

The impact of advertisement on young women's life – young women's perception of the representation of beauty ideals and health in advertisement

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<p>Beauty ideals are extremely commonly present in media, in advertisements and in social media. Seldom, beauty ideals are based on health or healthy actions but encourage on unhealthy actions towards something which is not even real. Media uses this phenomenon as a tool to sell better but ignores the possible negative side effects caused this.</p> <p>Different problems concerning low self-esteem and self-confidence are very common between young women. Many of these problems is caused by the picture media presents of a perfect and desirable woman ideal. This woman ideal is in many ways problematic, it is unreal, discriminating, unhealthy and especially very far from what a real woman actually looks like.</p> <p>Most of the young women feels that they are imperfect and not enough. They have feelings that they must lose weight, has certain procedures to reach more perfect figure and use dozens of different beauty services to get as close as possible to this beautiful figure of a woman. The real deal is that the perfect figure of a woman is usually modified in some way and so on not really possible to reach.</p> <p>The goal of this thesis is to discuss about the problematic picture of a perfect woman ideal and open up different changes happened during years, what is the current beauty ideal nowadays and how does it effect on young women's life. It is discussed how big effect media can have to young women and how they should react to it and how to handle the information media send us. One of the themes is also how critical towards media people are or should be.</p> <p>The research is done with qualitative method to be able to have diverse and broad answers and especially to have real experiences. Qualitative research was done by interviewing three young women. The results collected from the qualitative research were expected and existing theory supports the answers. It was found out that thinking of own appearance starts on very early age and is a extremely strong part of young woman's life during the whole journey of growing up. The results also discuss about the criticalness towards media.</p>	
Keywords Beauty ideals, Ethical advertising, False advertising, Social media	

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1 Introduction

Nowadays different medias have a huge role as an influencer on people's life. Magazines, advertisements, tv-series but also different blogs, forums and maybe as a strongest influencer, the social media. It's natural that media is trying to provoke people to have actions but sometimes it paints pictures which might cause more harm than positive movements. One of those is beauty ideals which more than often are very unnatural and unrealistic.

In this thesis is introduced how beauty ideals has developed during hundreds of years and how does our beauty ideal and especially women's expected look is today. The meaning is to introduce media's effect on beauty ideal's forming and how beauty ideal is shown in different medias like in advertising. It is being discussed about marketing and advertising ethics as well problematic paradigms occurring and being spread on different social media channels. This kind of problematic paradigms are for example diet culture, eating disorders, thin ideals and unhealthy actions towards the appearance which is being desired at time.

Another point of view is focused on the journey from a girl to a young woman, what happens there in between and what is expected for the future. There is discussed about different expectations and challenges girls and young women needs to face at very young age and how does it effect to their life. It is being find out how young there already starts to rise insecurity of own appearance and how these people have tried to cover it to be more happy for themselves.

In the qualitative research is being interviewed three young women who all have their own experiences being young women in today's world and what things has been part of their journey. After all it is possible to find out that the feelings and eras has not been so different because all of them has raised in the same Western world which feeds us all the same expectations and requirements. It is interesting to hear what these young women thinks about today's world, are they victims of beauty ideals and how do they act to avoid different negative side effects media and beauty ideals might cause.

On the other hand, is it just silly to blame on media and people in social media of false advertising and photo manipulation or is it everyone's own responsibility to understand what is true and what is fake?

2 Beauty Ideals

Women's dissatisfaction and anxiety of how they look is a serious and global problem which have roots early in the time of ancient Egypt. Across 10 countries 90% of the 3300 girls and women wanted to change at least one thing on their look and even child as age of 6 to 9 express body dissatisfaction, mostly about their weigh. Social factors are in huge role to cause problems with body image and worldwide 67% of all the women of age 15 to 64 cancel meetings with friends, exercises, and dates because they feel bad of how they look. This pressure is result of the fact that in today's world external appearance can provide information about economic power, gender role identity or social role. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

In Western culture people think that the external appearance matters a lot because it is though as a symbolic form of the norms of the society. It is thought that the certain beauty ideals for example body or face shapes describes how attractive people is seen inside the culture. No matter of the time or place there is always certain model how people are expected to look like. Beauty ideals are normally seen as a bigger part in lives of women. Different documentations from the ancient Egypt shows how much time and effort women had used to make their body and face look perfect. This perfectionism has travelled during centuries from ancient Egypt to modern Western world. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

2.1 History

Beauty ideals has changed a lot during centuries and there has been plenty of different body shapes to pursue. For example, between 15th to 17th century the pursued body wasn't thin, but actually quite full with round face and pear-shaped body. But, in the 19th century it was already possible to see how women's body shape has been started to control and unnatural body shapes, for example forced hourglass body with too tight corset, has started to come a part of body ideals. Corseting can be compared to many today's world unhealthy actions what people do to be able to reach the desired look. In late 19th century women even slept and bath while wearing the corsets. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

During the mid-19th century there was two images of the women, another one was thin waisted and tiny and was associated with high social status and moral values. Another model was full-bodied and fleshy and associated with good health. At the end of 19th century these figures combined, and the new beauty ideal was a woman with slim waist and

legs but still having wide hips and large breasts. In 1920s the beauty ideal changed a bit towards the boy-like appearance with flat chest and still keeping the slim body features. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Because people started to show their body features more on 1920s, women started to do everything to keep themselves thin which required starvation diets and lot of exercise. When mass media came quickly very popular, the beauty ideals just strengthened their positions in Western culture. Different magazines, pictures and celebrities kept people informed of what is beautiful. Long legs and flat stomach became the cornerstones of the beauty. Also, in the 1940s big breast became again as a dominant feature of the female beauty and was very popular also in the 50s and 60s. Good example of the desired body ideal was for example Marilyn Monroe with the correct bust to waist to hip ration. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

In the 1966, Twiggy, 17-years old model with flat chest, no hips and nearly anorexic body, gave a new ideal for beauty, a very slim body. In the 1970s the focus was more on the buttocks, not in the breasts and in 1980s the muscular body became famous, but still keeping the main focus on slim body shape. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

People have been surrounded by different diets and diet pills already a long time. And like we can see from the examples below, over decades the diets have been very unrealistic and unhealthy with the only goal to lose weight as much as possible.

- Grapefruit diet, also known as Hollywood diet, was released in 1930s. Grapefruit diet is 7- or 21-days long diet which is based on very low carbs and calories. Dieter must drink a cup of black coffee and eat half grapefruit at each meal and was allowed to eat only small amount of meat and salad. Diet was based on the idea that grapefruit would boost fat loose.
- 1950s famous diet was cabbage soup diet which promised 10-17lb weight loss during diet which last only 7 days. Dieter was allowed to eat only cabbage soup with specific recipe and only some other foods on specific days.
- Rainbow diet pills were popular in 1960s and 1970s and only in 1967 consumers spent \$120 million dollar on these pills. These pills had appetite suppression effects and were named after their bright and varied colour. Rainbow pills actually caused dozens of deaths because of the ingredients pills were consisted of. Pills had for example amphetamines, laxatives and thyroid hormones to help with weight loss but included also many other ingredients to prevent common side effects like insomnia or anxiety.

In magazines and images most of the model weight way less than the beauty ideal expected. Many popular women's magazines started to have a lot of articles of weight loss and dieting. In 1990s the synonym for the female beauty ideal was thin ideal. Over last three decades is documented that very thin or muscular females cause most insecure for women. The muscularity has risen beside the thin beauty ideal, and women wishes to be more muscular than they are in their current shape. In the late 90s and early 00s the Western beauty ideal contained thinness with flat stomach, thin waist but big breasts, boyish hips with long legs, beautiful skin and well-defined muscles. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Every form of media, magazines, Tv shows and advertisements, films, music television, even children's fairy tales spread information about thinness and how it is ideal for female beauty. Unfortunately, this kind of media has an extremely negative effect on body image of girls and women. Also, non-media-based talk about thin ideal, for example fat talk which means talk focusing on someone's shape, may have significant effects on body dissatisfaction. This have been established across different research for example correlational, experimental and meta-analytic studies. Female who exposure on media is also more prone to disordered eating habits, dieting and bulimic pathology. Seems like no one can avoid the ideal of thinness as even people who do not purposely watch tv shows or read magazines with the topics such as dieting, or fitness has still the image that thin is more approved body shape than some other. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

It is researched that people combine two ideas together, beauty and goodness. "What is beautiful is also good" thinking means basically that attractive people are also exciting, social and liked. Women has reported that if their external look is like the beauty ideal advises their life would also change in the more positive way. Thin-ideal internalisation means that people accept the societal thin standard as their own standard and change their own behaviour to meet with that standard. People who do that are more vulnerable for the negative effects of beauty ideals. People with higher thin-ideal internalisation are linked for example to negative body image and disordered eating. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

2.2 What means Diet Culture

"I need to lose the weight I gained over holiday season", "need to go to gym after this", "this is making my hips bigger", "this food is so sinful", "eating this isn't worth it", "got to

burn off the calories gained from pizza last weekend”, “Need to start detox right on January to get rid of puffiness”. Slim fast and meal replacement shakes, diet pills, detox, laxative, even caffeine lotions which should boost fat burn. Low-calorie diet, low-carb diet, “lose 10 pounds only in 2 weeks” and so many other, the list is endless. (Bucaro, 2021.)

Diet Culture in a nutshell means unhealthy actions and thoughts of weight loss. It is selling the idea of being thin leads to success, acceptance, love and health. Christy Harrison, Master of Philosophy in Public Health and Registered Dietitian, summarise Diet Culture as follows, “it’s a set of beliefs that worships thinness and equates it with health and moral virtue”. Diet Culture is trying to boost people confidence by dieting and exercising, it convinces people that being thin is so much better for their mind and body. Disordered eating, for example eating less with each meal to have an influence on body shape, has become a norm. Only in the U.S. 75% of women eat in a disordered way. Diet Culture’s one of the biggest problems is that it says thinness is health, but weight is not actually a very good indicator if someone is healthy or not. Many diets are proved to have a big negative impact on health for example on heart health and cognitive functions. Bigger and better indicators for health are for example family history, genetics and age. (Teich, 2021.)

Diet Culture is a serious problem nowadays spreading the idea of “right way” to eat and have a healthy attractive body, no matter of the mental or physical faults caused of it. Therapist and Licenced Clinical Social Worker, Judith Matz, has a great example of how Diet Culture is trying to motivate people to lose weight by encouraging “‘correct’ body size and good health, - and that it is attainable for anybody who has the 'right' willpower, the 'right' determination,”. (Teich, 2021.) Many people are not even aware of the daily flood adoring thinness and weight loss they are surrounded of, and which influences on their daily decision. People use hundreds of dollars for different products which do not even work to lose weight. Teenagers’ life is surrounded with diet culture which causes serious problems for example eating disorders. (Bucaro, 2021.)

Diet culture is present if someone is feeling lower self-esteem when looking magazines and advertising with “perfect” looking models on it. It is beliefs that certain food choices are bad and people who eat those foods are bad as well. It is convincing that it is always better to drink a glass of water first instead of eating, because you may be only thirsty. (Teich, 2021.)

Diet Culture has created one ideal of beauty which is almost impossible to achieve for most of the population. This ideal of beauty is usually described as white woman, slim and

tall, feminine and living “perfect” life. (Teich, 2021.) She has balanced face with narrow jaw, high cheekbones and large eyes. Often it does not include only physical features but also specific hairstyle, clothes and cosmetics. Even though it is a fact that diet culture is a bigger part of women’s life, the expectations of perfect beauty ideal are also defined for men. Desired man is nearly always described as muscular and tall with strong facial features like wide chin and facial hairs. (Solomon, 2019.)

Diet Culture is not only poisonous idea of thinness and “perfect” appearance, but also a racist movement. Because the image of the ideal appearance which include only certain type of people over other is so narrow, most of the people has no possibility to reach it. People with brown skin, larger body, with disabilities or trans folks can not fit in the frame diet culture has set. (Solomon, 2019.)

Diet Culture shows people a model of the “perfect person” who also happens to live perfect life. This gives people an idea that aspiring thinness and perfect look will also offer a perfect life. The point of it is to drive people make purchase decision they think they need to fulfil the society’s expectation of how to look like and act like. For example, someone may have thought of cosmetic surgery after watching magazines with beautiful models even she would never felt herself unattractive before. This kind of thoughts affect people’s self-concept in a negative way. Self-concept means basically someone’s own thoughts of his or her value as a person. The idea is based on beliefs person holds of her or his own features and how to evaluate the self on these qualities. (Solomon, 2019.)

2.3 Beauty ideals in everyday life

According to American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, only in America people get over 9 million cosmetic operations in a year including both surgical and nonsurgical procedures. Top 5 procedures are breast implants, liposuction, nose surgery, eyelid surgery and tummy tucks. Most of the operations are only made to fit on current beauty standards and to even look better on selfies. People use millions on clothing, body waxing and cosmetics to please the current ideal of “beautiful and perfect”. (Solomon, 2019.)

Today, beauty ideals can be seen everywhere, it is not possible to avoid it. Magazine covers, tv shows and store windows are full of beautiful people living perfect life. Fashion dolls and barbies represent unnatural thinness and body shape people should try to reach. Movies, internet and social media gives a corrupted idea of how people should look in today’s world to be successful and loved. In a one survey made for young girls (12-19 years old) over half said that the ads they see all the time makes them want to go on diet

and lose weight. Like the content in media wouldn't be enough, there is over 400 websites only in U.S. which gives "thinspiration" for people who would like to lose weight. "Thinspiration" can be for example tips for bingeing and vomiting, how to hide weight loss from the people who might get worried or tips on crash dieting which is a very low-calorie diet. Thinspiration tries to attract people on eating disorders like bulimia or anorexia. (Bucaro, 2021.) (Solomon, 2019.)

Ideal body type is changing all the time in Western culture, but the idea of thin body has been around us a long time. Models body mass index in 1920s was 20-25 which is considered as normal but today models body mass index is under 18.5 which is considered as undernutrition based on WHO (World Health Organization) standards. The size of the models does not make sense as the clothing is way too small compared the size of most of the people. Markets has only lately started to realize that it is not exactly the best deal to offer clothes to the normal size people which are advertised only by thin models. (Solomon 2019, 226.)

Women are not the only ones forced to follow beauty ideals but also men have to feel pressure of how their body look. Muscularity has been top trend in men's body image and can be seen in different magazines and advertisements like also women's beauty ideals. Another male body ideal is the body hair removal. Also, cosmetic procedures have increased lately and forced men to use more money on different beauty procedures. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Currently it looks like that woman can criticize different beauty ideals but are still bound by them and ready to try to reach these ideals. WHO defines that healthy human is "a state of physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2006.). This means that in Western culture people, especially women, are not seen healthy human because of the cultural beauty ideals. This proof that these harmful beauty ideals should be eliminated from the lives of women. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

2.4 Problems in beauty ideals

Unfortunately, the female beauty ideals have always been and is currently really difficult to fulfil. For example, having big breast but thin waist is almost impossible to reach without surgical modification because it is impossible to lose body fat without having effect on breast size which consist mostly of fat. There is always the same problem that most of the body shapes doesn't fit in current female beauty ideals.

Problems with body image and eating disorders are not the only problem caused of beauty ideals, but women and men has also started to approve more body-altering surgical procedures because the ideal bodies can be seen everywhere in media. When earlier people used corsets to have thin waist, today those are replaced with plastic surgery, diet, and exercise. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

All the time younger and younger teenagers and children have problems with their body image. Even 6 years old children report that they would prefer smaller body size when they grow up and 72% of 1056 teenager defined that the preferred body would be smaller than their actual body is. We can ask why? American model's average body size is 5 feet 11 inches tall and weighs 117 pounds, also the average American women is 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighs 140 pounds. Barbie dolls have been criticized because of their unnatural body shape which is actually dangerously unattainable. It has been researched that only 5-10% of all women could quite easily have the desired look fat-free body, which at the same time means that 90-95% of women can never naturally have it. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

The boundaries between fictitious and real women has been blurred. When the beauty ideal is seen everywhere in media, people really start to believe that it is possible to reach if just try hard enough. Different beauty, fashion and health products are designed to be marketed in a way that there seems to be a gap between the consumer and the beauty ideal and solution is the product. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

It has been discussed if these always changing narrow and unrealistic beauty ideals are actually oppression of women. Media has created the pattern for women that the pursuit of the beauty ideals is a guise of free will and choice. The pressure to meet with beauty ideals is a real problem for women. In one survey in Glamour magazine in 1995 was uncovered that 55% of men would recommend their girlfriend to have breast implants if it would be painless, safe and free. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Women are all the time vulnerable on the effect of beauty ideals and for example beauty industry portrait women's bodies imperfect and that women's bodies are under constant need of correcting. In America people use billions and billions of dollars each year on beauty products. The amount of the money beauty industry forces women to use in different beauty products can effect on really negative way on woman's economic resources. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Women's natural bodies have always been rejected. We already had examples of corsets and diets, but also "giraffe-necked" women and foot binding are very brutal examples of that. "Giraffe-necked" means that women wear neck rings from an early age and every year the number of rings is added until it reaches 24 rings, and the neck is long enough. Also in China, foot binding has been popular hundreds of years and continued until the 20th century. Foot binding means that very young girls must bind their foot in a way that it will never grow big and in normal shape. Women in China did this because a woman who didn't bind her foot couldn't get married. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

Different plastic surgery procedures have increased majorly, and it has been explained with the fact that the pressure to look like current beauty ideal demands is so big that it has driven also people who refuse plastic surgery to have plastic surgery operations. Also, different tv-shows and social media has normalised plastic surgery for women. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007.)

2.4.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a part of person's self-concept and describes the positivity what person experience. If the person's self-esteem is low, she or he might not perform well and often try to avoid failure and embarrassment. Self-esteem is a part of Diet Culture in a way that markets try to benefit of it by consciously offering content which may effect on people's self-esteem in a negative way. If the advertising content of the company is an image of beautiful and happy person who just happens to use company's products, it may trigger consumer for social comparison. If the consumer experience lower self-esteem after seeing triggering advertising, it may lead to evaluating own appearance and compare it to artificial images in advertisements. (Teich, 2021.)

If people in the world of marketing which is far from reality always see things what lowers his or her self-esteem, people start to think their worth as an individual and judge themselves. For example, in a study where female college students saw ads of perfect women felt lower satisfaction with their own appearance compared to women who didn't saw the pictures of beautiful women. Another example is that after watching 30 min of tv programming young women change the view of their own body shape and size. Similar results were also gained from men. (Teich, 2021.)

3 Advertising

Advertising gives an opportunity to consumers to discover products and services which they could benefit and be informed of the different choices. Advertising is a very important tool for businesses what comes to marketing because it increases the sales (Sirgy 2001, 150-151.). Advertising may also have negative side effects for example it can increase materialism, highlight certain stereotypes of women or give false information of the product. (Sirgy 2001, 150-151.) Advertising may also create a false need which means unreal needs society has built on top of real needs, usually sold by media. (Majumbar 1997.)

Advertising can be unconscious, indirect or direct. Unconscious or subliminal advertising means that consumer get an idea of the product by images, sounds or what other people are using without thinking that too much. Indirect advertising means that the product or service is not promoted directly but is still visible in a way that people are aware of it, as an example of this are sponsorships. Direct advertising is direct communication between the company and the consumer. Direct advertising can be for example posters or social media or email campaigns. (Caton 2013, 8-12.)

The idea of the advertising is to get consumer aware of the product and its features. This information includes for example the name of the product, what it is and what it does, price and the places you can find it. Advertising is trying to be tempting so that consumer would get interested of it because the goal is always to find a new user for the product or service. Advertising is a constant process for the company so that they can keep consumers loyal for the specific brand and not to try competitor's product. (Caton 2013, 8-12.)

The aim of the advertising is to keep trade aware of the product, inform possible customers, make the first sales, and keep already existing customers loyal for the brand and product. Advertising is a vital part of the products or service's life cycle because without people getting aware of the product it doesn't get bought. (Caton 2013, 8-12.)

3.1 Ethical marketing

Ethics in marketing has been discussed and questioned over the years. Usually, the discussion focuses in two areas, the process of marketing and the product being marketed. (Laczniak & Lusch & Strang 1981.) Ethical marketing can be difficult to define because people experience things different ways depending on their mental condition. It also makes it challenging to do research if something is ethical or not. (Laczniak & Lusch &

Strang 1981.) The term ethics refers to following: “a set of moral norms, principles or values, and the nature and grounds of morality that guide people’s behaviour such as moral judgements, standards, and rules of conduct” (Lee & Jin 2019, 2). Basically, ethics means someone’s judgement if something is wrong or right or good or bad.

Ethical marketing is closely linked with social responsibility. Ethical marketing also consists of four Ps of marketing mentioned before, ethics related to product, price, place and promotion. Ethics related to product discuss about safety and liability of the product, when price-related ethics is about equality and fairness principle. Place- ethics is about distribution channels and how organizations in dominant role may use their power wrong. Promotion-related ethics discuss about moral what comes to sales and advertising. (Lee & Jin 2019, 2-3.) In marketing, companies, should always put customers first and serve them if the company want to success. Because consumers are the people who brings the money for the company, the company is only that long successful as people support it and enjoys of it.

3.1.1 Ethical advertising

Advertising ethics are usually discussed because of a possible harmful side effects which can be noticed on societal level. Advertising ethics can be discussed at three different levels: the micro level, the meso level and the macro level. The micro level in this case is about individual, the meso level about the group or organization and the macro level about the effects on society. (Rodgers & Thorson 2012, 504-505.)

Marco-level advertising is an advertising level which cause most of the criticism towards marketing system by encouraging to materialism, use negative stereotypes and create problematic values. Even though macro-level advertising is an old type of advertising, there is still not a lot of empirical research of the criticisms towards this type of advertising. This is because it is hard to research issues in environment what each individual already lives. Macro-level criticism is not taken seriously by the practitioners. It was found out that people practicing macro-level advertising wasn’t likely to recognize the ethical issues of it (Drumwright, Murphy 2004). Practitioners and other people defending macro-advertising says that it only reflects already existing values, doesn’t create them. (Rodgers & Thorson 2012, 514-515.)

3.2 Problems in advertising

Interest towards using men and women in advertising has started in the early 1970s. Since then, it has been very normal for companies to use gender roles when they promote their products. Using gender roles in advertising can be tricky in a way that it may increase the power of advertising but also cause negative outcomes for society. Genders are still used a lot in marketing as with specified gender role it is easier to reach the certain focus group, for example young women. (Rodgers 2012, 187.)

Big problem, when using certain looking women or men in advertising is, that it may cause an unwanted stereotype of a desired look of a certain gender. People learn in indirect way that some kind of a look or behaviour is socially more desirable, and this kind of consequence may have a negative effect of viewer's self-esteem. Negative consequences for society are more affecting in women because those lower gender equality. (Rodgers 2012, 187.)

Gender role stereotypes means that there are some specific features which differ genders from each other. It is normally suggested that men are holding higher status as a person who brings money to maintain family and women are holding lower status as a person who takes care of the home and children. Gender roles are not defined only with the occupational status but also with certain traits, physical features and roles. Each of these components has features which are more strongly associated with certain gender, but some of them has changed dramatically over the years. (Rodgers 2012, 188.)

Meta analysis by Eisend (2010) provides strong evidence of that genders are strongly stereotypes what comes to advertising. In the analysis it was presented that women are three times more as a product user in advertising than men. Based on the analysis by Eisend it was stated that women are presented two to four time more likely in a certain role depending on if in the advertising the person had to be in a depended role, using domestic products (home, food) or presented at home, than men. Similar provides was also got from the longitudinal content analysis of gender roles by Verellen, Dens and De Pelsmacker (2016). This analysis was based on advertising in Belgian television and the analysis showed up that women in advertising were younger and more often presented as sexual objects than men. Also, in this analysis, women were presented more often in dependent roles. (Rodgers 2012, 190-191.)

Even though gender role stereotyping in advertising may be questionable, consumers thoughts are still mixed. People think that it is okay to meet gender stereotypes in advertising because the brand may benefit of it or because these gender stereotypes are matching with their understanding of existing social model. People are afraid if something differs from the safe and normal, learned, gender role stereotypes. It is displeasing that for example based on Orth and Holancova (2003/2004) findings, people respond more likely to advertising which is based on stereotypical roles. (Rodgers 2012, 192.)

Advertising is a powerful tool, not in a way to only make people to buy products, but it can also affect on people's beliefs and values in society. Advertising can even cause health problems for people by promoting products which are unhealthy. Like the normal content in media, advertising also promotes body standards which are unnatural and impossible to reach for each person. People tend to compare themselves to idealized bodies in advertising and it has been found that this has an unquestionable effect with lower self-esteem and body satisfaction. (Rodgers 2012, 192-193.)

The consequences for society caused of advertising has been debated with two positions: the mirror argument and the mold argument. The idea of "mirror" arguments means that in advertising is reflected the values which are already existing in society. The "mold" argument instead stands for idea that with the help of advertising it is possible to reshape the values of consumer. What comes to gender roles the "mirror" argument reflects the current expectations of the gender when the "mold" argument supports the idea that advertising can shape and reinforce the gender stereotypical values in society. In empirical findings by Eisend (2010), it has been suggested that neither of these arguments should be used but focus more on developments on the side of gender equality. (Rodgers 2012, 193-194.)

4 Empirical part

The goal of this qualitative research is to collect experiences and thoughts of what is it to be a young woman in today's world and what things has had an effect on the interviewees journey from a little girl to a young woman. In this thesis it was decided to arrange qualitative research because it is more possible to gain more benefits and reliable answers with this research method than with other research methods. Also, because writer of the thesis is very interested of the topic, qualitative research was a good choice as it requires a lot of resources from the person who executes the research. Topic is strongly bound with moral values, so it is also one of the reasons why qualitative research is better option than for example quantitative research where there is no similar possibility to get close of the target group.

The material collected was collected during three individual interviews which was recorded. The questionnaire consisted of couple of main questions which were rounded with several sub questions which may differ depending on who was interviewed and in which direction the interview naturally flowed. The reliability of the interview is on decent level as people who were interviewed matched to the target group, the interviews were recorded, and interviewed people were telling their own experiences and thoughts of the matter. At the researcher I was familiar with the people who was interviewed so their trust on me was on good level, so they had chance to be very honest. Also, the answers were pretty similar with every interviewee and that increases the reliability level.

4.1 Qualitative research

When planning the qualitative research, it is important to keep planning process as open and flexible as possible. Researcher should be informed of the literature, earlier research, and theoretical background related the topic and base the planning on it. Even the researcher would be well informed of the topic based on earlier information, it shouldn't affect on the information gained of research. Researcher shouldn't try to get the specific answer he has been thinking to get but be excited of the unexpected comments because new information helps to create a theory.

Planning the qualitative research also requires thinking of funding, facilities and personal life. In this case for the researcher this kind of factors isn't a big concern because the research is executed in daily environment and doesn't have special needs. Researcher doesn't need funding and have needed facilities to execute the research. Research neither have an effect to researcher's personal relationships. Researcher will work alone so

there is no need to consider the effect of the research to on possible assistant. (Grönfors 1982.)

In qualitative research, researcher should be very open and honest to be able to get the trust of the interviewee. Qualitative research also demands flexibility from the researcher so that the people participate to the research can have a feeling that researcher is truly interested of the subject, answers and results. Research problem needs to be presented to the interviewees as positive as possible and researcher shouldn't affect on interviewees opinion with his own mindset or way to talk.

Researcher should explain for the interviewees why the research is done, how the results will come out and also some background about why the researcher wants to implement the research and why is he interested of the topic. Researcher's goal is to find balance between not being too involved but still show interest and be active. During qualitative research is implemented interviews which are very open, so the interviewee can talk about the topic without restrictions and researcher's task is that the topic will be covered. Especially when the whole research is based only on interviews, it is needed to pay attention on the people who researcher chooses to interview and ask same questions several times. (Grönfors 1982.)

Before starting the interview, researcher would be good to create positive atmosphere and start with easy questions to make interviewee to feel comfortable. When the atmosphere is on point, researcher can start to ask more specific questions related to theme and ask interviewee to specify too wide answers. Researcher's job is to keep the conversation focused on topic, even though the conversation may ramble a lot. Researcher should never stop interviewee when he is talking but quietly lead interviewee back to the topic. (Grönfors 1982.)

Interviews can be implemented for the random people or as well people who are already familiar for the researcher. Also, interviews can be done alone between researcher and interviewee or as a group interview when there are two or more interviewees. Interview should be long enough to be able to cover the topic fully but not too long so that interviewee doesn't get bored or tired. The best place to execute the interview may vary from home to public place depending on the character of the interviewee and how intimate is the topic. Also, it is important to find right time to execute the interview so that the interviewee can truly enter into subject. It is good if the interviews can be recorded but, in some situations, notes must be done manually for example if the interviewee doesn't want to get recorded. (Grönfors 1982.)

The main tools when doing interviews is written notes and voice or photo recording. Notes should be done as soon as possible so that the information collected doesn't forget. Best way is to use voice recorder because it gives many benefits for the researcher including possibility to listen recording many times and get everything out of the information. If researcher use written notes, should they be done during interview by using for example key words. In qualitative research analysis happens same time as information collection. Researcher observes all the time during research process and interviews and this way create preliminary models of the interaction relationships and chains of events. In qualitative research validity is an important but also problematic factor. Validity can be indicated with logical relationship between theoretical and conceptual attributes and also, by proving the hypothesis with matching theoretical and empirical information. (Grönfors 1982.)

4.2 The expectations and old paradigms – what should change?

The journey from a little girl to a successful strong woman is a messy and long way to walk and the hardest part of this journey is probably being a young woman. In this research when is talked about young women, it means 20 to 29 years old people who identify themselves as a woman. I interviewed three young women at different stages at life, Jane 24 years old, Sara 26 years old and Lisa 29 years old. The names have been changed to protect their privacy. All of these young women have had a unique journey from girl to a woman but after all when we dive into the interviews there is lots of similarities in what they have felt and experienced during this trip.

One reason for why this journey from girl to a woman can be very challenging is that younger women are often considered as a weaker person compared for example same age male. Jane and Lisa thinks, that young women are not taken as seriously as men which refers to some old paradigms which are still living strong. Especially beautiful, pleasant and smiling girly vibe in a person can be seen as a weakness or a sign of stupidity. These features can also lead to that person can more easily get harassed sexually or get manipulated because the person is seen more as an object than subject. Lisa tells that in this world there is an idea that young women shouldn't look too pretty, they shouldn't smile or laugh that much, they need to think what to wear to be considered as a real, smart and capable human being. Person who has too much feminine vibes is not taken seriously. People who were interviewed understands that pressure of the presence is not only woman's' matter but also men's and whatever sex's problem as well. In this research the main focus is on young women, but it doesn't mean that men wouldn't struggle with some problems too. Sara for example mentioned that she speaks now only as in the role

of women, but she knows that many other sexes have to struggle exactly with same things.

Sara pointed out that the world is demanding and as a woman or as a young person there is a need to be a lot a different things. As a young woman you need to be successful at work and school, but at the same time live healthy life, look clean and hygiene and have a decent social life. All the different sections of life should be on point. There are also some other expectations for women. For example, Lisa wants to fight against the assumption that women should become a mother in some point of life. She wants to point out that women do not need to follow those norms that women's main role is to be a mother and a wife.

“The world is pretty demanding, there is a need to be a lot of different and many kind of things. Need to be gifted at many different stages, need to be successful and fulfil society's requirements. ... There is lot of possibilities in this world so there is a need to make decisions and it is very challenging.” Sara, 26.

There is still a lot of connections to old paradigms and thinking models, even though society tries to change that in a way that there is not only one frame what to follow but you are actually free to make your own choices. Jane thinks that there is still living an idea that women stay at home with children and man is the one who earn the money and that is an extremely old paradigm in 2022. Of course, we need to consider also different cultures and habits, it is not the same world everywhere but especially in Western countries in 2022 certain assumptions of woman's role should be forgotten. Lisa pointed out that the attitude towards how it is to live as a young woman in today's world may vary of where you live at. She says that for example in Finland it might be easier to look “imperfect”, it's okay to look natural and there are many different styles which can be considered as fashionable compared to some other countries for example Poland where Lisa currently lives in.

4.3 The transition from a girl to a woman

Based on the interviews and theory it is clear that the transition from a girl to a woman starts on very early age. People has started to think about their own and others appearance since elementary school. Sara said that it has started from the first grade, as a 7-years old little girl and same says Lisa. Also, Jane now 24 years old young woman says that she started to get interested on “feminine things” which in this case means makeup and clothes, probably on elementary school. Lisa remembers that maybe on the age of 9,

she always choose clothes ready for school day before and probably at the age of 10-11 she started to use some makeup for example mascara. Mascara seemed to be one of the first makeup experiences also for Sara and Jane. Lisa says that the reason she started to use for example mascara was that some friend might use mascara and she realised how beautiful eyes changed when you added some mascara. At the age of 13 she started to use makeup as a daily basis, and she used it a lot. She used strong full coverage foundation, lots of mascara, some eyeshadow and blush, there was nothing left of her natural beauty.

It matters a lot what kind of model children get as they start to be aware of their own self at so young age. Often children look for a model from their own parents or other older people. It is very important factor what kind of comments of their appearance children gets and from who. Lisa says that was the comment negative or positive it always has an effect. Lisa also says that her self-confidence was really strong at some point but has had a lot of up and downs during her journey from girl to a woman. The reasons for experiences of lower self-esteem have been linked to weigh, which is known to be very usual subject causing lower self-confidence at younger age. Lisa says that she has always been considered herself as a slim person but at teenager she might have noticed some extra weight around her waist area and that has had a negative effect on her self-confidence. Nowadays she has very balanced and good self-esteem. Often, she doesn't use makeup at all but if she goes somewhere for example office or out with friend, she likes to wear some makeup. She doesn't define herself as a person based on her appearance. Lisa hopes that the perspective which she has now, would be possible to reach at younger age. She hopes that people could at younger age be more confident and happier for themselves as they are so, that they could enjoy of their life without thinking too much their imperfections if there even is none.

"I kind of know what is good for me but if I think about younger people, it is challenging for them to survive because they have much bigger job to do than we had when we were younger and for them to realize that it is just all fake" Sara, 26.

Young people are extremely sensitive to the things they see, and those things has impact to them. Sara knows that young people are more vulnerable for different advertising and pressure media presents and she is concerned of the fact that they don't necessarily even realise how bad it can be for their future and self-confidence. Also, Lisa says that the flood of different beauty ideals and pressure of appearance is endless. She thinks that age is one of the biggest factors which influence on how people can handle these pressures. Based on her own experience she claims that at older age people are not as weak for

other people's opinions but trust more on their own judgement on what is necessary and what is not. Lisa is now 29 years old and says that she has started to be very happy on what she is, but she admits that it was more complex at younger age.

"... There is all kind of model of a woman, but I would say it is nowadays easier to not to take pressure of own appearance. It might have been harder couple of years ago and I think that age matters a lot that I have started to realise that there is no reason to dive into all rubber-kind of things like breast implants or lips fillings even though someone else might has those." Lisa, 29.

4.4 Social cohesion – how to handle the social pressure

"...there comes a pressure of how to look like and I thought that this is just how it goes, this is how I must do" Sara, 26.

It is clear that all of my interviewees have felt social pressure of their appearance, especially on younger age. Jane says that even though she doesn't try to follow beauty ideals on purpose she still does it subconsciously. She bases her idea to the visual sense, when you see something nice, you want to change yourself on that direction. Jane believes that girls start to think their appearance when they start to get interested of other people and start to compare each other. Earlier it was pointed out that the first experiences of thinking own appearance was in elementary school. Sara tells that one good example of the social pressure experienced on early stage which also support what Jane said, was the yearly photo shooting at school. Sara said that you wanted to look good because you kind of got feedback from your friends of how you looked in the photos and it was normal that friends looked each other's pictures and checked how everyone looks.

"...there comes the social pressure when everyone is watching and sees you and everyone has the same photo of the class you are included it" Sara, 26.

When I asked from Sara how did she get ready for the photo, she answered that she put some makeup and curled her hair and it is actually exactly the same things what people do nowadays for example for their Instagram photos. Put some makeup on, wear nice clothes and curl the hair, all that just for the photo so that people cannot judge your appearance or your imperfections, but gives you acceptance. Jane thinks that biggest reason that people want to enhance their appearance is social cohesion. It is important for people to be part of the group and follow how other people acts. Also, Lisa was talking about same thinks. She said that she realised at very young age that the way you look

has an effect on how people treat you, “girl who has nice clothes is also popular and people fancy her.” She said. Also, Sara’s comment “You knew that everyone else will also get ready for the photo” talks about the social pressure to follow how other people acts and individuals needs to follow the group.

4.4.1 Money enables beauty

Nowadays women use a lot of money for different beauty boosting services. It looks like every woman should have brow lift, false lashes or at least lash lift, gel nails and spray tan. Women for example is social media use huge amount of money in these services and this creates pressure for women to use many different beauty services. People, who has more money, can use all these different services and that creates jealousy towards people who doesn’t have money to use on beauty. It also creates pressure between same age people because everyone has no possibility to purchase all these things and it can lead even discrimination.

If we think about all the beauty services which are very common between young women, lash lifts, brow lifts, gel nails, hair extensions and gym memberships, it means hundreds of euros of money used monthly. How many students for example has money for that? Lisa knows that all the beauty procedures take a lot of money, and she says you should be quite talented if you can do everything by yourself to get it cheaper. She also thinks that it is nonsense to use money on all the beauty services because after all it is just a temporary medicine to boost your confidence because the problems with self-confidence are much deeper under the skin.

4.5 Good, bad, ugly advertising - How media effects on pressure of how to look?

Many of the ideas how to enhance the appearance to look “better” comes from media. Social media, magazines, tv shows, the list is endless. But also, what matters is the model, girls and young women get from their mothers, sisters or other older girls who they look up to. Jane says that she has got model from magazines which includes photos of celebrities and believes that it has influenced how she has changed her own appearance during years. She thinks that biggest effect has had with magazines, media, series and movies. Jane also points out that social media came a little bit later and thinks that it has a bigger effect nowadays than other media. Sara says that nowadays it is extremely challenging to avoid the effect of media and the pictures of perfectness what media feeds us. Is the media nowadays something you should avoid to feel better and be mentally healthier?

"I have cropped the advertising I get exposed to" Sara, 26.

"It is about has she accepted herself as the person she is, so that the social media doesn't has that strong effect on her mind that it might has at younger age when people are often insecure of everything... but if she has realised that everyone is different no matter how many beauty ideals there is..." Jane, 24.

In social media people scan all the time different looking people and very often people in pictures looks extremely good. Still, Jane thinks that it is also everyone's own responsibility to accept themselves as they are and not to compare too much on unrealistic photos on social media. It can be hard especially younger when you are insecure of everything. Jane says that everyone just needs to get through the process of accepting themselves as they are and realise that everyone is different no matter what the current beauty ideal is. For some people it can be easier to fit in beauty ideal naturally for example because of their body shape and some people will never reach their body goal, but it is all okay. Nowadays in advertising there is bigger vary in what models looks like. There are different body sizes, different skin colours and different nationalities. Still, Sara for example thinks that sometimes it might seem even a bit pretentious because it looks like the brand tries to sell with the idea that they accept every woman.

"...should find a balance and approval in how you look like and think if you really want your life to be so appearance-oriented or should you just do things you honestly like to do" Jane, 24.

Lisa thinks that young women get probably interested of the advertisements where is something about travelling, wealth or that there is just some beautiful and successful person. Advertisements which target group is young women include products like skincare products, sports and clothes, things to enhance their appearance. The advertising what young women have to face just makes stronger their feeling of insufficiency and can make them feel that they are not good enough in their current phase. Examples of this kind of advertising are different guides how to wear makeup in a certain way to look more beautiful, how to eat or exercise to reach the specific body shape or what kind of clothes to wear to pop certain body parts and look good enough. Lisa understands that in advertisements the goal is to sell the idea of tempting and perfect life what is possible to reach with the product or service which is being advertised. She is aware that the advertisement needs to rise some jealousy or inspiration or some other reaction that the people would like to purchase the product. Only in that way the advertisement is effective. Lisa still points out

that she personally likes more advertisements where is a real successful person for example a celebrity and not just some random model who has been made to look perfect just for the one advertisement.

“...people in advertisements are always so happy and with that the advertisement is trying to forward a message that this is fun and nice and with that positivity is used as a tool to sell the product, like if you buy this you will also have this positive feeling” Sara, 26.

“There is a lot of advertising of fillings which modify quite a lot the face, of course depending of the amount. The advertising is focused on how to get on shape- challenges, this certain diet or sport course and you will reach the result even though in reality it doesn't go like that” Jane, 24.

“Advertising is all fake” Sara, 26.

Does people really think that advertising is fake and if they do, how can advertising be profitable? Advertising can give a really fake image of what something actually is, and it may even cause harm for the product or service which is being advertised. Sara's one hobby is cross-fit, and she says that CrossFit gives a picture of really massive and muscular people who exercise hard but actually people in training sessions are just normal people, not over muscular and inhuman. She thinks that it may scare out some young women who looks for slim and feminine body. She thinks that it would be probably better if the models in cross-fit advertisements would be just normal people, not professionals. But also, she thinks that if the situation is opposite that the person who really would like to have a lot of muscles goes to cross-fit class based on advertising could be disappointed when the people in there looks just normal. Sara wonders if people could be more positive towards advertising if it would be more natural and so that there wouldn't be reason to control or limit the advertising they face. Also, she doesn't understand why all the advertising must be so unnatural when the things could be done, even more easily, just naturally.

“Advertising based on reality is a win-win situation for everyone” Sara, 26.

Jane has same thoughts as Sara what comes to veracity of the advertisements. She says there is a lot of advertisements of different sports challenges and weight lost challenges. Jane is very critical towards this kind of weigh lost challenges because she knows that weight loss need continuous change, there is no shortcuts in weight loss journey. She also thinks that it is not a good starting point for weight loss to follow some diet exactly just

to look same as the person who advertise the diet. This person who advertises the diet has not got his or her body with this one specific diet.

“It is not the truth what advertisements offer, it just half of the truth if even that” Lisa, 29.

Is media nowadays really so harmful that everyone needs to understand that what people see in the advertisement is not the whole truth. When I asked from Lisa where she could possibly see people who are perfect, her straight answer is the social media. She says that sometimes when she sees a perfect woman with perfect body and everything, she really thinks how is that possible. She might think that maybe it is just the most perfect shot with perfect lightning and everything, the picture has been edited with a heavy hand or this person lives a very harsh life or just all that together. But Lisa says that even she might be a little bit jealous for someone’s life and look in social media, after all she doesn’t want to live a life like that because it is not realistic. Social media is not real life, and that is extremely important point to understand for everyone. People who post on social media are real individuals but that doesn’t mean that the content is even close the actual truth. In social media or any other media there is possible to create whatever people want or how they want to show themselves to other world. If young women take model to their own appearance from social media, it is possible that they take model of something which is not even real.

“...everyone needs to be critical towards media...there (in social media) can be anything, anyone can put there anything without any degrees or sources. People needs to think what is true and what might be false. For example, when reading magazines there is a need to filter the bulls**t out to find the truth.” Jane, 24.

Lisa knows that it is not possible to reach this perfect picture of women which is being created and marketed by diet culture. She says that no one is always happy and pleased. Media and advertisements offer us only an endless run towards something what is not possible to reach. It is not possible to be everything for everyone, but it is possible to be you for yourself and that is something everyone should try to reach, a happy phase with their own appearance and life without comparing it to other’s life or look. Also, Jane says that it is not possible for everyone to reach idea of perfectness because people may have different restriction for example illnesses and some people have to double the job, they do but will still never reach the “dream body”.

“I hope that people would put their focus on more important things in this world than only their own appearance and useless social media photos which doesn't seem to lead to real happiness but feels more like an achievement.” Lisa, 29.

4.6 Beauty and women ideal

When we are talking about what is beauty in today's world, people have different opinions. Someone might like blue eyes and brown hair with thin body and another one prefers blonde hair and muscular shape. But after all, all the opinions come together, it is all about hair, skin and body. Beauty is defined based on our appearance. Could it be based on something else? Could it be based on our actions, how we treat other people and animals, how we speak to them and who we are inside. But today's world beauty seems to be defined only based on our external looks, maybe it changes someday but probably not as we have been living with beauty ideals based on appearance over hundreds and thousands of years. This is not judgemental, it is natural for human to compare themselves to other and because we don't know everyone on personal level, but we can see how they look like, we compare only our looks and judge each other based on that.

“People should understand that it is completely fine to be anything” Lisa, 29.

When I asked from Jane what beauty is today, she answer that people likes to wear clothes which shows more skin and then they are usually wearing some makeup. Makeup doesn't have to be very heavy but still need to have some. But Jane points out that after all, trends change all the time. Beside clothes and normal makeup, nowadays different lash extensions, facials, gel nails, Botox and other fillings seems to be very popular. Jane says that she doesn't use that many products, but she likes to take care of her skin and eyebrows are extremely important to her. She always likes to put some makeup on her eyebrows if those are not tinted. Eyebrow trend seemed to be very popular for every interviewee. Also, Sara and Lisa said that they put a lot of attention on their eyebrows which is understandable, eyebrows are like a frame of face. Sara has always brow lift and her eyebrows are also tinted, and Lisa tells she has microblade eyebrows because it makes her face to look always fresh and sharp.

“Fitness body” Jane, 24.

“Probably hourglass body shape, thin but has some curves, boobs and butt.” Lisa, 29.

When talking about the current beauty ideals, one woman ideal pushed through during every interview. We are talking about white, blonde and thin woman. She is maybe Scandinavian; her skin is beautiful and fresh, and her body structure is slender but still got some muscles. Another beauty ideal what can be seen is more exotic and unique style, she might have red hair or some ethnic background or something which is interesting. But mostly when we are talking about the beauty ideal, this picture of blonde slim western women rises up.

“Very Scandinavian... she is blonde and slim, slender body structure and her face is fresh and clear” Sara, 26.

“There is this type of women who has blonde hair, classic makeup and clothes and their appearance pleases most of the people” Lisa, 29.

Thin-ideal internalisation was very relevant theme during interviews because all of my interviewees were thinking that thin body is still very in, and people accept it by trying to reach this thin body ideal. Thin ideal has been a trend a long time and looks like it is not ending soon. A thin body is still considered as healthier and better option than curvy body and it is not right. A little bit too thin body is not in any way better than a little bit too curvy body. At the same time people wants to be thin they like to have muscles. Fitness trend and gym body is very on top at the moment. Basically, gym body means that you have clear narrow waist, your shoulders are wide, and you have good bum with nice muscular thighs. It doesn't sound too bad to exercise and get muscles, but if people try to aspire this X-body shape because *it looks good*, there might be a problem. People should do sports because it is healthy and it feels good, not because you could possibly get the desired body shape. Overall, Lisa thinks that beautiful body is a body which has been taken care of, there is some muscles, and it looks healthy. She thinks that neither overweight nor underweight person doesn't send message of healthy body. Beautiful body is strong, and it is a body what its owner carries with a pride.

“In today's world people's reactions for bigger bodies is more body positive and it is okay to be a bit more thick but it still doesn't fit for the most perfect body shape or beauty ideals, so got to say that I'm not jealous, I wouldn't like to be thick. One of my friends is quite thick and she has chronic illness... and if she would like to go on date for example, it is so much harder for her to find someone who she finds attractive and who would be also be interested of her... for me it is so much easier because I fit better in beauty ideal” Lisa, 29.

“Even though community tries to change beauty ideal more versatile, it is still not that versatile everyone could fit in it. It is quite plain and monotonous.” Jane, 24.

“People can be jealous especially for someone’s thinness because some people are very determined to achieve a thin body and they might have lots of yo-yoing with weight and test all kind of diets but will never reach the target.” Sara, 26.

It is positive sign that people are not necessarily seeking only for slim, model kind of body but they actually want to build some muscles and even curves. It’s a fact that slim body is still very popular body shape, but curves has become more and more popular. For example, Kardashians, a very popular celebrity family between young women has brought some curves to women’s body. It’s refreshing but it is also extreme. Kardashians’ picture of perfect body means big butt and boobs with very thin waist. Anything extreme is not something to pursue because often it is not healthy. Because of the Kardashians for example, many girls want to make their butt look bigger, so they exercise in a way that their glutes get bigger. More extreme are different surgical procedures people make to have bigger butt or narrower waist. These procedures can be in a worst case, deadly.

“In many countries people take Brazilian Butt Lift which is extremely dangerous, but still, everyone should have it and that is why people takes it because it is currently desirable.” Lisa, 29.

Big problem nowadays is that social media promotes a very unrealistic beauty ideal, and it means an endless flow of perfect people and for example Lisa says is nonsense try to reach. Many of the people who post photos on social media or if we are thinking just regular advertising, is not the reality because of the photo manipulation. People does so much photo manipulation and editing that there is not any sense to trust anything which seems unrealistic. Also, nowadays it is so easy to edit photos for anyone that it is even hard to realise that photos have been manipulated. Beauty filters on Instagram are so easy to add for example in video stories. Still, honestly, the bigger problem than beauty filters and photo manipulation is that people trust way too easily on what they see and are not critical enough to question if something is reliable. Weak self-esteem and other problems are much easier to understand if we realise, how unrealistic image people has of what is possible to reach and what is fake.

“It is so easy to feel ugly if you compare yourself to what social media offers. Social media is not good for anyone who has problems with their self-esteem.” Lisa, 29.

“Current beauty ideal in social media is not humane” Sara, 26.

Advertising and social media can be also something what should be avoided, or people tries to avoid because of its unhealthy and undesirable effects on mind and well-being. Lisa tells she is quite critical towards media because she is very aware of how people edit their photos and what does it require to make a life look that perfect.

“...but I have understood that okay hey, that’s my friend and she looks amazing but how does she look so perfect, even her chin looks a bit unnatural and then I understand that these pictures has been edited a lot and many people has different beauty filters on use and those can look very realistic. If someone wants to have attention, she could just use some photo editing apps on her pictures to look that perfect what everyone would like to be.” Lisa, 29.

She knows that a perfect looking life is not really a happy life anymore, it is more like a neurotic life. Also, Jane says that she has unsubscribed people in social media who share things which she doesn’t find interesting but also people who for example advertise facile things and who doesn’t seem reasonable. Facile things to advertise can be for example products which are focused only on appearance. Normal person has always moles, belly can be bloated, body can’t be always on ripped shape, there is imperfections. It is so unrealistic to keep up this perfect set and it also takes a lot of money. Lisa says that she hopes that young women would more likely invest their money or use the money for real experiences than putting their money on lash extensions and fake tan because those leaves you nothing but empty.

“I understand that there is no reason to take any pressure of what media presents, and it won’t even cause any pressure when someone is okay with herself and understands that it is just made advertisement. I don’t care it anymore, it has had more effect when I was younger when I was seeking for a model...” Sara, 26.

“I’m afraid that people do not understand what a real woman looks like. Young women and men don’t understand what a real person looks like.” Lisa, 29.

5 Discussion

Diet culture, thin-ideal internalization, unethical advertising, they are all existing and people are having thoughts of it, they get influenced of it, but they also understand its point as well possible negative effects. But are people strong enough to fight against the assumptions society and media sets and just live their own life just as they like it. At least there is discussion of the matter and because people are more aware of media and world around it, changes can happen really soon. Seems like the women ideal what pops out in the interviews is very similar to what was expected, also different actions people take to meet with the beauty ideals was not unexpected. In the interviews was talked about the Scandinavian habitus, thin but athletic body shape and success at social life. It is pretty much the same what diet culture is marketing and current beauty ideal is marketing, beautiful person with perfect life.

5.1 Outcomes of the research

In the research it was found out that women are still very strongly considered as an object. It is still common that women have a certain role by taking caring of the home and children and men takes care of the finance. Seems like there is a lot of demands set by society which women should try to reach to be considered as a capable and successful. These demands are focused on women's appearance and social role. It almost seems that there are two possible scenarios for a woman, another one is successful, proper and serious business-like woman and another one is more appearance focused, media-based picture of a woman. First one can be seen as a subject another one as an object. Both has good and bad sides, but can women be both of them at the same time. About this has been lately discussed a lot, can a woman be appearance focused but still taken seriously by the society? Based on the interviews the answer for this question will be somewhere in between. Big part of the society won't still accept the scenario of appearance focused successful businesswomen, but especially younger people has dedicated to this scenario, and it is even something what they try to pursue.

The aging is a vital part of the woman's growing up process because seems like age and experiences has a positive effect on young women's self-esteem. Age brings self-confidence and understanding of the complex picture of a women media presents. At a younger age girls start to take model from older people as well from their friends and media. In the research was find out that first experiences of thinking own appearance has started at elementary school. Ideas of making changes to own look has started by social

cohesion and different media platforms has give inspiration to these changes. At older age it is expected that people get happier to their own self because they accept who they are and know their own limits better. They also have ability to be more critical towards what they see in media and does not believe everything what comes on their way. As people get older, they require sources and background information before they believe in something.

Advertising and social media are strong influencers what comes to channels which share information of the current beauty ideals and desirable life. People are aware that the idea of the advertisement is to get people aware of the product or service, but it shouldn't be done to the detriment of people's well being and normal perceptions of reality. In the research it was find out that too often advertisements seem to spread false information and people must be critical towards advertising. False advertisement based on the interviews is focused on the results advertisements show. Too often advertisements seem to offer perfectness immediately and in real life it is not possible. This kind of advertising is often based on changing own appearance, weight, face or style. It can be focused on diets, weight loss challenges or different products to enhance own beauty. Seems like advertisements almost has an additional target, to make people feel they are not good enough in their current body shape and external appearance. Based on the material collected of the research people must nowadays crop the advertising they get exposed to not to just block the non-interesting advertisements but to block unhealthy and on false information-based advertisements.

In the research the interviewees pointed out that beauty ideals are unrealistic and not possible to reach or at least very difficult to maintain. It was found out that beauty ideal is not only about appearance but also about popularity and decent other life. It is not enough to be beautiful, you should also be rich and socially capable.

Social media feeds the unreal picture of women beauty and sometimes even feels that beauty is based on wealth. The person who has most money to use on different beauty procedures, services and trends are the most beautiful people cause their money enables it.

5.2 Conclusion

I was happy to realise that people I interviewed were really conscious of what is real and what is fake and how media tries to manipulate people' minds. Seems like these people has choose to do something not because it is a pressure set by the society but because they actually love to do it and they get joy of what they do, for example sports. They find

their way to enhance their appearance and do sports as a way to express themselves in a good way and stand out as an individual. I honestly hope that every people on this planet have started or slowly starts to change their thinking on that direction. People I interviewed knew that it is not reasonable to take any pressure of the advertisements, but they also understood that it is very normal in today's world to use different medias and be influenced by that at least subconsciously but also consciously. Also, Sara's good point was that if the person is okay and happy with herself and understand that for example advertisement is done for a reason to sell something and it has nothing to do with reality, there is not space left to take pressure of it.

Jane and Sara have many sport hobbies and they both said that they do it because sports are fun, and you have a chance to develop your skills and body further. For example, Jane says she does cross-country skiing because it is fun but also because it is good for her condition. Gym training Jane does more with the idea that it gives her strength and nice body shape comes as a plus. Her main idea is that after all hobby should be fun and it can, and it usually does develop physical features also but more for health reasons not for external appearance. Lisa says she follows healthy model of women and for her it means approximately 30 years old women in good shape, who has nice career and life in balance. It is nice to hear how realistic beauty ideal someone may has. Of course, it is natural that beauty ideal is focused on someone's good life because who would admire someone's miserable life, but it doesn't mean that life should be so perfect that seems there is no bad times at all. In the research it was found out that balance at every section at life is something to seek for.

As an author of this thesis and a young woman, I am extremely interested of this subject concerning beauty ideals and how media presents it. This subject is currently very on top, especially in social media which has many user accounts talking only about diet culture, problematic beauty ideal and body positivity. Another trend popping on social media is that people show before and after pictures of their photo editing and it is absolutely refreshing and offer people behind the camera- material which helps understanding what the actual reality behind all that perfectness is. This kind of inventions should be in social media as well other medias much more. It might feel a scary though for the media, but after all people respects honesty, and the one who is honest, no matter what he has done, will get awarded in a way or another. Honesty also crates trustworthiness and that is what media and advertisements needs, to have people on their side.

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Appendixes

Attachment 1.

List of qualitative research questions:

1. Describe with your own words, how is it to be a young woman in today's world? Do you have a feeling that society is expecting something specific from you as a young woman?
2. What kind of beauty ideals do you feel are existing nowadays in young women's world?
3. When have you started to think about your own appearance? How has it started?
4. How do you feel other people might see you compared to the stereotypical picture of beauty?
5. What are your feelings about advertising?

List of some sub questions:

1. Do you feel that you are following beauty ideals?
2. How has thinking of your own appearance changed during your years?
3. From where have you been seeking a model of how to look like?
4. What are your motives to enhance your own appearance or change it to a certain direction?
5. What feelings does a picture or advertisement of a stereotypical woman awaken in you?
6. Is it possible to reach the stereotypical appearance of a woman which is being marketed?