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# Only Two Percent of Women Describe Themselves as Beautiful

New Global Study Uncovers Desire for Broader Definition of Beauty

NEW YORK, Sept. 29 /PRNewswire/ -- Dove(R) unveils a groundbreaking new study today that discusses the implications of a global society that narrowly defines beauty by the images seen in entertainment, advertising and fashion runways and the startling impact this has on women. The result: only two percent of thousands of women from 10 countries around the world consider themselves beautiful. Does this mean that we live in a world where women are not beautiful or does it mean that women around the world are calling for a broader definition of beauty?

Dove, as a global beauty brand and responsible marketer, wants to investigate these issues and understand women's views on beauty. With these concerns in mind, Dove partnered with Dr. Nancy Etcoff, Harvard University professor and author of "Survival of the Prettiest," and Dr. Susie Orbach, London School of Economics, visiting professor and author of "Fat is a Feminist Issue," to develop The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report, which explores the relationship women have with beauty. Specifically, Dove's mission is to determine how women define beauty; their level of satisfaction with their own beauty; and its impact on their sense of well-being.

"The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report makes it clear that it is time to lift the quota system on images of beauty," says Etcoff. "This study uncovers that beauty is never going away and has enormous power. Beauty should not be reduced to a political or cultural problem but understood as a basic human pleasure."

#### Beauty: The Eye of the Beholder

The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report uncovers startling information about how women physically perceive and define their look. Supporting the current and narrow definition of beauty, the respondents are hesitant to claim ownership of the word "beauty," with more than 40 percent strongly agreeing that they do not feel comfortable describing themselves as beautiful.

Furthermore, only five percent feel comfortable describing themselves as pretty and a mere nine percent feel comfortable describing themselves as attractive. Additionally, just 13 percent of women say they are very satisfied with their beauty; 12 percent say they are very satisfied with their physical attractiveness; 17 percent are very satisfied with their facial attractiveness; and only 13 percent are very satisfied with their body weight and shape. In fact, in a society captivated by diet and makeover programs, a third of women around the world are very or somewhat dissatisfied with their body weight. The women of Japan have the highest levels of dissatisfaction at 59 percent -- followed by Brazil (37%), United Kingdom (36%) and the United States (36%), Argentina (27%) and the Netherlands (25%).

#### Pop Culture's Beauty Mark

Having assessed how women think about as well as evaluate their own beauty and appearance, the study asks women about social issues emerging from mass media and pop culture. From Brazil to the Netherlands to Argentina -- across

cultures, ages, ethnicities and race -- women make it clear they believe there is a one-dimensional and narrow, physical definition of beauty. The findings show that the ideas of beauty and physical attractiveness are largely synonymous, and although both are highly valued by society, both are rendered almost impossible to attain.

Respondents said they felt pressure to try and be that "perfect" picture of beauty:

- \* Sixty-three percent strongly agree that women today are expected to be more attractive than their mother's generation.
- \* Sixty percent strongly agree that society expects women to enhance their physical attractiveness.
- \* Forty-five percent of women feel women who are more beautiful have greater opportunities in life.
- \* More than half (59%) strongly agree that physically attractive women are more valued by men.

The study explores the degree to which mass media has played a role in portraying and communicating a narrow definition of beauty:

- \* More than two-thirds (68%) of women strongly agree that "the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women can't ever achieve."
- \* Well over half of all women (57%) strongly agree that "the attributes of female beauty have become very narrowly defined in today's world."

#### Women around the World Unite

The traditional definition of beauty, based only on physical appearance, is powerfully communicated through the mass media and has been assimilated through popular culture. It is this ideal that many women measure themselves against and aspire to attain. However, women around the world would like to see media change in the way it represents beauty.

For example, women feel they are surrounded and bombarded with images that are unrealistic:

- \* The majority (76%) wish female beauty was portrayed in the media as being made up of more than just physical attractiveness.
- \* Seventy-five percent went on to say that they wish the media did a better job of portraying women of diverse physical attractiveness, including age, shape and size.

The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report uncovers that women recognize beauty is more than just physical -- it includes character, passion and presence. And, in order to influence a cultural shift in popular culture and mass media, it is necessary to come together and stake a claim to redefine beauty.

"What women in this study tell us is that a sense of legitimacy and respect is wrapped up with beauty in today's world. Whether this sentiment dismays or delights us, it poses a serious challenge," says Orbach. "And it is this in the first instance: For the idea of beauty to become truly democratic and inclusive, then beauty itself must be revitalized to reflect women in their beauty as they really are rather than as portrayed in the current fictions that dominate our visual culture."

#### So What is Beautiful?

How are the women of the world defining beauty and what do they really want to see as society continues to evolve? The study finds two-thirds of women strongly agree that physical attractiveness is about how one looks, whereas beauty includes much more of who a person is. Women rate happiness, confidence, dignity and humor as powerful components of beauty, along with the more traditional attributes of physical appearance, body weight and shape, and even a sense of style. The respondents also see beauty in many different forms:

- \* Seventy-seven percent strongly agree that beauty can be achieved through attitude, spirit and other attributes that have nothing to do with physical appearance.
- \* Eighty-nine percent strongly agree that a woman can be beautiful at any age.
- \* Eighty-five percent state every woman has something about her that is beautiful.

Not only do women agree that happiness is the primary element in making a woman beautiful, but they strongly agree that they themselves feel most beautiful when they are happy and fulfilled in their lives (86%). Furthermore, 82 percent of women agree that, "If I had a daughter, I would want her to feel beautiful, even if she is not physically attractive."

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that authentic beauty is a concept lodged in women's hearts and minds and seldom articulated in popular culture or affirmed in the mass media. As such, it remains unrealized and unclaimed -- an idea of beauty that is a narrower, functional definition of "physical attractiveness."

However, this study clearly outlines women's views about the true components of beauty and affirms that, while they include physical attractiveness, they also include happiness, kindness, wisdom, dignity, love,

authenticity and self-realization. Through this study, the possibilities for the beautiful to be known, found and represented have been infinitely extended and the ways in which female beauty can be defined have been profoundly deepened.

#### The Campaign for Real Beauty

Sparked by the results of the global study, Dove is launching a major initiative designed to provoke discussion and encourage debate about the nature of beauty. The Campaign for Real Beauty asks women to give serious thought to a host of issues surrounding beauty, such as society's definition of it, the quest for "perfection," the difference between beauty and physical attractiveness, and the way the media shapes our perceptions of beauty.

The Campaign for Real Beauty uses various communication vehicles to invite women to join in the discussion about beauty and share their views of it with women around the world:

- \* Advertising: A global advertising campaign, launching October 2004, will question whether "model" attributes, such as youth, slimness, and symmetrical features, are required for beauty -- or are completely irrelevant to it. Each ad presents an image of a woman whose appearance differs from the stereotypical physical ideal, and asks the reader/viewer to judge the woman's looks by checking off a box.
  - "Wrinkled? Wonderful?" features Irene Sinclair, 95, of London, England with a wrinkled face and asks: "Will society ever accept old can be beautiful?"
  - "Gray? Gorgeous?" features Merlin Glozer, 45, of London, England with a natural mane of gray hair and asks: "Why aren't women glad to be gray?"
  - "Oversized? Outstanding?" features Tabatha Roman, 34, of New York, NY a plus-size woman and asks: "Does true beauty only squeeze into a size 6?"
  - "Half empty? Half full?" features Esther Poyer, 35, of London, England with small breasts and asks: "Does sexiness depend on how full your cups are?"
  - "Flawed? Flawless?" features Leah Sheehan, 22, of London, England with freckles and asks: "Does beauty mean looking like everyone else?"

Each ad will direct readers/viewers to a special web site (<http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com>) where they can cast their votes.

- \* Web site: At <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com> , women can cast their votes on the questions raised in the ad campaign and engage in an ongoing dialogue about beauty by posting to discussion boards, hearing what women around the world are saying, and downloading research studies about beauty.
- \* Billboards: Mobile billboards will be placed in major cities challenging women's notions of beauty by encouraging them to cast their votes. A featured interactive billboard, located in New York's Times Square, highlighting the "Wrinkled? Wonderful?" ad will keep a running tally of the vote submitted for that issue.
- \* Panel discussions:
  - The Campaign for Real Beauty launches in New York City on September 29 with a kick-off panel discussion about beauty, co-hosted by American Women in Radio and Television(R), and featuring Dr. Nancy Etcoff of Harvard University; Mindy Herman, former CEO, E! Entertainment Television; Andi Bernstein, Vice President, Special Projects, Oxygen Media and additional media and beauty industry leaders, moderated by Jamie Colby, Correspondent and Anchor, Fox News Channel.
  - Dove is furthering the panel discussions on a grassroots level by partnering with the Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership, a not-for-profit educational organization that provides ethical leadership training and professional development for women, for two special weekend workshops to be held in Atlanta (October 8-10) and Chicago (November 12-14).
- \* The Dove Self-Esteem Fund: Dove has established the Dove Self-Esteem Fund to raise awareness of the link between beauty and body-related self-esteem. The new initiative continues an ongoing effort by Dove to fund programs that raise self-esteem in girls and young women. The Dove Self-Esteem Fund is working through the Unilever Foundation to sponsor uniquely ME!, a partnership program with Girl Scouts of the USA that helps build self-confidence in girls ages 8-14 with resources and program activities. The Dove Self-Esteem Fund also supports Body Talk, an educational program for schools in the United Kingdom and Canada.

#### About The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report

The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report was conducted by research firm StrategyOne in collaboration with Dr. Nancy Etcoff and the Massachusetts General Hospital/ Harvard University, and with the expert consultation of Dr. Susie Orbach of the London School of Economics. The study is based on quantitative data collected from a global survey of 3,200 women from

Argentina, Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States.

#### About Dove

Dove, manufactured by Unilever, is the No. 1 personal wash brand nationwide. One in every three households uses a Dove product, which includes bar cleansers, body washes, face care, anti-perspirants/ deodorants and hair care. Dove anti-perspirant/deodorant is the No. 2 female-oriented anti-perspirant/deodorant brand in the United States. Dove is available nationwide in food, drug and mass outlet stores. The Dove mission is to make women feel more beautiful every day by challenging today's stereotypical view of beauty and inspiring women to take great care of themselves. Visit <http://www.dove.com> .

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