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The Cultural Perception of Beauty Standards

Throughout history people have been brainwashed to think that they have to look a certain way due to society's standards of beauty. This causes many people to go to extreme lengths to achieve their ideal body. The goal of the documentary *The Illusionists: The Globalization of Beauty* is to explore other cultures around the world such as France, Lebanon, and Japan, and emphasize how beauty standards are influencing women all over the globe. To make the audience, society realize that these standards they've built and create for people are unrealistic. This documentary is effective because by striking strong emotions such as sadness by connecting with the viewer on a deeper level. This documentary changes the world's view of beauty.

The main points of *The Illusionists: The Globalization of Beauty* are focused on how the mass media, as well as the leading beauty and fashion businesses are responsible for the way beauty is defined and how we view ourselves in the modern world. Moreover, the documentary also discusses how to address the challenge of the media focusing on the skewed images of beauty from the West. One argument the documentary makes is emphasizing how dangerous these expectations can get to the point where eating disorders have stemmed from them (26:48). Dr Tetsuya Ando elaborates on this point by expressing how in Japan many women feel as

though they are overweight, even though that may not be the case. Beauty companies are the root of the problem. These companies are built on distorting the definition of beauty through false propaganda. An example of this is the 2008 skin whitening ad controversy between the L'Oreal beauty company and singer Beyonce Knowles (20:02). Furthermore, this shows the need beauty companies feel to alter natural beauty. The problem, according to the documentary is that the commercialized idea of beauty of beauty is being idolized causing women and men to lose sense of what true beauty looks like.

One of the main reasons why the argument is so strong is due to the filmmakers' ability to connect to the audience using the appeal of credibility. It focuses on providing real experienced people to truly persuade the audience into thinking about what is being said. For example, in Lebanon Dr. Toni Nassar use his credibility as a plastic surgeon to let people know how valued plastic surgery is in their culture (11:53). At one-point Maysa mentions how sometimes surgeons will ask women who they would like to embody but everyone looks exactly the same (12:21). The documentary shows how impactful these expectations can be on an entire culture. The world has grown to idolize an unattainable standard of beauty. However, people may not want to change their ways of living because they have become accustomed to this way of living over long periods of time. Women have been brought up to think that the only way they will be desirable is if they have a slim waist and a pretty face. Men over the years have been told the only way they will be desired is if they build muscle and have no hair on their body. The world has become so comfortable with westernized beauty. The audience may not want to listen because if they do then they feel as if they may not be as desirable as they would have been if they hadn't had listened. The documentary supports the emotional appeal with an appeal to children and the reality of implementing the idea of beauty in a child's head at a young age. By

using aspirational marketing toy companies market their products to children in a way that makes them want to act older (35:47). This strikes the emotion of sadness by connecting to a deep part of the audience's life and making them think about how it affected them.

The documentary appeals to logic by showing statistics through cultural and historical viewpoints. It shows examples of beauty companies such as Vogue spreading false information about the way women age (06:33). By providing statistical logic the filmmakers ensure that the information that they are providing are factual and not biased in any way. This persuades the audience to think about these facts and statistics and realize how impactful they can be and have been on people throughout history.

Although beauty standards haven't been the kindest to people over the past few years society has started to support the body positive movement. Companies such as Aerie hire models that do not fit the ideal body type and they are not retouched with Photoshop or any beauty enhancing device. This appeals to the audience because when a model looks naturally beautiful, it allows the audience to feel that the standard models set is within their reach. Overall, the film effectively connects to the audience and makes them aware of the unattainable beauty standards of the world that society has taught people is normal. It persuades the audience to look at beauty from a different perspective.

Works Cited

The Illusionists: The Globalization of Beauty. Elena Rossini, Media Education Foundation, 2015. *Kanopy*
<https://tcc.kanopy.com/video/illusionists>