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## Smart Or Pretty? Um, What About Both?

Published on [AllBusiness.com](http://AllBusiness.com)

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Like many women, I have a love/hate relationship with my looks. Like many smart women, I also have a love/hate relationship with some of the fashion and beauty advertising aimed at women. I'm talking about ads that, instead of celebrating—or, at the very least, accepting—our unique features or figure flaws, coyly provide us with a whole new set of insecurities.

Don't get me wrong. I like cosmetics. A lot. And not only because I'm paid to like them. I enjoy the tones, tints and textures, and marvel at the subtle nuances that separate sheer from shimmer. I've never felt that I was less of a smart and strong woman for also wanting to be a pretty and well-groomed one. For that reason, I suppose, I've spent a good portion of my personal and professional life buying, applying or marketing makeup.

Which means, I see the dynamic from both sides: I understand the challenges of fashion marketing, and I'm also a loyal customer. But these days, when I look at the ways that many cosmetic companies go about luring other customers, well, I'm left with some mixed feelings—and more than a mild sense of irony.

While I was researching my book, I came to realize that, in many ways, the more that advertising geared toward women changes, the more it stays the same. In the mid last century, a woman was assured that a spritz of perfume, a swipe of lipstick and a dusting of powder would render her irresistible. Flip through a fashion magazine these days and you'll notice that the cosmetic ads are eerily similar.

Or are they?

Aside from a handful of ads that tout a "campaign for real beauty,"

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advertisements today feature models and ideals that bear precious little resemblance to the average woman.

Fashion magazines from the middle of the last century and the start of bursting with advertisements promising a younger, able version of yourself. In those days, though, like Sophia Loren and Marilyn Monroe represented the ideal despite their fleshy thighs, jiggy arms and In our own times, it can be hard to recognize able famous faces and figures as they become molded hitted by the plastic surgeon's scalpel.

Earlier in my life, I was a makeup artist with celebrity clients. Back in those days, supermodels were mostly mortal, and catwalks contained healthy size 8s instead of scary size 0s. In the days prior to our friends Nip and Tuck, maybe beauty was not necessarily in the eye of the beholder, but it was at least more attainable. And as far as we knew, models weren't literally dying to be fashionable.

In August of last year, model Luisel Ramos died of heart failure brought on by anorexia.

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