

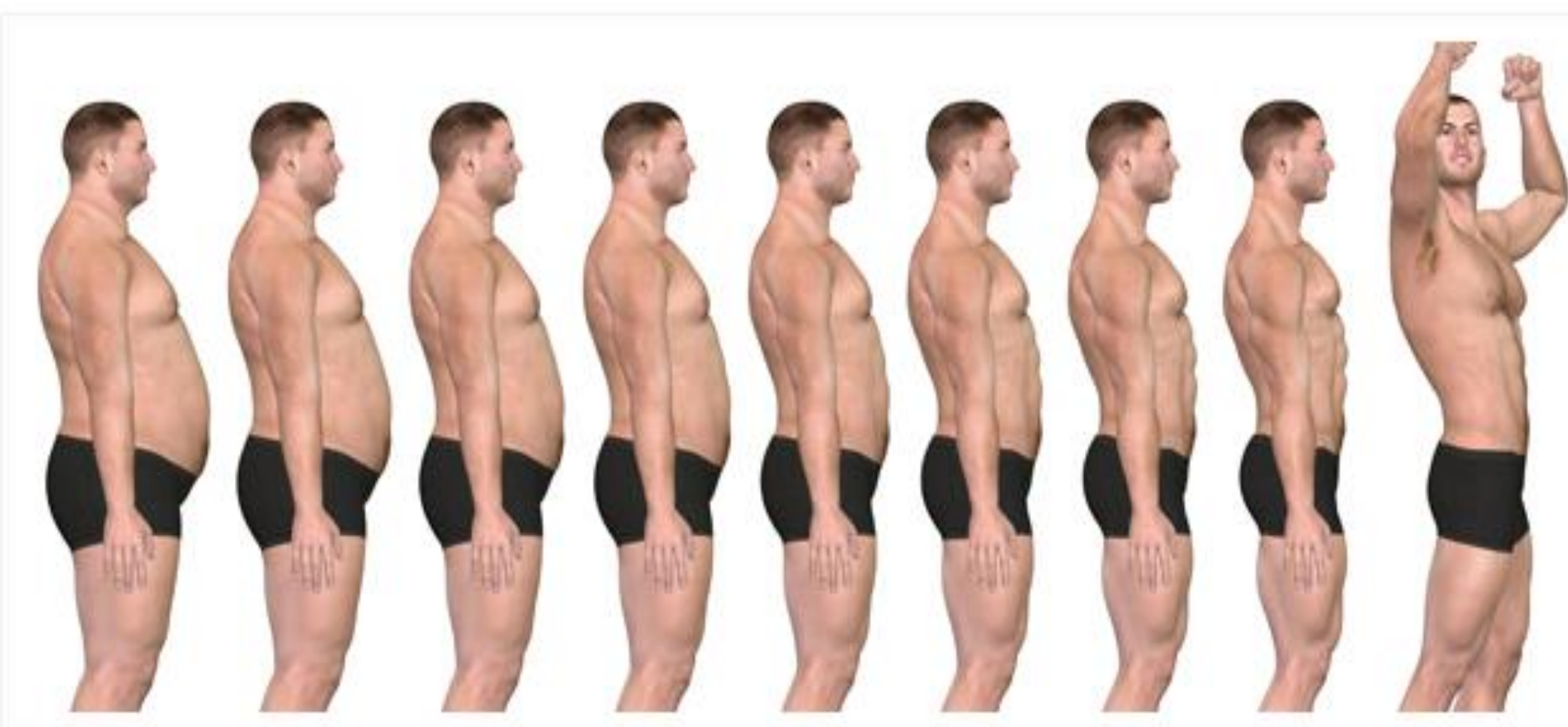
INFLUENCE of MASS MEDIA: MEN'S BODY IMAGE and SELF-CONCEPT

ABSTRACT: For men and women, as the pressure for an unattainable physical ideal increases as expressed by mass media, the discrepancy between that ideal and one's body increases as well. This dynamic, however, is more readily recognized for women than for men.

As men are socialized not to discuss their body image concerns, their negative self-concept may lead to feelings of isolation, distress, depression, and anxiety. In recent years, increasingly stringent physical ideals have gained a greater audience with the proliferation of media including mobile and social, while serving to further isolate those with a negative self-concept of their bodies.

Self-concept: attitudes, opinions, and cognitions that a person has of oneself

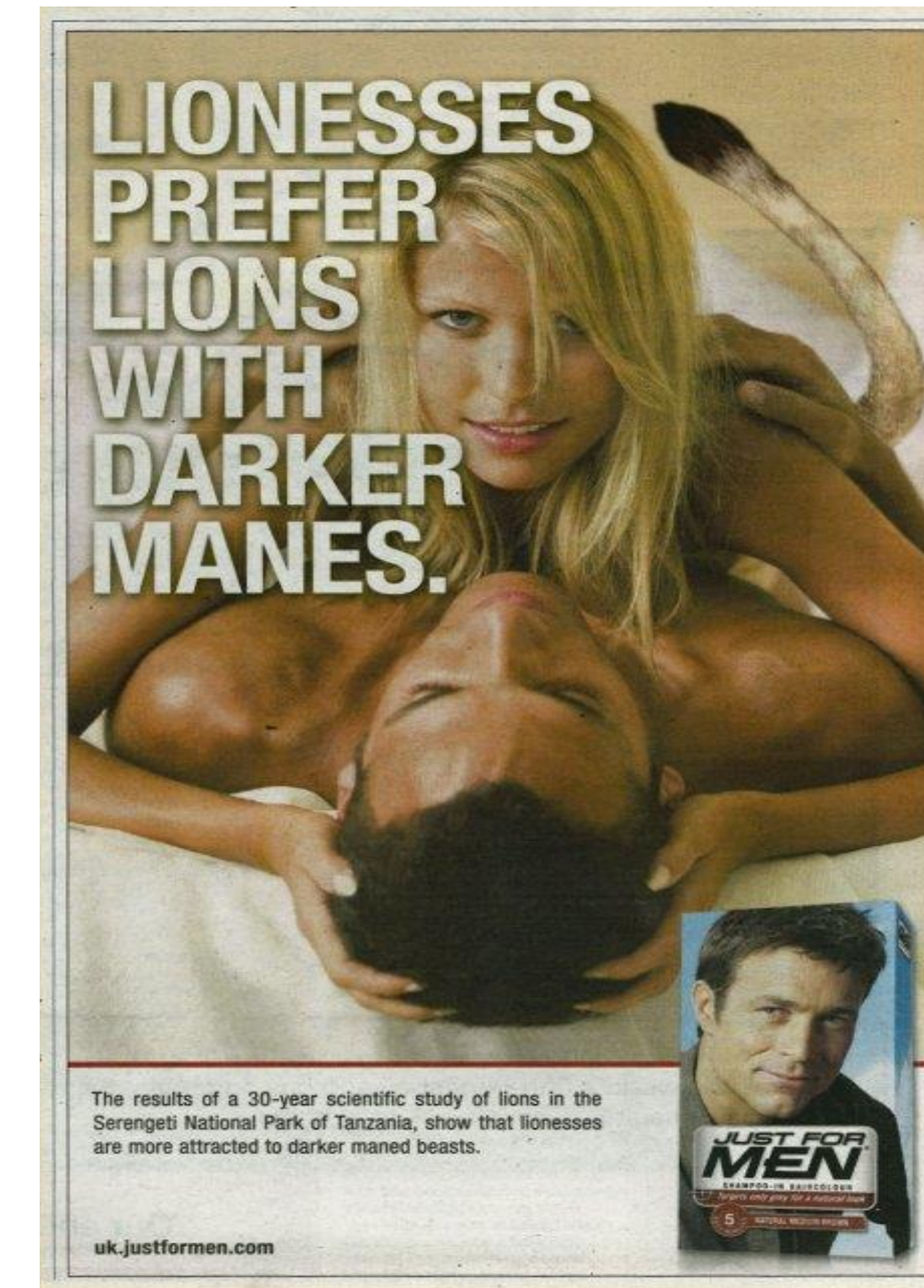
HISTORY: The proliferation of media in its many forms has heightened body image and self-esteem concerns of male and female consumers, while society has experienced an escalating prevalence of overweight and obesity¹. **Broadcast and print media are saturated with advertisements for products and services designed to enhance the body** and elevate ones' self-esteem reflected as an overall self-appraisal of one's own worth as well as an attitude toward the self².



GENDER & SEXUALITY: Body dissatisfaction among children and adolescents has been shown to result in avoidant behavior. Avoidant behaviors, including isolation, involve lower levels of physical activity and may bear implications later in life when forming intimate relationships^{1,3}.

Feminist theorists contend that traditionally male-driven industries including media, advertising, cosmetics, etc. conspire to control women's power and to profit from an industry created to promote dissatisfaction. It is suggested that the goal of advertising is to create a sense of deficiency within its audience, resulting in efforts aimed at fulfillment. **As men learn about the male body ideal, media and socio-cultural markers transmit messages about this evolving ideal that is enhanced by a number of new products and services available in the marketplace.**

It is common and expected that women be unhappy with their bodies; this feeling has been termed "normative discontent"⁴. Body dissatisfaction and its correlates of body image concerns and eating disturbance amongst men and women is quite similar⁴. **As with women, men's body dissatisfaction has been linked to excessive exercise, eating pathology, steroid use, depression and low self-esteem^{5,6}.** Research suggests that men and women's eating disturbance and body image concerns are similar⁷. In a large sample, 10.0% of women reported binge eating once weekly compared to 8.0% of men. Laxative misuse varied little between women and men, 3.1% to 3.0%, respectively⁷.



MEDIA & MARKETING: Products and services that enhance what had previously been seen as normal functioning or part of the aging process is ever increasing^{2,8}. **This evolution has supported a healthcare industry whose role is not to correct what is medically wrong, but instead, as provisions for those who just want to be better.** Men are undergoing cosmetic procedures in response to male pattern baldness, and obtaining medications to enhance lifestyle - the best known is sildenafil citrate (Viagra) in response to erectile dysfunction.

That which is normative – or normally occurring – falls less and less in favor as compared to what can be improved upon. A 2008 study⁶ found that more than 50% of men wanted to be thinner, more muscular, have a fuller head of hair and less hair on their bodies. Additionally, these men also demonstrated lower overall self-esteem related to appearance.



IMPLICATIONS: Advertising has a newfound ability to target and tailor messages, and to deliver them in print, broadcast and digital media like never before. Additionally, the professional constituency of this industry has changed immensely in the past few decades; women occupy more than 50% of professional positions in media and marketing fields debunking earlier feminist theory. **The absence of depicted physical ideals in media that resemble those naturally occurring within society, act as reinforcement for conceptions and perceptions of body beautiful¹.** Negative self-valuations, esteem and poor body image present social and psychological barriers, and may be found more commonly amongst men who are socialized to be less emotive about these vulnerabilities.

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