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Fashion Magazines: Harmless or Destructive?

In today’s society, some Americans are constantly being judged by looks, gender, or even social status. These Americans are so afraid of being themselves that they create a personality that will please the public eye. To the public, being perfect means having a flawless face, body, and set of clothing, and people will do anything to maintain these expectations. The guidelines to being perfect are all perfectly clear in fashion magazines. Essentially, fashion magazines have a negative impact on society because they make some individuals feel inferior by advertising products that are beyond the average budgets of individuals and give individuals unrealistic expectations of what they should look like.

Many fashion magazines advertise items that are way too expensive for most average Americans to buy. Granted, there are exceptions. For example, in a recent issue of *Southern Living*, Tousle Me Softly Tousling Hairspray by Herbal Essence is advertised for only $4.49 a bottle (Lyons), and in an issue of *Woman’s Day*, a Blair fleece jacket is advertised for only $14.99. Some fashion magazines have advertisements for Covergirl mascara priced at only $8.00 (Eifert). Unfortunately, the majority of fashion magazines advertise items that cost a great deal more than $4.49 and $14.99. In the October 2012 edition of *Glamour*, a pair of earrings is advertised at $445 (Iglehart). For average individuals, that is way too much money to spend on a pair of earrings. In the April 2012 edition of *Seventeen*, a magazine targeted at teenage girls, a pair of shoes that are $150 are promoted as a “steal” (Duvall). Realistically, any teenage girl would not view these shoes as a “steal” at $150, rather as “overpriced.” Amanda Eifert reports that some fashion magazines have advertisements for Diorshow mascara priced at $50.00. It has been reported that the products in some fashion magazines are so expensive that 99% of the American population cannot fit them into their budgets (“High Prices”).

Fashion magazines also give American society an unrealistic image of what people should look like. Of course, there are some fashion magazines that show real people without Photoshop. *Seventeen* magazine editor-in-chief, Anne Shoket, created an eight-point plan to change the face of fashion magazines. She stated that her magazine will “feature real girls and models who are healthy,” “never change girls’ body or face shape,” and “celebrate every kind of beauty” (Powell). Sadly, the majority of fashion magazines show unrealistic individuals. Fashion magazines cause women to feel insecure and believe that they will never meet society’s standards. For instance, a study at Bradley University found that by looking at a fashion magazine for just three minutes, 70% of women felt depressed, guilty, and shameful (Powell). A group of women at the University of Wisconsin in Madison were surveyed about how fashion magazines made them feel, and the majority responded “overweight” (Chojnacki et al.). These magazines not only make women feel pressured, but also give men unrealistic expectations of women. By looking only at the cover, men expect all women to look like the underweight models on the cover, causing women to feel like they are not pretty and cause an increase in eating disorders. Young girls in grades five through twelve were interviewed, and 70% of them said that magazines contribute to their image of what the “perfect girl” should look like (Pearson).

In conclusion, fashion magazines advertise overly expensive products and portray an unrealistic image of what people should look like. In the materialistic world in which Americans live today, people read these magazines to stay updated with the latest trends and fashion statements, regardless of how overpriced they are. In addition, fashion magazines make individuals feel insecure because they don’t look like the model on the front cover. Overall, fashion magazines are harmful to today’s society. They should portray real people wearing average clothes rather than toothpick-slender models wearing a $900 piece of fabric.

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