



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 9 to 12
About the Author: MediaSmarts

Body Positive Ads



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*:
<http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

This lesson helps students understand the relationship between body image and marketing by exploring Aerie and Dove's body positive advertising campaigns. Students begin by reading about the impact that body positive advertising campaigns have on companies, as well as on their consumers. Students will then look at body positive ads aimed towards men and read research about how there is a lack of representation in this field. They will then deconstruct a series of traditional ads compared to body positive ones and discuss how marketers target "ideal beauty" messages to both men and women and whether they are effective. Finally, students will evaluate whether body positive ads are effective in general or not through discussion.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- awareness of the media's role in promoting unattainable standards of attractiveness
- awareness of the effect body positive campaigns have on companies and consumers
- understand the role played by target audiences in the creation of advertising campaigns
- understand the heightened awareness of lack of body positivity representation for males
- awareness of the effectiveness of body positive campaigns

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy or prepare to project following advertisements:

- *Women's Body positivity: Aerie*
- *Women's Body Positivity: Dove*
- *Traditional Ads– Men and Women*
- *Men's Body Positivity: Dressmanns, Fenty by Rihanna, Surge underwear, Levi's*

Prepare to distribute the handout *How and When to Talk Back*



Procedure

Traditional Ads

Project or distribute the handout “Traditional Ads—Men and Women” and ask students:

- These ads look a lot different from the ones Aerie or Dove publishes for women, which ads are a more accurate representation of the female body?
- What messages do these ads convey about men and women? Are they positive or negative? Why do you think so?
- If you don't look like the people in these ads, would you want to buy from their brand? Why or why not?

Body Positive Ads Aimed at Women

- Distribute or project *Women's Body Positivity: Aerie* and *Women's Body Positivity: Dove*

Ask students the following questions:

- Are they effective as ads? As body positivity messages? Why or why not?
- What is the message? Is it clear?
- Who is this campaign targeted to? (Discuss how the "audience" for a marketing campaign influences content.)
- How much do viewers' values and knowledge influence the interpretation of these ads?
- How would a campaign like this affect the company either positively or negatively? Explain your reasoning.

Tell students researchers have found that, when done correctly, body positive ad campaigns can positively influence revenue and popularity amongst consumers.

Now ask students:

- In 2019, the same year their brand shifted to promote inclusivity of all body types, Aerie sales rose by 20%. Do you think their consumers were responding to this shift? Why or why not?
- Some have argued that companies only promote body inclusivity or positivity because it makes business sense to them. Does you think that changes the value of the campaigns? Why or why not?
- Dove, which was one of the companies that first ran ads promoting body positivity, has also faced criticism because it is owned by the same company that owns the diet drink *SlimFast*. Do you feel this undercuts the message of the Dove ads? Why or why not?
- Some research have found that women feel better about their bodies after seeing body-positive ads. If this is true and body-positive ads have raised sales for companies like Aerie, why do you think more companies don't take this approach? (*Make sure to point out that in media industries, things that go against the 'conventional wisdom' are often ignored or explained away as exceptions. Why would the conventional wisdom hold that women respond more to ads with women of idealized body shapes?*)



- One of the opinions was that the women looked less sexualized in Aerie's ads compared to traditional ones. Looking at the traditional ads again, do you think they look sexualized? What messages do they convey? Do you think the body positivity message would be different if the images were sexualized? Why or why not?

Body Positive Ads Aimed at Men

Distribute or project *Men's Body Positivity: Dressmanns, Fenty by Rihanna, Surge Underwear, Levi's*.

Ask students:

- Do you think that body image is an important issue for men?
- When men worry about their bodies, what are they most likely to worry about?
- It's no secret that advertisers promote standards of attractiveness and thinness that are almost impossible for the average woman to attain. Would you say that this is true for men as well?
- Where is pressure for men to look a certain way most likely to come from?
- Do you feel you see more campaigns promoting women's body positivity compared to men's? If so, does this surprise you? Why or why not? If not, what are some other examples of men's body positivity ads?
- Do you think these ads would have the same positive effect on men as body positivity ads aimed at women?
- Do you think it is as lucrative for companies to promote men's body positivity over women's? Why or why not?

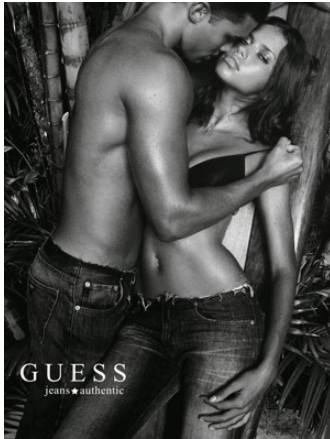
Assessment Task

Distribute the *How and When to Talk Back* handout to students and read through it together.

Have students find (in magazines or online) either an ad or advertising campaign that they think promotes *positive* or *negative* body image messages. Using the Talk Back handout as reference, have students identify whom they should talk back to about it and then create either a letter/email or a series of at least three social media posts either criticizing or praising the campaign..



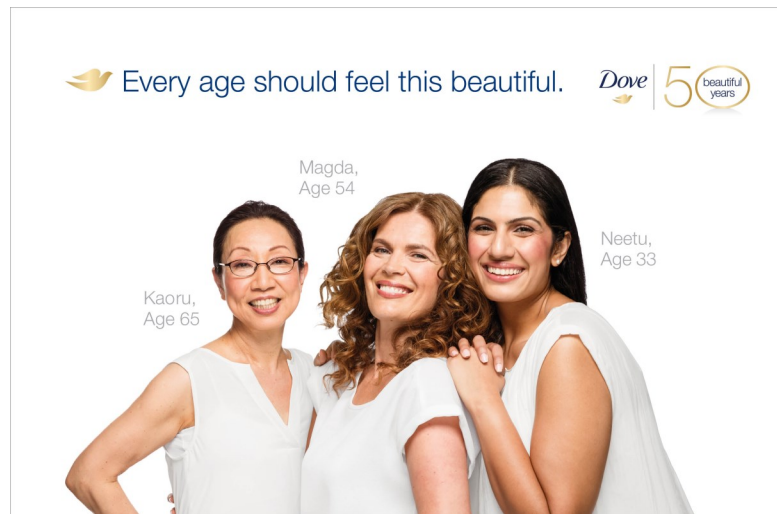
Traditional Ads—Men and Women



Women's Body Positivity: Aerie





Women's Body Positivity: Dove




Men's Body Positivity: Dressmanns, Fenty by Rihanna, Surge Underwear, Levi's

UNDERWEAR FOR PERFECT MEN







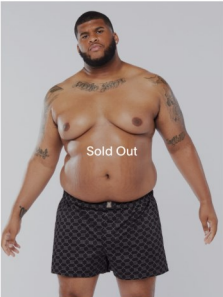
SAVAGE FENTY
LINGERIE BY RIHANNA

NEW BEST SELLERS BRAS UNDIES LINGERIE SLEEP RIHANNA FASHION SHOW

EXTENDED 90-DAY FIT GUARANTEE If you're not completely satisfied with your item, you can now send it back within 90 days for FREE (usually 30 days)!

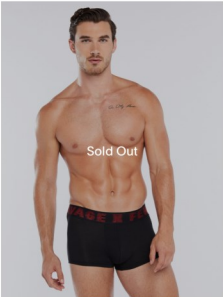
All / Men

MEN
View All



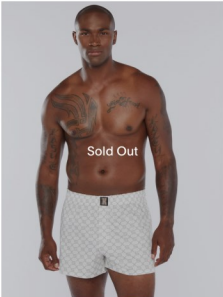
Sold Out

CAD 31.76 / USD \$22.95
Savage X Boxers
More colors



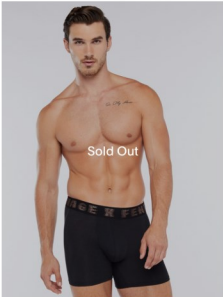
Sold Out

CAD 23.46 / USD \$16.95
Savage X Trunks



Sold Out

CAD 31.76 / USD \$22.95
Savage X Boxers
More colors



Sold Out

CAD 27.61 / USD \$19.95
Savage X Boxer Briefs
More colors

How and When to Talk Back

If you **like** or don't like the way people are portrayed on a TV show or in an ad, don't just tell your friends.

Tell the people who have the power to do something about it -- other consumers, producers, networks, social media, companies that make the ads, or companies that make the product being advertised.

HOW?

You can:

- Disagree with a writer or an advertising message point of view
- Compliment a writer or advertiser
- Inform a company you won't be buying their product
- Spread the word about an ad campaign with positive messages
- Tell an advertiser you don't like seeing their ads next to certain kinds of content
- Suggest solutions, such as ways in which an ad could be improved to reduce stereotyping

One way is to write a letter to the editor of a magazine or newspaper, or to the advertising department of a TV station.

Corporations take consumer opinions seriously. If you write to a company about something that bothered you about their advertising, tell them you will not be buying their product until they change their message.

If the company or product has a Facebook page or a Twitter, Instagram or other social network account, post your complaint (in a less formal form than a letter, but still professional, articulate and polite) there and get your friends to do the same. If a link to or embedded video of the ad is on their FB or a photo of it is on Instagram, comment on it directly.

A Few Hints for Comments on Corporate Social Media Accounts:

- Keep it brief and to the point
- Don't go on the attack: instead, write as if you are just trying to bring an issue to their attention
- Don't use slang or profanity
- If a company addresses the issue or already presents fair portrayals of different groups, acknowledge it
- Remember, you are talking to the company and everyone else who visits the site. It's a specific rebuttal and a public appeal.

If the corporation doesn't respond, you can send a complaint to [Advertising Standards Canada](#) for ads in print publications or to the [Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission](#) or the [Canadian Broadcast Standards Council](#) for ads on television.

You can also start your own movement on social media! Write a blog entry, make a Facebook page, start a Twitter hashtag make an Instagram post tagging the company or post a video that gets your message across.



Talking Back Assignment

Find an ad or ad campaign (either in magazines or on social media) that you think promotes either *positive* or *negative* body image messages.

Identify whom you should talk back to about it: the advertiser? The company that makes the product or service? The place where the ad(s) appeared? Other consumers?

Create either a **letter/email** or a **series of at least three social media posts** either criticizing or praising the campaign. Make sure to identify specifically **why** you are praising or criticizing and **what action** you want taken.



Task Assessment Rubric

	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Use Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources such as search engines and online databases and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.	<i>Finding and Verifying</i> apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media <i>Consumer Awareness</i> use digital or traditional media to take action as a consumer <i>Community Engagement:</i> use digital or traditional media to be part of a community	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
Understand “Understand” includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. “Understand” also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.	<i>Consumer Awareness</i> understand how media industries are regulated and self-regulated understand how consumers can influence industry and individual companies <i>Community Engagement:</i> show awareness of the discourse on both the issues and the opportunities involved in new media show an understanding of the issues through their creative work	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)

