Chapter Twenty-Three

Social Media Advertising and Female Body Image: A Textual Analysis of Select Online Body-Shaper Advertisements

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Introduction

The emergence of social media has profoundly impacted modern society, providing new platforms for businesses to reach consumers through targeted advertising (Mikosza & Smith, 2021). As social media opens avenues for advertisers to appeal directly to specific demographics based on personal data like age, gender, and interests, some researchers have raised concerns about the potential effects that highly targeted ads may have on those targeted groups (Bolton et al., 2013; Gruzd & Hernandez-Garcia, 2018). One particular concern is the effect pervasive beauty and body image advertising on social media may have on women's perceptions of ideal beauty standards and body satisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2015a; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015b). With the rapid growth of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and other social networks, women are constantly bombarded with carefully curated images promoting unrealistic beauty ideals (Cohen et al., 2019).

This proliferation of idealized body portrayals has been linked to rising rates of body dissatisfaction and associated mental health issues among women (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Body image refers to an individual's subjective perception of and attitude toward their physical body and appearance (Grogan, 2017). It is a multidimensional construct comprising self-perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours related to one's body shape and size. A negative body image manifests as dissatisfaction with or distortion of one's actual appearance compared to a perceived "ideal" standard (Alleva et al., 2018).

Social media advertising has emerged as a dominant factor shaping female beauty ideals and expectations. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook provide unprecedented access to celebrity, model and influencer photos depicting thin, toned, and curvaceous body types (Cohen et al., 2019). Upward appearance comparisons to such idealized images have been empirically linked to body dissatisfaction across numerous studies (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Specific elements of social media advertising, including the use of skinny models, objectifying bodily portrayals, and promotion of diet/beauty products, predict adverse body image outcomes for female consumers (Cohen et al., 2019).

Research Problem

Before now, in Africa, the concept of the female body image was a function of culture, especially in certain parts of Nigeria like Akwa Ibom and Cross River States where the standard of beauty emphasises natural features such as fuller figure, dark skin, intricate body art and distinctive facial features. Recently, the perception of the female's body image has shifted from being solely influenced by culture to being shaped by various media offerings, including print, electronic, and now digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram advertisements. From the onset of smart phones with access to information in the contemporary digital era of pop culture, the pervasive presence of social media platforms has introduced a new dimension to the portrayal of lean frame body images, light skin tones, narrow facial structures and slim figures through advertising.

The rise of these online body-shaper advertisements on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook has led to increased exposure of women to images depicting idealised body shapes thereby promoting harmful practices such as skin bleaching, dieting and body image distortions achieved through excessive use of products such as shape wears, waist trainers, weight loss pills, breast enhancement cream, bleaching cream or body enhancement surgical procedures such as Liposuction/Brazilian butt lift also known as BBL without considering the pros and cons or any reference to cultural norms, or perhaps, fatal consequences, like damaging self-esteem and self-acceptance. In other words, what language, visual imagery and persuasive messaging strategies are employed in body-shaper advertisements on social media to promote unrealistic beauty ideals?

The objectives of the chapter were to investigate the types of body-shaper advertisements on social media platforms; to critically analyse the language and visual imagery used in social media body-shaper advertisements and to understand how they promote unrealistic beauty ideals; to examine specific textual elements in the body-shaper ads that relate to female beauty standards and body image; and to identify specific persuasive messaging strategies employed in the body-shaper ads. The questions were: What are the various types of body-shaper advertisements published on social media? How do the language and visual imagery used in social media body-shaper ads promote unrealistic beauty ideals? What textual elements in the body-shaper advertisements relate to female beauty standards and body image? What persuasive messaging strategies do the body-shaper ads employ?

Literature Review

The influence of social media advertising on female body image has become a significant area of research and concern in recent years. As social media platforms have proliferated, they have opened up new avenues for advertisers to target specific

demographics with beauty and body-related content. This has raised questions about the potential impacts on women's body satisfaction and self-perception. Several studies have examined the relationship between social media use and body image concerns among women. Fardouly et al. (2015a) found that greater Facebook usage was associated with increased body image concerns, particularly for women who tend to make appearance comparisons. Similarly, Holland and Tiggemann (2016) conducted a systematic review which revealed consistent associations between social networking site use and body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness and self-objectification.

The role of influencers and celebrities on social media has been highlighted as particularly impactful. Brown and Tiggemann (2020) found that exposure to celebrity Instagram images elicited greater appearance comparisons and body dissatisfaction compared to images of non-famous peers. This aligns with earlier work by Sansone and Sansone (2014) indicating that individuals who score high on celebrity-worship scales are more prone to body image issues and eating disorder attitudes. Specific to body-shaper advertisements, Cohen and Blaszczynski (2015) found that exposure to just three waist trainer ads increased appearance-ideal internalisation and body dissatisfaction in 63% of women. The promotion of products like waist trainers, weight loss pills, and cosmetic surgeries on social media has been linked to reinforcing unrealistic standards of female attractiveness (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018).

Content analyses have revealed concerning trends in the portrayal of female bodies on social media. Kleemans et al. (2018) found that over 50% of female influencer images on Instagram contained digitally altered elements such as narrowed waists and exaggerated curves. This aligns with observations from parody accounts like Celebface exposing widespread editing of celebrity images (Celebface, 2022). Young women report that these perfected images increase pressure to achieve unrealistic beauty standards (Chae, 2017). The Nigerian context offers an interesting case study, as traditional cultural beauty ideals have clashed with Western-influenced social media portrayals. Jemisenia et al. (2019) found that exposure to thin-ideal images of Nigerian celebrities on social media led to increased body dissatisfaction among young Nigerian women, similar to effects seen in Western samples. This highlights how social media can shift beauty standards even in non-Western contexts.

Several theoretical frameworks have been applied to understand these phenomena. Social comparison theory has been widely used to explain how upward comparisons to idealized images on social media can lead to body dissatisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2015b). The tripartite influence model has also been applied to conceptualize how peers, parents, and media including social media shape body

image attitudes (Thompson et al., 1999). More recent work has examined potential protective factors and interventions. Chen and Tsai (2021) found that body appreciation moderated the effects of beauty influencer ads on body image, with those higher in body appreciation being less negatively impacted. This suggests promoting body appreciation could be a useful intervention strategy. Similarly, Kim and Lee (2021) identified self-esteem as a key moderator, with those lower in self-esteem being more vulnerable to negative effects from idealized social media content.

Many studies have employed qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to gain deeper insights. For instance, García-Gómez and Martínez-Martínez (2023) conducted a multimodal analysis of body-shaper ads on Instagram, revealing how visual and textual elements are used to promote specific body ideals. Their findings highlighted the objectification and fragmentation of female bodies in these ads. Rodríguez-Contreras and Martínez-Ramos (2022) performed a rhetorical analysis, uncovering how body-shaper ads employ a "rhetoric of perfection" to promote unrealistic standards. Aziz and Fawzy (2022) analyzed Instagram comments on celebrity posts, revealing themes of thin-ideal promotion, body shaming, and conflicting messages around body acceptance. This user-generated content analysis provided insights into how social media users perpetuate or resist dominant beautynarratives.

Additionally, while much research has focused on Western contexts, there is a need for more studies in diverse cultural settings. The work by Jemisenia et al. (2019) in Nigeria provides a valuable starting point, but more research is needed to understand how social media advertising interacts with local beauty standards across different cultures. Longitudinal studies are also lacking. Most existing research relies on cross-sectional or short-term experimental designs. Long-term studies could provide insights into how prolonged exposure to body-shaper ads and other idealized content on social media impacts body image over time. Finally, there is a need for more research on potential interventions and protective factors. While some studies have identified moderating variables like body appreciation and self-esteem, more work is needed to develop and test strategies for promoting positive body image in the face of pervasive social media advertising.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977 focuses on how individuals learn and acquire new behaviours, attitudes, and values through observing and imitating others. The theory suggests that learning occurs through a social process, where individuals learn from the behaviours and consequences

experienced by others in their social environment. According to the theory, individuals learn through observational learning or modelling. This process involves four key components: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The theory emphasizes the role of modelling and observational learning in shaping behaviour and attitudes. The theory further assume that individuals learn not only through direct reinforcement or punishment but also by observing others and imitating their actions. Through this process, individuals acquire new behaviours, develop skills, and adopt beliefs and values.

Overall, the theory offers valuable insights into how individuals acquire body image ideals and attitudes through observational learning on social media platforms. These platforms serve as a prominent source of modelling behaviour, where individuals are exposed to various body-related content and influencers. By observing and imitating the behaviours and appearance of others, individuals may internalize and adopt specific body image standards and ideals. The theory suggests that exposure to idealized images and messages related to body shape and appearance on social media may lead to the internalization of these standards and subsequent body dissatisfaction. Individuals may imitate the behaviours of influencers, such as engaging in extreme dieting or pursuing cosmetic procedures, to conform to societal beauty standards.

Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison Theory proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954 posits that people use social comparisons to gain accurate self-evaluations and establish their self-concept.Individuals engage in two types of social comparisons: upward comparison and downward comparison. Upward comparison involves comparing oneself to someone perceived as superior in a particular domain, such as appearance or achievements (Tiggemann & McGill, 2014). This type of comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction. Downward comparison involves comparing oneself to someone perceived as inferior, which can enhance one's self-esteem and boost feelings of superiority or satisfaction. The theory suggests that the choice between upward and downward comparison depends on factors such as self-esteem and the specific context. Individuals with low self-esteem may engage in more downward comparisons to boost their self-image, while those with high self-esteem may engage in more upward comparisons to maintain their positive self-concept (Fardouly et al., 2015a).

In relation to this study, Social Comparison Theory offers valuable insights into how exposure to body-shaper advertisements on social media may trigger social comparisons among women. The theory suggests that viewing idealized images of bodies in these advertisements may lead to upward social comparisons,

where women compare themselves to these perceived beauty ideals and potentially feel dissatisfied with their bodies. The study can investigate how social comparisons mediate the relationship between exposure to social media advertisements and body image dissatisfaction. By exploring the role of upward and downward comparisons, researchers can better understand the mechanisms through which social media influences women's body image perceptions and self-evaluations (Fardouly et al., 2015a).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary methodological approach. The design allows for a systematic examination of how language, visuals, and texts in body-shaper advertisements convey ideological assumptions that uphold social power structures related to gender and body image. The research adopted a multimodal critical discourse study, recognizing that multiple modes like words, photos, and layouts jointly normalize ideas about body image. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of both textual claims and visual imagery in body-shaper advertisements on social media platforms. The sample consists of 8 advertisements (3 from Facebook and 5 from Instagram) selected through purposive sampling. The study includes an analysis of approximately 200 user comments extracted from these ads using a systematic sampling approach (e.g., every 10th comment).Data collection instruments include the CDA Comprehensive Scoring Instrument (CDA-CSI).The data were analysed using the thematic techniques.

Units of Analysis

The analysis focuses on several key units, which can be categorized as follows:

Textual Units	Visual Units
- Language and messaging used in the ads	- Photographs/images of models depicting specific body types
- Claims and statements related to portraying beauty norms	- Areas of focus on the models' bodies through posing or editing techniques
- Terminology-inducing body dissatisfaction	- Visual depictions of the advertised products
- Text formatting and presentation styles	- Color choices and imagery aesthetics
	- Layout and design elements

Content Categories

To facilitate a critical discourse analysis, the selected social media body-shaping advertisements and comments are analyzed and interpreted through specific analytical categories aligned with the research objectives. These categories include: *Product Types:* Coding advertisements based on the specific type of body-shaping product or service promoted (e.g., waist trainers, weight loss pills, cosmetic procedures).*Platform Sources:* Recording the specific social media platforms that sampled body shaper advertisements (Instagram and Facebook). *Textual Messaging:* Analyzing the literal written copy/claims contained within ads, including thin ideal/shaping promises, emotional appeals, and sexual attractiveness claims. *Imagery Portrayals:* Analyzing visual components like photographs, illustrations, or video clips depicting particular model body types, appearance focus, and product depictions. *Portrayal of Beauty Norms:* Identifying textual or visual elements that propagate specific standards of attractiveness. *Body Dissatisfaction Messaging:* Covering advertisement content explicitly induces personal insecurities or negative body image emotions.

These categories provide a framing mechanism to unravel the complex interplay of advertising content, platform dynamics, and audience interpretations shaping women's body perceptions and attitudes. By employing this comprehensive methodological approach, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how body-shaper advertisements on social media platforms potentially influence female body image. The findings from this analysis will contribute to the growing body of literature on social media's impact on body image and inform strategies for promoting more responsible and inclusive advertising practices (Fardouly et al., 2015a; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Types of body-shaper advertisements published on social media

The first phase of analysis mapped the types of body-shaping products and services promoted within the sample social media advertisements across the two platforms investigated. A close study of the posts reveals four predominant categories of body modification offerings:

Table 23.4.1 Types and Popularity of Body Shaper Advertisements on Social Media

Product Type	Platform	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
Best Shape Products breast enhancement cream	Facebook	137	32
Best Shape Products Buttock/hip enlargement cream	Facebook	81	47
Perfect Health Weight loss pills and body slimming treatments	Facebook	57,000	19,000
LIPO Back Compression Foam Buttock/hip enlargement cream	Instagram	5	41
Brazilian Butt lift oil Cosmetic surgery procedures	Instagram	81	53
@livic_enterprise Buttock/hip enlargement cream	Instagram	59	29
Realign Aesthetic Clinic Cosmetic surgery procedures	Instagram	589	50
Realign Aesthetic Clinic Cosmetic surgery procedures	Instagram	9,634	58

Source: Author's compilation, 2024

The study purposefully selected more Instagram ads (5) compared to Facebook ads (3) because preliminary exploration found body shaper promotions are more prevalent on Instagram. This platform's heavy emphasis on visual content and influencer culture enables greater reach for appearance-focused advertisements. Additionally, Instagram's younger, female-skewed demographics align closely with target groups vulnerable to body image advertising. The disproportionate 3:5 Facebook: Instagram ratio in the sample reflects the greater volume of body modification promotions identified in the image-centric Instagram environment.

Capturing more Instagram body shaper ads facilitated a robust analysis of this dominant platform's specific impact on women's self-perceptions. The unequal sampling aimed to provide representation matching where contemporary body image advertising proved most prolific. Analysis of the table reveals key insights into the types of body shaper advertisements promoted on Facebook and Instagram as well as their relative popularity based on engagement in the study sample. The product type column shows the range of body enhancement offerings targeted at women such as creams for breasts and buttocks, non-surgical "fillers," weight loss pills, and invasive cosmetic procedures like liposuction. This reflects the breadth of advertisements aimed at exploiting female body image insecurities online. The platform column confirms Facebook and Instagram host similar influential body shaper promotions, indicating both sites require interventions to regulate predatory messaging.

Breast enhancement creams

The sample Facebook Post 1 directly promotes breast enlargement, stating:

> No matter what they are saying, you can make your front Bobi bigger. That is just a fact. Use this cream, and just apply it twice daily.

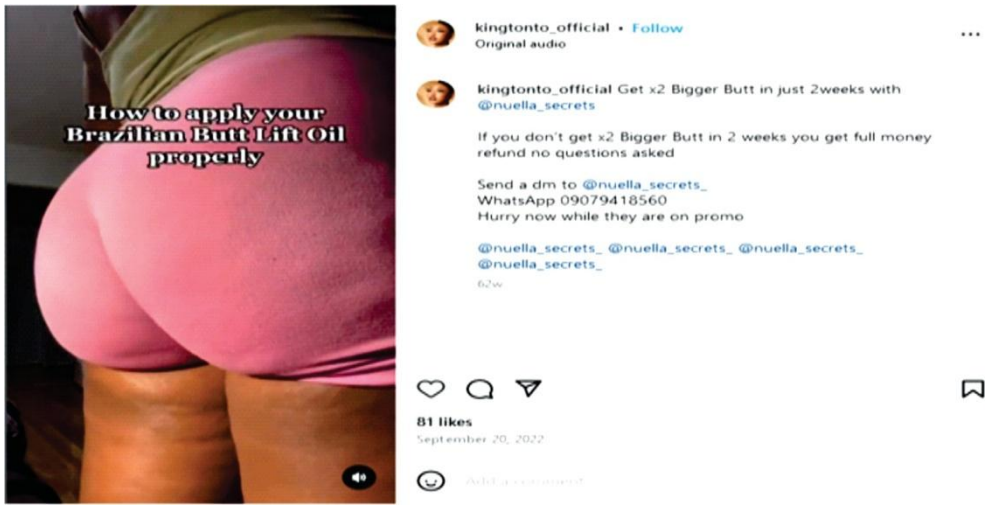


The textual messaging makes unequivocal shaping claims that this cream can physically transform women's bust size. Terms like "Bigger" and "Fact" convey definitive guarantees targeting bodily insecurities around breast size. The post attracted predominantly positive reactions like "Very impressive!" and "I need this," suggesting receptive attitudes toward the product's bodily transformation promises.

Buttock/hip enlargement products

Similarly, Instagram Post 2 advertises dramatic augmentation of the buttocks, urging women:

> Get x2 Bigger Butt in just 2 weeks with @nuella_secrets. If you don't get x2 Bigger Butt in 2 weeks you get a full money refund no questions asked.



This post also employs direct bodily guarantees, promising to double women's buttock size within an unrealistic timeframe. The comment "Does it really work?" further demonstrates susceptible consumers eagerly hoping these bodily transformation claims prove legitimate.

Weight loss pills and body slimming treatments

Moving beyond augmentation to reduction procedures, Instagram Post 3 promotes:

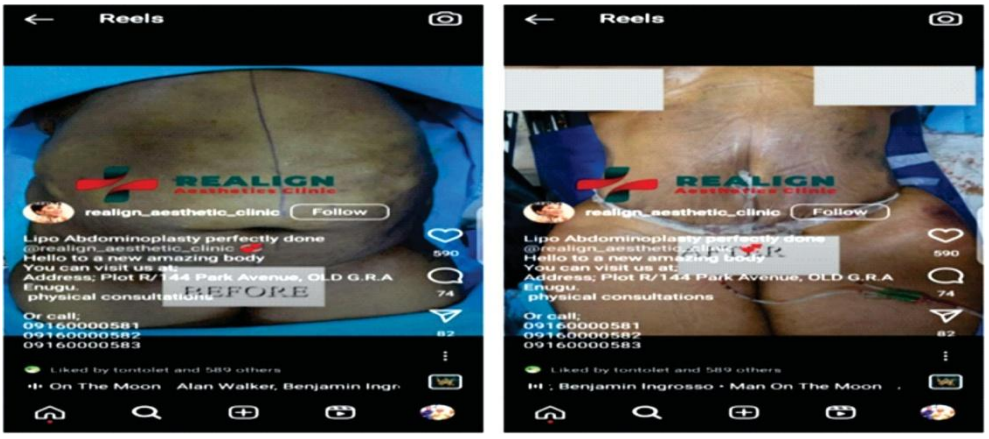
> Slim pills today and get that desired shape.
> Slim pills are available for immediate delivery.



The ad contrasts supposed physical imperfections like "that big tummy" against an unstated but implicitly idealized standard requiring medical intervention. Terms like "slim" and "desired shape" reinforce popular thinness benchmarks. Interested requests for the product again signify positive reception.

Cosmetic Surgery Procedures

Finally, multiple posts advertise cosmetic surgical procedures to achieve bodily ideals. Instagram Post 5 applauds a patient's *"#LipoAbdominoplasty perfectly done*," equating invasive operating room alteration with bodily optimization.



The clinical context visually situates female bodies as necessitating technological perfection via scalpels and liposuction cannulas to attain true beauty. Commenters' use of celebratory emojis demonstrates the perceived aspirational social status conferred by undergoing surgery to meet restrictive body standards. Critical discourse analysis of the sample social media body shaper advertisements aligned to the four specified product categories unveils dominant repetitive promises of physical enhancement tapping into appearance insecurities to drive consumption. The posts' textual shaping claims and visual bodily ideals attract predominantly positive engagement, indicating successful emotional influence strategies amongst susceptible female consumers across both Facebook and Instagram.

Languages and visual imagery used in social media body-shaper ads to promote unrealistic beauty ideals for women

Delving deeper into advertisers' influence techniques, the next analytical dimension scrutinizes the textual messaging and visual imagery employed across posts that serve to reinforce improbable standards of feminine attractiveness.



Textual Messaging

Within the textual language pervading promotions, analysis unveils four predominant rhetorical appeals leveraged to promote unrealistic beauty beliefs:

Table 23.4.2 Key Terminology within Body Shaper Advertisement Textual Messaging

Textual Messaging Themes	Associated Terminology
Direct thin/curvy body promises.	"Bigger", "Just apply", "Get x2 Bigger Butt", "desired shape"
Emotional confidence appeals	"You Can Actually", "That is just the Fact", "don't risk your lives just to increase your backside"
Sexual desirability claims	"Assists the Loose Skin from Shrinking", "take it easy dat ime [so I don't hurt her through sex]"
Peer influence warnings	"No Matter What They Are Saying", "safely"

Source: Author's Compilation

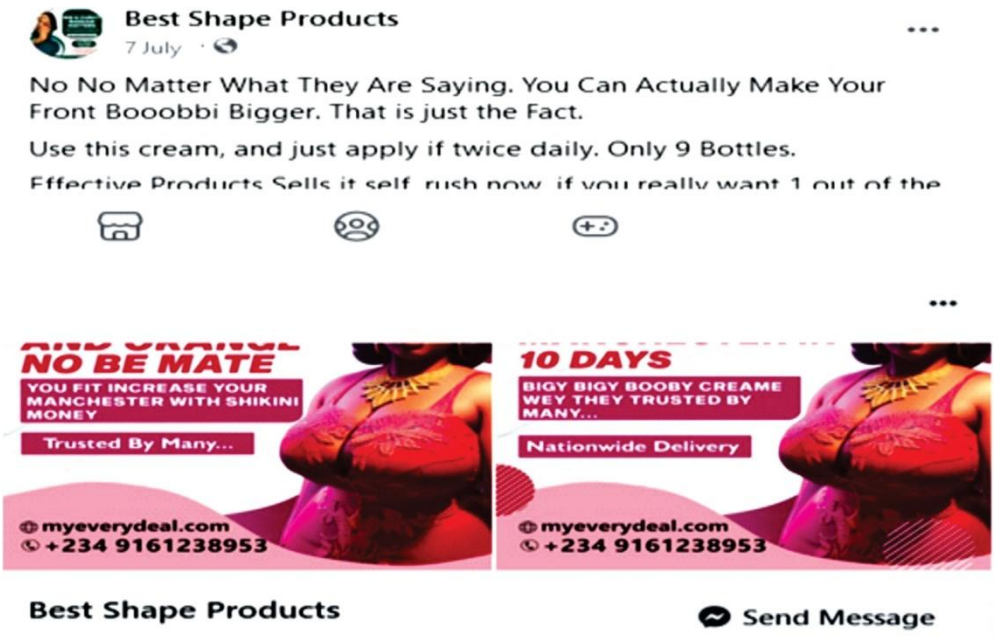
Direct thin/curvy body promises.

Multiple advertisements make explicit bodily transformation guarantees targeting female insecurities. For example, Facebook Post 1 claims:

> You can actually make your front Bobi bigger. That is just the Fact. Use this cream, and just apply if twice daily.

The post exploits anxieties around breast size, promising augmentation through a topical cream. Terms like "Bigger" and "Fact" convey definitive assurances, while the directive "just apply" simplifies the process, compelling trials. Similarly, Instagram Post 2 urges:

> Get x2 Bigger Butt in just 2 weeks with @nuella_secrets. If you don't get x2 Bigger Butt in 2 weeks you get a full money refund no questions asked.



This ad also exploits body dissatisfaction, guaranteeing a doubling of buttock size in an unrealistic period. The unconditional money-back offer manipulates perceived risks to promote the product. In both cases, the ads make unequivocal bodily promises targeting insecurities.-

Emotional confidence appeals

Alongside physical enhancement guarantees, advertisements deploy emotional messaging linking worth to bodily conformity. Instagram Post 3 contrasts supposed imperfections like a "*big tummy*" against an implicit ideal requiring medical intervention through "*slim pills*." Terms like "*desired shape*" fuse external

expectations to inner fulfilment. Facebook Post 1 more explicitly ties confidence to breast enlargement, stating that despite surrounding commentary, "*you can actually make your front Bobi bigger*" with their cream, exploiting self-consciousness and social anxieties.

Sexual desirability claims

Multiple male-centered sexual approval appeals also emerge. Facebook Post 2 claims its hip-plumping cream "Assists the Loose Skin from Shrinking" so that women's bodies remain pert. The ad ties natural ageing to diminished attraction, promoting youthful firmness as necessary for continued sexual validation. Meanwhile, one blunt male user responding to a surgery promotion declares appreciation solely for the altered body's sexual utility, noting:

> Na dis type of waist I be dey bang for lima [assumed woman's name]...she turned and said to me take it easy dat ime [so I don't hurt her through sex]."

Peer influence warnings

Finally, ads leverage peer pressure to motivate conformity. Instagram Post 2 cautions women "*don't risk your lives just to increase your backside*" like lesser others. Instead, it offers a "super effective and...no side effects" natural alternative to meet expectations "*safely*." Relatedly, Facebook Post 1 employs a manipulative confidence appeal, suggesting unless women enlarge their "Front Bobi," they will face scorn and unwanted commentary from others who don't meet expectations. Both ads exploit fears about falling short of peer standards to compel product use. In summary, analysis of popular textual rhetorical and emotional appeals provides concerning insights into the strategic influence techniques body shaper advertisements leverage to propagate unrealistic beauty beliefs.

Imagery Portrayals

Mirroring hyperbolic written promises, the visual imagery pervading social media body promotions also advances unrealistic ideals via three avenues:

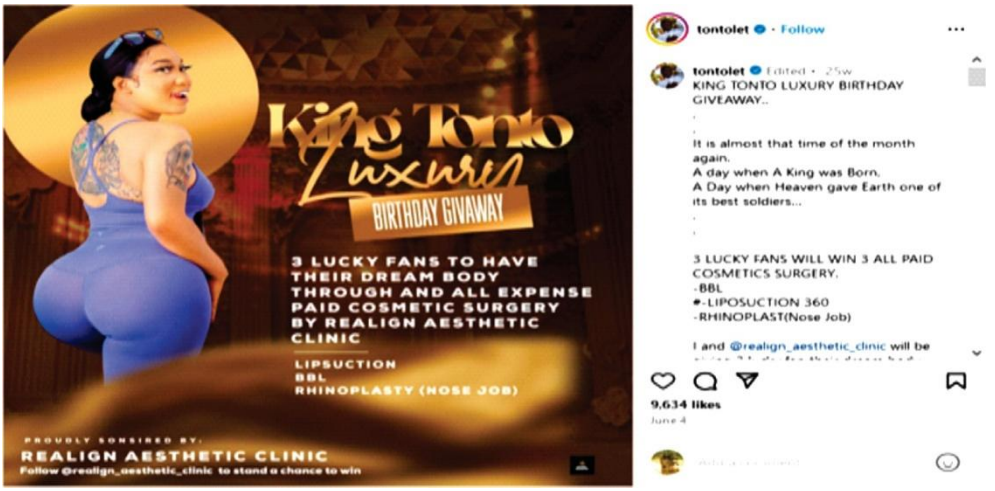
Table 23.4.3 Imagery Portrayals within Body Shaper Advertisements

Imagery Portrayals	Depictions
a) Model body archetypes	Hourglass figures, cinched waists, full busts/hips
b) Appearance focus	Zoomed body parts, cleavage, stomachs
c) Product transformations	Before/after photos, smoothing effects

Source: Auhtor's Compilation

Model body archetypes

Multiple ads display models showcasing hourglass physiologies with cinched waists and full busts/hips as aspirational archetypes. Instagram Post 1 reveals a rib-protruding subject promoting post-liposuction compression wraps to achieve her almost emaciated post-op vision. The imagery ties svelte thinness to goals.



Appearance focus

Zoomed bodily areas also pervade visuals across promotions, reducing models to parted body regions like cleavage or stomachs. Cropped alone, these images further objectify women while magnifying scrutiny on supposed "problem zones." For example, Instagram Post 1 displays a model showcasing an hourglass physique with a cinched waist and curvaceous backside. The image's focal point zooms in on the adipose-free stomach region that remains the target of endless body anxieties.

Product transformations

Lastly, ads utilize before/after photos showing dramatic bodily changes from product use. However, many such images contain inconsistencies indicating digital manipulation. By portraying fiction as reality, advertisers doubly deceive consumers regarding attainable outcomes. Instagram Post 5 flaunts a patient mid-liposuction operation, her svelte figure obscured by medical apparatus. This clinical context visually situates the female body as requiring technological intervention for physical optimisation. The post's caption reinforces surgery's necessity for "a new amazing body" while displaying the suspiciously panelled abdominal "after" shots that pervade cosmetic marketing. Through these avenues, social media body promotions fuse restrictive verbal messaging with idealized and selective imagery

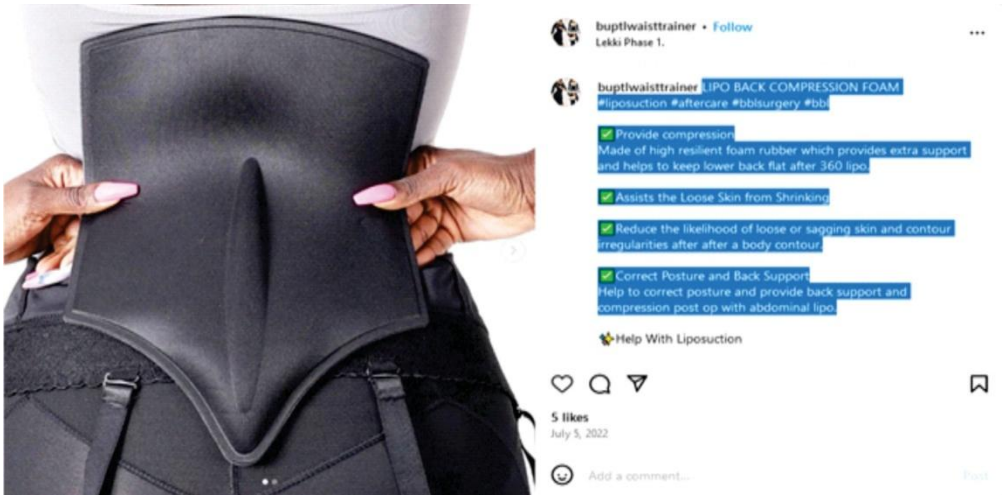
to influence female self-perceptions, necessitating reforms to protect consumers. Please let me know if you would like me to modify or expand this updated analysis further incorporating the provided data.

Textual elements in the body-shaper advertisements related to female beauty standards and body image

Expanding the analysis to broader sociocultural messaging codes, the examined social media body promotions propagate restrictive feminine beauty ideals chiefly through four interlinked textual themes:

Thinness Portrayal

A predominant theme across advertisements centres on showcasing and idealising female thinness, a longstanding Western indicator of attractiveness. Instagram Post 2 offers an exemplar, claiming its cream can help women "*Get x2 Bigger Butt in just 2 weeks*" to ostensibly conform to a slim thick aesthetic ideal. Meanwhile, Instagram Post 1 displays a rib-protruding model to advertise its post-surgery compression belt, directly equating a near-emaciated waistline with aspirational recovery goals.



Through such messaging linkages between thinness, body shaping procedures and sexual desirability, advertisements serve to continually reinforce associations between low body weight, food restriction and feminine beauty. Researchers argue this heavy emphasis on promotional weight loss and dietary control messaging contributes to disordered eating and mental distress in consumers (Cohen *et al*., 2019).

Hourglass Curves Ideals

While valorising thinness across areas like waists and limbs, body-shaper advertisements simultaneously glorify and promise to augment curvaceous elements like breasts and butt. Instagram Post 2 epitomises this textual duality, guaranteeing women "Get x2 Bigger Butt in just 2 weeks" while targeting "back folds" and "tummy" fat, encapsulating the paradoxical advertising fusion of slenderness and voluptuousness that establishes near-impossible benchmarks of female attractiveness. Such ads seduce women to pursue both a thigh gap yet curvy backside, and a flat stomach but fuller bust, through spending on their quick-fix products. Critics condemn this practice of peddling body dissatisfaction and then capitalising on insecurities (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018).

Flawless Complexion

While less prominent within this sample set, a subset of ads additionally interweave textual codes and visual markers glorifying female perfection standards around unblemished, lightened skin tones. Instagram Post 5 promotes cosmetic surgery's transformative powers to unlock supposed "flawless" complexions, its post-op abdominal reveal showcasing a smoothed, scar-free stomach. The frequent textual linkage between concepts like "perfect" and female bodily qualities serves to further strengthen restricting beauty beliefs. Researchers highlight that especially in non-Western contexts, these aggressive appearance perfection narratives ignoring skin diversity may negatively impact self-worth (Bandyopadhyay & Banerjee, 2020).

Body Dissatisfaction Messaging

Finally, analysis reveals that a predominant theme collectively underlying each advertisement fundamentally centres upon inducing personal body dissatisfaction amongst women to compel product sales. This emotional manipulation transpires through tactics like contrasting attractively "after" images against shame-inducing "before," using words like "big," "fat" or "loose" to describe existing bodies, or directly invoking failure, rejection and stigma if unwilling to purchase or change. For instance, Facebook Post 1 employs a manipulative confidence appeal, suggesting unless women enlarge their "Front Bobi," they will face scorn and unwanted commentary from others. Meanwhile, Instagram Post 3 warns women "You have to use our slim pills today" or remain saddled with repulsive "back folds" and "face fat." Such narratives seeking to actively foment anxieties and self-disgust to drive consumption represent highly unethical practices needing regulation, though remain dominant themes across contemporary promotion models (Apeagyei, 2009).

Persuasive messaging strategies employed in body-shaper ads that could influence women's self-perceptions and body image

Expanding beyond textual analysis to explore how platform-specific design factors also subtly enhance promotional influence, the next analytical dimension isolates four key technological elements leveraged across social media spaces to amplify body imageconcerns:



Hyper-Personalisation

A core influence strategy underpinning contemporary social media advertising centres on data-driven personalisation profiling each user's interests and vulnerabilities to target promotional content accordingly (Chen & Ping, 2019). Highly specific body improvement ads leveraging personalisation algorithms on platforms like Instagram and Facebook based on tracked demographics and emotional states constitute potent self-perception influencers (Taft *et al*., 2022). For instance, within this sample, while most male users would likely not receive weight loss pills or breast implant surgery promotions, young women encountered a barrage of body-fixating ads based on digital dossiers recording their gender, age and appearance-centric browsing habits. Continual bombardment with "personalised" body modification ads exploiting self-esteem vulnerabilities represents a demographically asymmetric influence factor.

Algorithmic Amplification

Relatedly, social platforms' proprietary algorithms analysing user profiles to optimise addictive engagement have proven to disproportionately amplify body negative content to vulnerable female groups (Taft *et al*., 2022). Through automating predictions of ideal posts that will compel continued scrolling, algorithms directly heighten exposure to thin ideals, cosmetic surgery and body dissatisfaction memes further shaping beauty beliefs (Cohen *et al*., 2019). This analysis suggests women likely regularly encountered augmentative sequences of body-centric advertisements colouring overall perceptions.

Filter Fraud

Specific to visual-dominant networks like Instagram or TikTok, deceptive alterations using editing or filtering tools that create unrealistic bodily portrayals constitute another disproportionate influence technique damaging women's body image (Chae, 2017). This false advertising strategy now endemic across influencer culture gets leveraged to promote body-shaping items by visually exaggerating their effects through manipulative before/after images edited with smoothing, reshaping or erasing tools. Companies increasingly exploit these digital deceptions, compelling body anxiety through fictional "transformations."

Immersive Intensity

Finally, the sheer omnipresence and immersive intensity of today's always-accessible social feeds represent a far cry from the fixed durations of past passive media like television programming. Contemporary women can scroll for hours, fully engrossed in unconsciously impactful streams of bodily analytical and corrective content (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). This unlimited supply of influential promotional imagery requires much greater research into cumulative exposure impacts.

Discussion and Findings

The analysis of body-shaper advertisements on social media platforms revealed concerning trends in the promotion of unrealistic beauty ideals and their potential impact on women's body image. Four predominant categories of bodily alteration offerings were identified: breast enlargement creams, buttock/hip plumping injections, weight loss pills, and cosmetic surgery procedures. These advertisements employed persuasive messaging strategies that exploited women's insecurities and anxieties about their bodies. The language and visual imagery used in these ads consistently promoted unrealistic beauty standards. Linguistic strategies included bodily guarantees, sexual approval promises, and peer conformity warnings. These tactics align with Cohen et al.'s (2019) findings on the exploitation of vulnerabilities to elevate unrealistic ideals. The imagery featured ultrathin models with extreme hourglass proportions, establishing improbable aspirations. This visual approach reflects Kleemans et al.'s (2018) observations on the use of idealized body types in advertising. The combination of textual and visual elements creates a powerful narrative that reinforces limiting beauty ideals, making it increasingly difficult for women to resist these messages.

Textual analysis revealed four predominant restrictive feminine beauty ideals: thin/toned physique worship, hourglass curves glorification, complexion perfection, and body dissatisfaction messaging. This aligns with Lewis-Smith et al.'s (2021) identification of harmful beauty standards in media. The promotion of thinness, paired with the glorification of curves, creates paradoxical benchmarks that are virtually impossible to achieve naturally. This contradiction is likely to fuel body dissatisfaction and may contribute to disordered eating mentalities. They included promises of bodily "transformations," portrayal of idealized body types as aspirational, before/after comparison imagery, shaming language, emotional appeals related to attractiveness, and exaggerated transformation claims. These strategies are amplified by platform-specific features such as personalization algorithms and filtered fraud, as noted by Chen and Ping (2019) and Taft et al. (2022). The constant exposure to these messages, facilitated by algorithmic amplification, risks reshaping women's perceptions of reality and beauty standards.

Social factors associated with these advertisements were found to significantly contribute to body image issues among female audiences. Peer influences, parental oversight (or lack thereof), and partner/relationship pressures were identified as key factors. This aligns with the tripartite influence model described by Rodgers et al. (2022), which emphasizes the combined impact of media, peers, and family on body image. The study found that friends' admiration for surgical enhancements and the tagging of each other in enhanced images contributed to comparison anxiety and pressure to conform. The attitudes of female social media users towards

these body ideals varied. Many respondents demonstrated overt positivity and receptiveness toward extreme surgical outcomes.

The study also revealed a concerning normalization of medically-mediated "beauty" standards. The predominantly positive reactions to cosmetic procedures and body-altering products risk further entrenching these unrealistic ideals as requirements for feminine worth, as suggested by Holland and Tiggemann (2016). This normalization process is facilitated by the constant exposure to idealized body images and the celebratory tone surrounding bodily modifications. The research highlights the complex interplay between social media advertising, societal beauty standards, and individual body image. It underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to address these issues. Suggested countermeasures include enforcing truthful advertising practices, incentivizing inclusive representations, mandating warning labels on altered media, and funding counter-messaging campaigns.

Conclusion

The chapter unveiled the calculated techniques employed by body-shaper advertisers on social media to exploit women's insecurities and promote unrealistic beauty standards. Through promises of dramatic transformations, idealized imagery, and shaming language, these ads perpetuate the notion that women's natural bodies require "fixing" through medical procedures. Social media platforms amplify these messages through personalized targeting and engagement-boosting algorithms, disproportionately affecting vulnerable demographics, particularly adolescents. While some women resist these ideals, many internalize them, leading to a cultural normalization of cosmetic procedures as feminine "self-improvement." This hazardous environment demands reforms in advertising ethics, educational counter-messaging, and societal progress in redefining female worth beyond commercial body image standards. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach involving policymakers, social media platforms, public health agencies, families, and industry groups to foster a healthier digital environment that respects consumer rights and promotes realistic body image standards.

Policymakers should enforce stricter regulations on body-shaper advertisements, ensuring they provide balanced information about potential risks and realistic outcomes rather than relying solely on emotional appeals. Social media platforms should implement stronger controls to limit exposure to manipulative ads, particularly for vulnerable groups like youth. This could include more rigorous screening processes and community guidelines against misleading content. Public health agencies and educational institutions should develop awareness campaigns and programs focused on promoting positive body image,

media literacy, and critical evaluation of advertisement messaging.Advertising and medical trade groups should take the lead in self-regulating the industry by establishing ethical guidelines to prevent misleading claims and unrealistic imagery, ensuring consumer transparency and non-maleficence.

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