

103 - BODY IMAGE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: CONSUMER AND MEDIA

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Introduction

In Contemporaneity, everyday life has changed dramatically. The development of technology that resulted in the emergence of new media types, in turn, brought about the possibility of communication in various ways. The subjects were adapting to this reality, to their environment and society in which they live, both in respect to technological issues, but also cultural and social matters. All these changes have also modified the lifestyles of individuals, their habits, their practices. But it is impossible to speak of these changes without discussing the place that body, or rather, body's image occupies in contemporary society.

Another key theme for this discussion is the consumer. Body image currently passes for what is consumed to be worn by a body. Increasingly rampant, consumption also influences this body image. Indeed, it is a reality determined by the compulsion to consumption, in which the body becomes increasingly malleable, changing according to certain standards proposed by media.

The body is an object of admiration, endowed with great social value. Converted into a sign, it is not just a "collection of organs arranged according to the laws of anatomy and physiology," but "a symbolic structure, projection surface capable of uniting the various cultural forms." (LE BRETON, 2007, p. 29). In addition to its physical and concrete form, reveals a strong symbolic, designed and desired power.

In this sense, talk about body image today as a symbol, a social representation, is to reflect on the body image as an object full of meanings which is constantly built and rebuilt. This is because the standards are modified, as these are social constructions articulated to a certain time.

Based on the relationship between man, body and society, there are numerous issues. The objective of this paper is to discuss about the socio-cultural construction of the body in contemporary society.

Body: culture and society

Before we address the question of body, we should understand the concept of culture. Geertz agreement (1989, p. 15) is that: "Man is an animal tied to webs of significance he himself spun, I take culture to be those webs [...] not as an experimental science in search of laws but as an interpretative science in search of meaning."

The web is a woven structured by the man himself. As author of this structure called culture, he acts creating and recreating it, generating meanings. But these are not ready or closed, are being built and reconstructed in social dynamics. Thus, culture can be considered as the creation and implementation of values, norms and material goods by humans. In it are the social practices.

Culture is fundamental for society, for man depends on it to develop and improve his qualities. Thus, we can say that culture is a man the product of an action on a certain space and time on a complexity of the environment. It is a material and social heritage and ideas associated with symbolic and expressive manifestations as religions, myths, ideologies, arts, folklore and concepts that are communicated to successive generations. Thus, as social interaction, the contact with other human beings, it is essential for the formation and maintenance of a culture.

Another important issue is that body is a cultural element too, not just a biological identity. The individual reacts and collectively creates significant incentives endowed with certain values, like words, food preferences, fashion, trends, customs, social stereotypes related to aesthetic standards and body beauty. In the role of sender or receiver, it "produces continuously senses and thus enters the man, actively, within given social and cultural space." (LE BRETON, 2007, p. 8).

Siqueira (2006) considers that the body is "[...] carrying signs. So there is no neutral body because it is modeled on cultural values." (Siqueira, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, social and cultural experiences allow it acquires a meaning, becoming discourse on the society to which it belongs, being open to different readings as social groups. Product of culture, body is built differently by each society at a particular time.

Just as culture is constantly changing, body is also transient. The subject is divided into temporary representations that make up according to the timing. For Le Breton (2003, p 223), "thinking the body is another way of thinking about the world and the social bond: confusion introduced into the body configuration is a mess introduced into the coherence of the world."

Therefore, body must be understood as a cultural event, full of signs, meanings and senses and remains in constant transformation, through the experiences and learning that happen constantly. It is shaped, created and recreated by social life. In other words, body may be interpreted as a social and cultural matter.

Body, media and consumption

Currently, body is an object that can be refurbished, but it is under the yoke of social demands and the means that are tasked to evaluate it and practically exalt or confine it to deletion. This is how we can understand it: as a place symbolic representation of the world, in which "there is an interface between the social and the individual, between nature and culture, between the physiological and the symbolic" (LE BRETON, 2007, p. 92).

Mass media, to some extent, proposes or imposes a body image. It is a fragmented construct of technology and material, that to avoid rejection, resembles the projected image, losing its own identity. The individual destroys the body image that keeps him and gets carried away by fashion, by consumption and media influence.

The mass media has spread in recent times a number of communicative practices whose main purpose is to ensure - through the use of different signs (verbal and nonverbal) - numerous types of articulation and interpretation of consumption. If formerly humans consumed according to their natural needs, nowadays, in the so-called consumer society, what guides this practice is pleasure and need for acceptance.

According to Lipovetski (2007, p. 23), the term consumer society "first appeared in the 1920s, popularized up in the

years 1950-60, and its success remains absolute in our time." It is related to the changes caused by the results of consumerism (superfluous acquisition of goods) and the Industrial Revolution processes. It can be said that technological advances have led to the emergence of new production processes and movement of goods and contributed to the development of consumption, since the products became available to a growing number of people.

Just as there is a society of consumption, also there is a mediated society, a media culture. The means of communication and information have occupied an increasing space in the lives of individuals. The media influence grows as technological progress. This, in turn, influences decisively the behavior of individuals and their social practices.

In this contemporary media society, the use of signs and symbols is as or more important than the consumption of material goods. For Featherstone (1995), the act of buying is synonymous with happiness and satisfaction. The pleasures are linked to the purchase of products. The consumer thus acquires a cultural dimension. According to the author, the "emotional pleasures of consumption, dreams and desires are celebrated in consumerist cultural imagination." (Featherstone, 1995, p. 31). Thus, the individual emotional satisfaction relates to the signs, images and symbolic goods.

Already Baudrillard (2007) believes that consumption is a manipulation of signs, emphasizing that there is a social logic: it is the "individual appropriation of the use value of goods and services [...] is not the logic of satisfaction (the prevailing), but the logic of production and manipulation of social significant." (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 66). Products are not acquired because of its usefulness only, but for all the values that are aggregated to it. The consumer logic is not only based on the use or need, but in a code of signs and social differences. According to the social logic of consumption (of signs), the body is also a buying object. Thus it comes to be seen as an object of narcissistic investments, physical and erotic. Around it, it has been created a market ever-expanding, which mainly takes "around cosmetics, beauty treatments, the gymnastics rooms, the slimming treatments, welfare maintenance or development of body therapies" (LE BRETON, 2011, p. 350). Body becomes, therefore, a place of well-being and good opinion.

Since body is a capital, for many, it is the only chance a person is perceived. So, increasingly, body changes are up. The tattoos, the piercieng, for example, are ways to expose and out of invisibility. Currently, being in the world implies acting, playing roles to be seen. In this sense, as stated by Debord (1997, p. 13), the body "presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles."

In the "society of the spectacle", body is one that should be displayed. In it are present representations and values that circulate in society today. It can be argued that it has been reframed as a sign-object, which contributes to the diverse range of tangible and intangible assets. The consumer - of goods to wear, groom or feed the body - is the focus of advertising and mass media work, resulting in a massive consumerism.

The body today

As stated earlier, the contemporary society undergoes fundamental influence of media and information. The individual lives in a society in which fashion and advertising have become the protagonists of the consumer universe. Thus, it can see that advertising proposes values and models of behavior, lifestyles and social stereotypes that are always presented in daily life.

The view that the subject has about body is structured from numerous historical and social factors that influence the transformation and adaptation of his body structure. In contemporary society, body is designed to consume and demonstrate pleasure and desire. It is a body in which the outside is more important than the personality, revealing a cult of appearance. There are beauty indicators thinness, youth and fame.

Aesthetics and importance with the appearance also have connection with the production of the world. For Lipovetsky (1989, p. 175), "The neonarcism reduces our dependence and our fascination with social standards [...] less consideration the opinion of other than management tailored to our time, of our material environment, our own pleasure." The image took the place of main piece of marketing and consumption. Lifestyle and body representation are the crucial points where society is based.

Currently, narcissism has played a sovereign role, a social control tool, which appears to set one free. Individuals believe they are acting freely when, in fact, undergo a control whose impact is unaware. According to Baudrillard (2007), it is a neonarcism, which is different from the traditional, for that is governed by the law of value. In this neonarcism, they are exalted as an exchange of signs, beauty and value.

In this sense, body is also part of narcissistic consumption of signs, because the subject searches a singularity. Indeed, it is a singularity not totally unique and a little individual and fragmented. It is also attached to the social imagery that focuses on beauty. The subject belongs to a "society of the spectacle" (Debord, 1997), in which there is an exacerbation of desire by itself, a quest for self-realization which leads the individual to buy compulsively. Such a search seems to be driven by a self-deception because we know that there is no service, product or body that guarantees "happiness", a permanent realization. Man becomes a compulsive consumer, always exposed to the desire that often leads to suffering, since this desire will never be satisfied.

As the ideal of physical beauty is utopian, the individual is immersed in a double game of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which puts him in a vicious cycle of transformations, acceptance as opposed to rejection.

The constant changes undergone by society imply changes in identities and speeches. Thus, the current standards of beauty are very different from previous seasons. Man made the pursuit of physical beauty a priority and, in many cases, an obsession. The desire to achieve perfection, to have an ideal body can take him to follow strict diets and non-prescription, uninterrupted gym hours and exercise, risky plastic surgery etc.

Society seems to be obsessed with the ideal body image, as well as its visual, technological and commercial exposure. It can be seen that the definition of contemporary body is linked to the field of image and the need to have a young body, beautiful and strong, governed by certain aesthetic standards. It is a priority, which resulted in the emergence of numerous gyms, beauty clinics, beauty salons, "spas", beauty manuals, light products. People who seek to have perfect bodies fill doctors' offices. The goal is to be beautiful, live many years, enjoy life and not feel pain.

Body image begins to replace the individual's personality. Worth is what is exposed. In media culture, what is important is fashion and trend, and only the subject that follow those standars may be seen and accepted by society. And this is independent of sex: all the time, aesthetic models are imposed for both men and women. With regard to men, the standard is youth, strength, virility and worked muscles. Thus, bodybuilding is so successful, since it allows men to develop and control their muscles progressively through resistance exercises.

Body becomes a machine whose life is related to other machines. The individual passes from a machine (device) to another, as if on an assembly line. And the final product is his strong and defined muscles. The result should allow buttocks, chest and abdomen stand out and look perfect.

According to Le Breton (2007, p. 87), body is "molded, modified, modulated, as the taste of the day." In this way, body

becomes an object that can be molded according to the desire of the subject. It is an object that implies overcoming, to be explored and changed how and the way you want. Optimize body seals is a key move, since the individual, through experimentation numerous exercises and activities can discover the potential of his own body.

For a woman, the aesthetic model is a bit different from the male. It also values the youth, but woman should be attractive, thin, wrinkle-free, seductive. Analyzing the endless supply of beauty products targeted for women available in the market, it is evident the model to follow. Both products and their ads show images of perfect bodies, desirable and immune to the ravages of time. They are images of an ideal body to be achieved by women.

It is forbidden to young women today to accept decay and finitude of her real body. Therefore, more and more women undergo procedures not always safe and get products to keep it young and thus conform to the social aesthetic standards. Lipovestky (1983, cited LE BRETON, 2007, p. 85) considers that "the personification of the body requires the imperative of youth, the fight against temporal adversity, fighting to preserve our identity without hiatus or failure ... simultaneously ... narcissism".

Media presents bodies modified by graphic technique, which, in turn, give rise to the representation of a new body. In these representations, appear young bodies, without any imperfection. They are lean, defined bodies, tiny waists, worked thighs. There are feminine images that, far from an actual woman's body, reveal an unreal, artificial body like a doll.

The advertising discourse also contributes to the construction of this image, involving the consumer in a magical, fanciful and seemingly perfect world. It offers not only products, but also values, aesthetic and behavioral standards, social stereotypes and body. But what can be seen in these images is a lack of connection with reality, with life and humanity. And so the dissatisfaction and frustration of not identifying with the model of an "unreal body" mean that many of them initiate a series of actions that enable their transformation.

This perfect body image, whether female or male body, was designed by the mass media and absorbed by society. However, it creates a constant sense of frustration in the individual who relentlessly seek the ideal of disseminated body. In contemporary society, the subject is immersed in a game of appearances, he is encouraged to become an "expert" in turning their body image. The truth is that it is an unrealistic and unstable body. It is a subject to modification, but never cease to be only a shell.

Conclusion

Body, media and consumer are words increasingly related. In contemporary society, it is essential to think how the mass media can influence our consumption choices and especially the way we view our bodies.

Bodies circulating the streets are bombarded by stimuli that influence them. In turn, these same bodies create content that will act on other bodies. And to form bodies and / or influence the emergence of body images of others, it is essential to consume. The options are almost endless: various types of clothes, accessories, makeup, food supplements, cosmetics etc. These objects allow body modification, turning it into a construct increasingly influential.

With regard to media, it is impossible not to consider it in this discussion. It is the way how information about body and consumption circulate. Media is responsible for stimulating consumption and disseminate new looks on the body.

Walking through real or virtual streets, we can see different bodies and be seen as well. An uninterrupted exchange of symbols and signs which results in an ever-changing media landscape. Bodies buy and are 'consumed'. So is the current contemporary world.

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BODY IMAGE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: CONSUMER AND MEDIA

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to discuss body nowadays and its relationship with the consumer and media. If previously the subjects consumed to meet their basic needs, in contemporary society, consumption is synonymous of self-fulfillment, pleasure and happiness. By consuming, the goal is to acquire artifacts that enable the transformation of a common body in a beautiful and perfect one. And the image of this perfect body is propagated by the media, so that consumers find themselves encouraged to consume products that enable them to achieve this standard. In this sense, the body is also a product to be consumed, modeled and transformed according to the wishes of humans and market demands. As a social construct, body must be understood as a cultural event, full of signs, meanings and senses and remains in constant transformation, through the experiences and learning that happen constantly.

KEYWORDS: Body; Consumption; Media.

L'IMAGE DU CORPS DANS LA SOCIÉTÉ CONTEMPORAINE: CONSOMMATION ET DES MEDIAS

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cet article est de discuter de l'organisme actuel et sa relation avec le consommateur et les médias. Si auparavant les sujets ont consommé pour répondre à leurs besoins fondamentaux dans la société contemporaine, la consommation est synonyme d'épanouissement, de plaisir et de bonheur. En consommant, l'objectif est d'acquérir des artefacts qui permettent la transformation d'un corps commun dans un corps beau et parfait. Et l'image de ce corps parfait est propagée par les médias, afin que les consommateurs se trouvent encouragés à consommer des produits qui leur permettent d'atteindre

cette norme. En ce sens, le corps est aussi un produit pour être consommé, modelé et transformé selon les souhaits de l'homme et les demandes du marché. Construction sociale, le corps doit être comprise comme un événement culturel, plein de signes, de sens et des sens et reste en constante transformation, à travers les expériences et les apprentissages qui se produisent constamment.

MOTS-CLÉS: Corps; Consommation; Médias.

LA IMAGEN CORPORAL EN LA SOCIEDAD CONTEMPORANEA: LOS CONSUMIDORES Y MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es discutir el cuerpo actual y su relación con el consumidor y los medios de comunicación. Si anteriormente los sujetos consumieron para satisfacer sus necesidades básicas, en la sociedad contemporánea, el consumo es sinónimo de realización personal, placer y felicidad. Al consumir, el objetivo es la adquisición de artefactos que permiten la transformación de un cuerpo común en un cuerpo hermoso y perfecto. Y la imagen de este cuerpo perfecto se propaga por los medios de comunicación, para que los consumidores se ven alentados a consumir productos que les permitan alcanzar este estándar. En este sentido, el cuerpo es también un producto para ser consumido, modelado y transformado de acuerdo con los deseos de los seres humanos y las demandas del mercado. Construcción social, el cuerpo debe ser entendida como un evento cultural, lleno de signos, significados y sentidos y que permanece en constante transformación, a través de las experiencias y aprendizajes que se producen constantemente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cuerpo; Consumo; Medios.

A IMAGEM CORPORAL NA SOCIEDADE CONTEMPORÂNEA: CONSUMO E MÍDIA

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é refletir sobre o corpo atualmente e sua relação com o consumo e com a mídia. Se anteriormente os sujeitos consumiam para satisfazer suas necessidades básicas, na sociedade contemporânea, o consumo é sinônimo de autorrealização, prazer e felicidade. Ao consumir, o objetivo é adquirir artefatos que possibilitem a transformação de um corpo comum em um corpo belo e perfeito. E a imagem deste corpo perfeito é propagada pela mídia, de forma que os consumidores se veem incentivados a consumir produtos que lhes permitam atingir esse padrão. Nesse sentido, o corpo é também um produto a ser consumido, modelado e transformado de acordo com as vontades dos seres humanos e as demandas do mercado. Construto social, o corpo deve ser compreendido como uma manifestação cultural, carregado de signos, sentidos e significados e que se mantém em constante transformação, por meio das experiências e aprendizados que acontecem constantemente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Corpo; Consumo; Mídia.