for many young women today. Openness around plastic surgery and influencers´ and celebrities´ procedures is still a discussed dilemma, but research suggests increased numbers on procedures after celebrities have admitted to those specific surgeries (Tijerina, J.D., Morrison, S.D., Nolan, I.T. et al., 2019).

Overall research shows how stereotypes and beauty standards within social media, now affects young women´s self-image and mental health (Dutta, 2022). Even though the consumers have a responsibility for the content they consume alone. Content Creators and controlling authorities that capitalize from social media in today´s society, must also take responsibility. Especially Influencers and celebrities with a lot of followers.

Information on how social media can affect us is therefore important, as most of us consume it every day. Social cognitive theory is one way to help us understand how social media can affect us. This gives us a chance to protect ourselves. This way young woman can unfollow people or content on Instagram, that is sensitive, and damage their self-image and mental health. Information is key to spread awareness on how the content we consume on social media can affect us.

**Reference list**

# Bryant, J., & Oliver, M.B. (Eds.) (2008). *Media Effects*. New York: Routledge.

# Dixon, S. (2022) `Social media - Statistics & Facts´, *Statista*, 21 June. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/#topicHeader__wrapper> (accessed: 8 December 2022).

Domanski, M. C. and Cavale, N. (2012) ` Self-Reported “Worth It” Rating of Aesthetic Surgery in Social Media´, *Aesthetic Plastic Surgery,* 36, pp. 1292-1295. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00266-012-9977-z>

Dutta, S. S. (2022) ´Eating disorders and Social Media) *News Medical & Life Sciences,* March 28. Available at: <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Eating-Disorders-and-Social-Media.aspx> (accessed: 8 December 2022).

Gould, D. J., Leland. H, A., Ho, A. L., and Patel, K. M. (2016) `Emerging trends in social media and plastic surgery´, *Annals of Translational Medicine*, 4(23), pp.1-4.doi: 10.21037/atm.2016.12.17.

Kubiak, M. and Lindberg, A. (2016) ´ Slice me nice: A study exploring Swedish young womens views and responses to marketing of Aesthetic Surgery in social media´, *School of Health and Society*, 26 May. Available at: [http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:945869/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A945869/FULLTEXT01.pdf)  (accessed: 7 December 2022).

Tiggemann, M., Slater, A., and Smyth, V. (2014). ´Retouch free´: The effect of labelling media images as not digitally altered on women’s body dissatisfaction´. *Body Image, 11*, pp. 85–88. doi:[10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.08.005)

Tijerina, J.D., Morrison, S.D., Nolan, I.T. *et al.* (2019). ´Celebrity Influence Affecting Public Interest in Plastic Surgery Procedures: Google Trends Analysis´. *Aesth Plast Surg* **43**, pp. 1669–1680, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00266-019-01466-7>