

Body image dissatisfaction as social issue created through fear marketing in personal care products

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Abstract- this conceptual paper aim to address social issues caused by fear appeals used in marketing of personal care products especially among youngsters. Analysis of different reports and research paper it is proved so far that television advertisements play a sufficient role in body image dissatisfaction that leads to serious health issues. This research aims to find a link between fear appeals and body image dissatisfaction also the possible health consequences of body image dissatisfaction both physical and psychological.

Key words- fear and fear appeals, body image, media, body image dissatisfaction

Introduction

Evidently, fear appeals are built upon fear- “a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil pail, whether the threat is real or imagined.(1).Fear appeals are persuasive messages that attempt to arouse fear by emphasizing the potential danger and harm that will befall individuals if they do not adopt the messages’ recommendations.(2). Marketers are using it to influence consumer to buy or act in a certain way. Fear appeals are commonly used in many types of marketing Communications, e.g., the marketing of goods, services, social causes, and ideas. The basic message is “if you don’t do this (buy, vote, believe, support, learn, etc.), some particular dire consequences will occur”(3) . Also, they are frequently used to get people to help themselves, and generally are effective in increasing ad awareness, interest, recall, and persuasiveness through message. At the same time, fear appeals have been criticized as they are sometimes

unethical, manipulative, unfair, eliciting negative and unhealthy responses from viewers, and exposing viewers to unpleasant images against their will(4). For years, marketers have used fear appeals effectively, without in view of its morality. Their main goal in using fear appeal is to create high threat and high efficacy message.(1). Use of fear in mass media has posed some serious psychological issues; one of them is fear of having unsatisfactory body or body image dissatisfaction. “Body image relates to a person’s perceptions, feelings and thoughts about his or her body, and is usually conceptualized as incorporating body size estimation, evaluation of body attractiveness and emotions associated with body shape and size”(5) Television, movies, ads and magazines are filled up with unattainable media image. lots of research have been completed that show how a woman’s body image, self-worth and eating habits are affected harmfully by what she sees and hears from the media(6). Female are the most affect behavior of body dissatisfaction and have strong negative feeling about image view therefore men also affected clearly by body dissatisfaction.(7). Body dissatisfaction is top ranked issue of young people (8). Studies conducted in the UK have found high levels of body image dissatisfaction among adults and young people. For example: 60% of adults report that they feel ashamed of the way they look. 70% of adult women and 40% of adult men report that they have felt pressure from television and magazines to have a perfect body. 42% of girls and young women feel that the most negative part about being a female is the pressure to look attractive(9). Current study aims to identify the social and psychological issues that fear marketing create by taking body image dissatisfaction as a social issue among youngsters (both males and females) created by fear marketing through mass media.

Importance of research

As people are becoming more self image conscious, they tend to take care of themselves much than in past. They compare themselves with perfect images of celebrities thrown in their ways. They are induced with fear to conform to social ideal of thin body image, and

if they not consequences may be fatal. In the age of globalization sociological research is showing that disordered body image, previously prevalent in only Western cultures, is now spreading throughout the world.(10). Fear marketing causing body image dissatisfaction is now prevalent in subcontinent causing many youth related issues.

Statement of problem

Role of mass media in the life of the common person has been so much increased; it has great influence on our daily life. Current study aims to identify the societal consequences of fear marketing in terms of body image dissatisfaction. Our media and society are exerting pressure to achieve ideal body at any cost. Youngsters are 24/7 exposed to media through movies and advertisements making them extremely conscious about their looks and body size. Media is inducing fear of being unable to conform to ideal looks and ideal body size among youngsters (both males and females), which is a serious health and psychological issue. (Gupta, 2011)

Research objectives

To determine the role that media play in stimulating body image dissatisfaction through fear appeals
Determine the possible negative health issues that body image dissatisfaction cause in youngsters

Research Questions:

Does Media inducing body image dissatisfaction through fear appeals in personal care products (i.e. cosmetics)?

Does body image dissatisfaction lead towards health issues in youngsters (i.e. depression, anxiety and low self esteem)?

Literature review:

Fear and fear appeals

Fear is one of the basic emotions of human nature. All of us experience fear more or less in our daily life .According to (11) fear saves humans from life threatening situations by taking counter actions to those situations, use of fear is effective in marketing as it increase the product involvement interest in brand and positive behavior toward brand.

(12) Said “The amygdala sprouts a profusion of connections to higher brain regions neurons that carry one-way traffic from amygdala to neo-cortex. Fear connections run from the cortex to the amygdala, however, That allows the amygdala to override the products of the logical, thoughtful cortex, but not vice versa. So although it is sometimes possible to think yourself out of fear (‘I know that dark shape in the alley is just a trash can’), it takes great effort and persistence. Instead, fear tends to override reason, as the amygdale hobbles our logic and reasoning circuits. That makes fear ‘far, far more important than reason’.”

According to(13) fear appeals are more effective when high level of fear is used in messages, when users are shown with stress and susceptibility with n efficacy message, they also found that fear messages are more effective when receiver are females.

Fear appeal messages have two basic components, according to (14) one is material to induce anxiety in receiver and other is recommended action to avoid the threat or anxiety.

Fear appeals are further categorized as physical and social fear appeals; they are related threat to body and social acceptance respectively(15).

Emotions are at basis for appeals .Marketers often use psychological appeals to emotionally connects the product to user make it fascinating for them like esteem , sense of security , happiness and fear.(16).

Research conducted on 263 under graduates found that a fear appeal messages should contain a threat and information on efficacy in order to be effective and arouse fear in user (17).

In a study of (18) found that 30% of the respondents accepts that they buy products by seeing fear appeals advertisements, 38% believe that fear appeals in advertisements are effective way to elicit consumer

response, 14% said it doesn't make any difference and 48% were neutral showing many time fear appeals motivate people to take buying decision and also make them to change their buying decision by making ads not only fearful but interesting and creative.

Fear appeals are part of advertising since decades and ethical dilemma of fear appeals has been long debated. Marketers usually don't consider the ethicality of fear appeals and only focuses on amount of fear without considering negative impact it can make on consumer (19).

Body image

(20) Quoted the definition of body image given by jody lightstone as: "body image involves our perception, imagination, emotions, and physical sensations of and about our bodies. It's not static- but ever changing; sensitive to changes in mood, environment, and physical experience. In other words it is how you feel others perceive you, what you believe about your physical appearance, how you feel about your body, and how you feel in your body.

(5) Quoted the definition of body image by schilder in her book as "the picture of our own body that we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves". In his book he defined body image as "a person's thoughts, perception and feelings about his or her body". According to(21) body image is multidimensional for example it has 3 aspects cognition and affect(thinking and feelings about body shape), body importance and dieting behavior(grooming action and concern about what to eat) and perceptual body image (how accurately we perceive our body weight , size and shape)

Fear Appeal and Body Image Dissatisfaction

(22) conducted research on "male body image and the fear marketing" and found that body image dissatisfaction has been increased due to increased used of steroid by sportspersons, increased sales of muscles supplement and frequent use of male body in advertisements . He also found that "fear appeal technique used in marketing campaigns

featuring the male body where feelings of embarrassment and non-masculinity are manifested in those whose body type does not match the advertisement"

(23) Found that obesity controlling campaign sometimes have unintended negative consequences because they use fear appeals to prevent obesity and focus only on negative consequences .exposure to these fearful messages may initiate weight preoccupation and negative self evaluation.

A Report were presented by national eating disorders collaboration in 2011 quoted that These campaign overly emphasize on BMI(body mass index) as physical parameter of health , usually result in maladaptive reaction to these messages and lead toward concern for weight, body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders.(24)

Body image dissatisfaction and media

It can be precisely defined as "a person's negative thoughts and feelings about his or her body". According to (25)body image dissatisfaction refers to "a discontentment with the shape and size of one's body and appearance. Specifically, it is the "experience of negative thoughts and esteem about one's body". (26) Observed that women who are exposed to more thin ideal media develop positive attitude toward thin body attainment and negative body image.

(27).found that body image dissatisfaction is linked to increased media exposure where thin body images are portrayed heavily on media make individuals especially females vulnerable to reject this idea. In her article media influence on body image (28) discussed that we found media images of unattainable bodies on each tool of communication right from print to digital ads. It is impossible for a person to with draw his or her self from continuous bombardment of these messages. as a result of this repetition we develop a body image dissatisfaction especially females as they are told to be thin, maintain a body shape , tone ,hair make up and structure in fitness magazines.(29)

Discussed that due to globalization of media, body image of western society which is based on thin women and muscular men is spread throughout the world which is solely based on cosmetics, diet and fashion. Supported by mass media, these body image ideals leads toward serious health issues.

As according to the report of American society of plastic surgeons (ASPS), from 2000-2009 ,there was a 36% increase in breast augmentation surgery, an 84% increase in abdominalplasty (tummy tuck) , 4,184% increase in lower body lifts , 4,191% increase in arm lifts, 132% increase in buttock lifts ,65% increase in breast lifts.

Health issues

The Constitution of WHO (1946) states that “good health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living, and is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities”. In a study (30)by women were shown their distorted fat images, those women processed the information as something processed by brain that is fearful. When shown real life images there were more emotional processing, these impulsive and emotional processing of brain lead toward some other negative mental and physical responses which can cause depression and According to WHO by 2020, depression will be the leading cause of disability worldwide. Taking media as contributing factor for self objectification(31) discuss that people who want to maintain certain body images suffer from Anorexia nervosa which is according to American Psychological Association(APA) is “a distorted body image that causes them to see themselves as overweight even when they're dangerously thin. Often refusing to eat, exercising compulsively, and developing unusual habits such as refusing to eat in front of others, they lose large amounts of weight and may even starve to death.” Another complicated eating disorder is Bulimia Nervosa in which “eat excessive quantities, and then purge their bodies of the food and calories they fear by using laxatives, enemas, or

diuretics; vomiting; or exercising. Often acting in secrecy, they feel disgusted and ashamed as they binge, yet relieved of tension and negative emotions once their stomachs are empty again.” (APA)

According to (32)Number of children and adolescents having anorexia and bulimia Nervosa has been significantly increased since 1950's both in US and other countries of world .it is found that 0.5 % girls in only US have anorexia ,1-2% have bulimia Nervosa . These eating disorders are also prevalent in males (10-15%).

Cultivation theory

George Gerbner defined cultivation as “the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality”. Cultivation suggests that media effects build over time through frequent, repetitive viewing. That is, heavy television viewers were more likely to perceive the real world in accordance with what they had viewed on TV. As now a day's our young generation spend most of their time in front of television, they are repeatedly exposed to advertisements causing image dissatisfaction among youngsters. (33)

Social comparison theory

This theory tells how people compare themselves with others in their social surroundings and develops attitude toward them regarding low weight and thin ideals. This comparison may be downward or upward-downward when people compare and find others lacking and upward when they find themselves lacking leads toward body image dissatisfaction.(34)

Theoretical framework

Research aims to identify the role of fear appeals in promoting body image dissatisfaction taking media as moderator as well as health issues caused to youngsters due to body image dissatisfaction.

Data is supposed to be collected from college and university students through focus group discussion and questionnaires to better understand the connection as

only few researchers have covered this issue previously. Figure 1.1 is attached at the end of paper.

Conclusion

Unfortunately in Pakistan, small amount of research is carried on the harmful consequences of fear appeals used in ads for personal care products can have on individuals. Youngsters who are exposed to ads 24/7 by the courtesy of media, repeatedly watch content that carries fear containing messages to conform to certain standards of body, skin color and beauty. Literature is presented in this paper already shown that such content in ads is making people less comfortable about their appearance. This research will find whether fear appeals in personal care products are causing our youth to negatively evaluate their body or whether they are feeling victim of body image dissatisfaction. Backing with previous literature, this research assumes that media is causing body image dissatisfaction which is leading to health issues in youngsters which are linked to their mental and physical health. Successful completion of research will enhance the awareness of this issue and let marketers to alter their current marketing strategies as they are causing harm to youth.

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Theoretical frame work Figure 1.1

