The Wrong Concept of Beauty: Women, Magazines and TV Advertisement in Japan

Ana Oropeza

Japanese Pop-Culture

Dr. Takahashi

28 November 2014

Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** ………………………………………………... p.3
2. **Teens Self-Expression Through Japanese Fashion**……......p.4-5
3. The Positive Aspects of Fashion Magazines....................p.5-6
4. The Cruel Reality Behind..…….……...………..…........ p.6-7
5. **Television**……………………………..…..……..................... p.7-8
6. How women are affected mentally through the negative effects of TV advertisement?........................................... p.8-9
7. **Eating Disorders: Anorexia**………………………………..p.9-10

a. Testimony...................................................................... p.10

V. **Conclusion**………………………………………………... p.10-12

**INTRODUCTION**

Just getting up every day and deciding which outfit to choose is a difficult decision especially for a woman. A women does not want to wear the same thing over and over again. As a woman my mood and the time of year has an influence on what I decide to wear. In this case I'm thinking how important fashion is in the lives of many people especially women. When thinking about fashion trends, the first thing that came to my mind were magazines and television advertisements, to me those two have more influence on fashion. It is very important for most teens to be accepted by society and thinking that simply looking fashionable is important. But perhaps society puts limits that we are not able to cross for fear of judgement. It is interesting to find that in other places of the world styles have no limits and are accepted in society as a single act of creativity. A great example is the fashion in Japan. Teenagers are free to choose and create their own fashion style without limits. This is important to me because in Japan people impose their own style in order to influence others around the world. Also, this concept is important because it captures my attention on discovering how they have the opportunity to create and enforce the uniqueness of their outfit styles to the entire world. By knowing these two worlds I realize that magazines and television advertisements tend to impose women fashion trends. The media can have a positive or negative impact in the lives of many people mainly in women that try to imitate and find an identity that is acceptable in society. In this essay I would like to investigate how the magazines and TV shows in Japan can change the live style of a society for better or for worse, with the goal of acquiring a single image. I want to explore and see if there are any side effects in Japan regarding to magazines and TV shows among women where fashion trends are endless and where fashion is seen as creativity in society. I want to investigate and learn what are the advantages and disadvantages of women by having the latest trends in the twenty first century.

**TEENS SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH JAPANESE FASHION**

Japan is a country recognized worldwide for its authenticity in the "creation" of new fashion. A trend in fashion that stands out among youth is the one in which they can express ideas and tastes through their wardrobe in order to show it to society. Today there are places like Fashion Street events serving as an inspiration among youth to showcase their costumes and inspire the world. Places like these attract thousands of young daily for the principal purpose of displaying their outfits with great enthusiasm to inspire and get new ideas in the world of fashion. These Tokyo fashion shows are very important in the Japanese society. Other countries females of Japan also get inspiration on how to dress by magazines and television programs. In my opinion, physical appearance speaks a lot about your personality and having the latest fashion speaks best. But not all about fashion is positive it also has its downside as all these trends can harm the youth in different ways. I believe that for every human being freedom of expression is very important and these young people are a clear example of courage or perhaps rebellion against society. Young Japanese tend to mix a variety of colors by creating a whole new concept of what is fashion in that country. Fashion in Japan is no longer controlled or guided by professionally trained designers but by the teens that have become the producers of fashion (Kawamura, 2006, p. 784). I chosen Japan because it has been an innovative country and from his outstanding obsession with clothing has changed the world of fashion and has caught the attention of thousands of people for their authenticity.

The example that caught my attention was the different styles of clothes and makeup that adolescents choose for their daily use. We all know that it all started in the 80s where different styles were created in fashion and each caused a great impact in society. For example Lolitas, Gonguro, and Style (10 Unusual, 2009) some of these styles made history and somehow part of their culture. It is important to know how these style revolutionized fashion and as today is a unique style of dress. So for my curiosity is important to discover how styles are shaped primarily in magazines and as disseminated among adolescents in order to create an image of what's popular in Japanese society. Today there are  thousand ways to dress but in my opinion I think and I discovered that the key is to try to mimic the physical appearance of the models or idols artistic medium in magazines or in television. For this I researched the impact of fashion magazines and television in adolescent whether positive or negative I want to expose to more fully understand Japanese society.

**The Positive Aspects of Fashion Magazines in Japan.**

First I want to start by explaining that all creation or action has positive and negative consequences in humans. In this case magazines and a positive side of society. Popular magazines in Japan are Vivi, AneCan and Seventeen these magazines have enormous popularity, especially among women and these copies are available anywhere in the city. For the same reason the fashion magazines are the most sold not only in the country but the entire world to expose the reader to the latest trends in the fashion world during the year. In my view I think that the purpose of a magazine is to inform the reader to help women discover what is happening around the world of beauty and fashion. Most of the time the magazines achieve its primary purpose to sell certain items, through advertisement, which are needed to convert millions of ladies in this perfect woman figure. A clear example is the beauty products seen in a magazine like lotions, make-up, varnishes, lipsticks and hair products. By promoting these items through advertisement, the magazines increase its popularity among women creating a significant reputation among them and at the same time creates a curiosity in buying the product and trying it by purchasing. The user knows that the magazine gives you advice and instructions in order to obtain those results shown in pictures as the “perfect girl” by looking like an expert in fashion. Now that gives me a clear perspective that all the information you need to know to be pretty can be found in the pages of a fashion magazine. In order to learn how to dress and make the necessary purchases to combine colors of the season and moreover learn how to apply makeup through the recommendations that a fashion magazine gives. A magazine is very useful because it has helped me to choose certain items through photographs as examples and easy to follow instructions in order to accomplish a new look. Pictures help millions of women by teaching them how to discover the magic world of makeup, outfits even hairstyles. Of course the image you manage to imitate depends on the products you use and which fashion magazines you obtained provide all the information stores where you can buy and making life easier. Buying an edition of a particular journal opens the door to a world in which you choose to take decisions in order to create a new you. So in many ways fashion magazines expose trends and ideas that make us buy it in order to apply it in our daily lives. I know that magazines help us to achieve a particular fashion trend but can this habit have serious consequences among women? On my next paragraph I will talk about the negative aspects of a fashion magazine.

**The cruel reality of a magazine**

Although fashion magazines teach us how to dress and apply make-up I think most of its content is negative towards the image of women. Magazines can be a guide to happiness in the lives of many women but also cause trouble in many of these. I've noticed that all the fashion magazines have something in common: they all portrayed the perfect woman that all women dream of being. But to continue this investigation I discovered that there is been serious cases in which thousands of women unconsciously undermine their lifestyle without considering the consequences to acquire this perfect woman image. When I was researching the side effects of the magazines I found that Japan suffers from many eating disorders for the same reason ranks on the first place of eating disorders in the world (Size Act, 2001). For me this was an alarming statistics that lead me to find out the mainly reasons why this was happening. For example, statistics show that body image is paramount among women in Japan and to obtain it makes it impossible to get. Most of these women start with this obsession at an early age, some studies by the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, Australia expose that girls aged 10 to 17 years perceive themselves as average or too fat (60.9%) wanted to be thinner (24.5%) and had tried to diet (7.5%) (Chisuwa, N & O'Dea, J, 2010). One of many resources to which these women and girls appeal to are magazines, which provide diets to lose weight without realizing the danger that these woman may face. The image of the perfect woman pretends to be a woman too thin which all styles will favor him and thanks to his physical image. We must bear in mind that this contributes largely to create idealism in society on the image of women. Perhaps the magazines have different purposes in the middle but further research is no doubt that the main purpose of the magazines is to sell and make money regardless of the consequences of posting certain information and persuade readers especially women to meet certain rules to society to be seen as perfection. In my opinion I know that all people make choices in life and maybe some are not so good and often we let ourselves be influenced by what society thinks is perfect and it is wrong to think that way. For the same reason the media have a very different concept of what is today the beauty and naive people fall into the trap of believing that through magazines found the perfect formula to be beautiful. Other media besides the magazines that contributes to creating this false image of a woman's appearance is television.

**TELEVISION**

On the other hand, since the advent of television in the world has captured the attention of millions. This media is a source of communication that keeps us informed of events that happen in the world. But today's television broadcasts have a wide variety of information that captures the attention of millions of women. Something interesting that we find in the TV commercial are speaking about the beauty of women. Studies show that the simple act of watching television affects our thinking as women. For example an experiment done by Myers and Biocca in 1992 shows that the simple act of looking thirty minutes of television a day affects our self-esteem to realize that our body is not similar to that of television models (Women, 1993). Women today are exposed to view programs that expose publicly the need for women to be seen the same time beautiful and fashionable. Television also affects the image of women exposing thin women. In other words creating the concept that the thinner woman will be able to find happiness and acceptance in society. This means that today thinness is symbolism of beauty and attraction when in fact it is a serious health problem that gets worse with each passing year.

**How women are mentally affected through the negative effects of TV advertisement?**

First of all, most TV ads have content that promotes lean body image and appears to be achieved easily. Weight loss products are exposed through testimonies of people who recommended due to efficient results in getting a slim and beautiful body. During my research I found that many of these advertisement commercials on TV are fraudulent and actually do not meet the promises. These can affect the health of many people for example an article published in The Lancet journal mentions that according to the domestic media, at least four people in Japan have been killed and 158 others have liver and thyroid disorders as a result of consuming weight loss products in the past 2 years (Watts, 2002). Television plays an important role in Japanese society that has captured the attention of your viewers with the main goal to entertain and persuade them to buy certain products that lie to the public in order to sell it. As I mentioned commercials on TV somehow influence to create a different concept of what physical beauty. In my research I found in a book that talks about how women feel dissatisfied with their image in society believe that the TV picture is perfect and which increases the need for this body shape as their primary goal in life (Women, 1993). This leads to the conclusion that the woman creates a conflict between the physical appearances of television creating an unsatisfied feeling and need to consider this image as part of happiness. Also these products are available anywhere, in other words anyone can buy them with out prescription anytime.

**EATING DISORDERS: ANOREXIA**

The investigation process of the main reasons of why women tend to be uncomfortable with your body shape has led me to the conclusion that in some respects the media manipulate the psychology of women. They want to create a perfect image of what must appear to be essential in the beauty of women. But reading some data I have come to the conclusion that the self-esteem of millions of women is very low and uncontrollable as television and other media and magazines are responsible for playing with your mind and bring them to a state of confusion and depressive. But it is very important to note that this depends on the level of self-esteem that this person has. If a woman has a very low self-esteem and is concerned about their body figure this may be a serious danger because women tend to create a conflict with their body image and bring it to take tough decisions about their diet to lose weight. For them, losing weight is a triumph in which is paramount your dedication. The key is to not eat as among consume less food weight loss increases.

At this stage in which women drastically reduced their food intake has a great chance of developing a disease that bears the name anorexia nervosa. This disease is part of a psychological disorder that apparently makes women feel an obsession with being thin no matter the consequences. During my research I found that one in five women die from this obsession (Act Sizes, 2014). It is impressive to discover that simply eating terrorized and for them is an act of failure. In other words I think that these women do not know the great danger they are facing a major health problem. For example people who do not eat the food needed the body begins to react in different ways some of which is the loss of teeth, complications with the lungs and tearing of the stomach (Act Sizes, 2014). As she keeps this crazy idea that being thin is perfect figure ideology is very difficult to change since around society demands a figure that unfortunately has many risks that can lead you to death.

**Testimony**

The testimonials are very important in researching important information and are very important for me to be able to find a testimony of a young man named Hachiko suffering from anorexia in Japan. This young helped me understand more about the problem facing a twenty-five years old. To disclosure of his testimony reflected his painful anguish that his country does not pay attention to these problems. Contrary to this testimony a doctor, Dr. Hiroyuki Suematsu, talk that the Japanese government collects three billion yen in tax revenue each year from companies selling slimming aids. If a country like comes to collect this amount annually this can be a sign that there is a big problem in society. Where most people are thin but still feel dissatisfied with their figure and buy these products. Hachiko is a great example of courage as talking about your eating disorder reveals an image that many women yearn to have their image and hide behind a cruel reality. I managed to find also a very important fact in this testimony, which speaks of an epidemic of anorexic in Japan, which is growing every year, and this society medical waiting to be treated is seven years (Georgia, 2012). The wait is too long and as a result thousands of lives are lost every year, deaths that could have been prevented. In other words these women are killing themselves because nobody is helping them to overcome with these serious illness.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion during my research I discovered that fashion has evolved over the years and today the definition of beauty has been distorted. The media have changed the mentality of society and put aside human values. Today the vast majority of women carried away by images and is incredulous to think that happiness is in their physical appearance. These women sacrifice most noticeable having a human life is to create the image of the perfect woman. It is important to note that today being thin is a symbol of beauty, which is totally wrong, and those we as human beings we should be more careful in what magazines and television programs presented to the public. Every human being is responsible for its actions and has the right to choose its own lifestyle on how to dress and eat. The demands of society to the physical appearance of women are difficult to meet. The media has influenced women in some part because of eating disorders but not quite. It is very important to make clear that the self-esteem of each person is important because through this we depend on decisions regarding our physical appearance and how vulnerable we are usually not being satisfied with our image. It is important to try different styles of fashionable but if we have control of our actions and take into account the consequences that exist to make decisions against our health. It is sad to know that women are the most vulnerable to fall into serious diseases such as anorexia and bulimia. It is important to educate women how danger this diseases are and how they have claimed the lives of many women and men worldwide. Japan being the number one country in cases of eating disorders should worry about its people and create a kind of help that perhaps I can save thousands of lives.

Also our self-esteem is very important and we should be ourselves and not try to pretend someone who we really are and you do not need to be. It's good to keep beauty tips but we have to be alert and more like women to know what information we are buying and how much is our obsession with the fashion style. I think in the society in which we live is important to be aware of everything around us and always be aware that not everything that is sold to the public has something good but also bad. The important thing here is to be informed and spread the word to all the risks behind a fashion style. As I mentioned Japan is the country with such problems and it is very important to act. By choosing this theme, I realized that this is not only a problem in Japan but is a global problem, which finishes with thousands of daily lives. Japan may have own fashion style if what makes it unique but how far this threat came holds for millions of women? We as women are more prone to this type of psychological disorder that slowly end with our lives and perhaps those of our loved ones.

**Bibliography**

Anorexia: The epidemic Japan refuses to face up to. (2012, May 5). Retrieved December 12, 2014, from <http://www.georgiahanias.com/blog/?p=12>

10 Unusual Japanese Fashions and Subcultures. (2009, April 20). Retrieved December 2, 2014, from <http://listverse.com/2009/04/20/10-unusual-japanese-fashions-and-subcultures/>

Chisuwa, N. , & O’Dea, J. (2010). Body image and eating disorders amongst japanese adolescents. a review of the literature. *Appetite*, *54*(1), 5-15.

Kawamura, Y. (2006). Japanese teens as producers of street fashion. *Current Sociology, 54*(5), 784-801. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0011392106066816

Ley de talles: Bulimia y anorexia a la Legislatura. (2001, November 5). Retrieved December 3, 2014, from http://www.noticiasurbanas.com.ar/noticias/ecc22a5c6afb906253069be849b84bba/

Sato, N., & Kato, Y. (2005). Youth marketing in japan. *Young Consumers, 6*(4), 56. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/212066033?accountid=10355>

Watts, J. (2002). Japan's fatal obsession with bodyweight. *Lancet*, *360*(9329), 318.

*Women in Mass Communication*. (1993). Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Pub.