



Background

Women in advertising have been represented in **the role of the wife and the mother** since the early days of advertising. This was, somewhat, affected by the changing role of women in the Second World War when women were encouraged to move outside of the realm of the home and support the war effort. When the war ended women were encouraged to return to the home. This was reflected in the advertising of the time.

Women were again linked to domesticity and if adverts did show women in the workplace it was only as employees, such as secretaries.

The **women's movement** has been in existence since the 1800s but gained momentum in the 1960s when women began to demand equal pay and opportunity. Media representation was much discussed and criticised by women across America and Europe.

Body Image and Sexual Objectification

The use of the **female figure to sell products** was employed by adverts in as early as the 1930s. Fair skin and a curvy figure were the traits associated with wealth and fertility and this formed the ultimate image of beauty. Advertising reinforced this body image.

Over the next decades the ideal body image altered to become slimmer and taller but the use of the female form to sell products has only gathered momentum. Advertisers have continued to believe that **sex sells** and that the female body is integral to promoting this.

The images used in advertising and magazines have had a substantial **influence on society's view on what should be considered as beautiful**. With modern technology and computer generated images (CGI) advertisers are now able to create images of beauty that are unattainable by the audiences that view them. This creates a **narrow stereotype** of what is 'beautiful'. **Naomi Watts** argues in her book **'The Beauty Myth'**, that the image advertisers present is said to be universal, eternal, healthy and sexual but it is ultimately a lie and doesn't exist.

Watch Naomi Watts discuss her theory:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJh8GEU2qik>



Laura Mulvey's The Male Gaze

In the 1975 essay 'Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema', British writer, **Laura Mulvey** first coined the phrase '**Male Gaze**' which is still applicable to media texts today. Mulvey claimed that because the camera in the media is often controlled by a man the audience only see women from a male's perspective. This viewpoint looks at women in a way that reflects masculine desires. Women are often dismembered by camera, with a focus on her body parts and therefore the woman is objectified.

Find out more here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI2Eh8swrEs>



<https://jackhusseyyy.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/dolce-gabbana-scarlett-johansson-02.jpg>



<https://katyflanaganphotography.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/male-gaze-womens-mag.jpg>



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