

REFERENCE GROUPS: Victoria's Secret Angel

Intro

A reference group is a group to which an individual or another group is compared. This article will look into the world of the well-known fashion idols known as the Victoria's Secret Angels. It is our belief that this particular group of models has had great influence on today's youth since its' very beginning, primarily on the younger female generations.

Components of culture

Language

The models use simple language, mostly due to the fact that they are not all from English speaking countries. On the other hand, the fact that models are introduced to the industry at a very young age leads to some having a lower level of education than an average person from a developed country.

For example:

Like – mostly used by Americans for comparison or describing purposes

Bombshell body – a desired body shape, usually slim and fit

OMG – an overly used expression of general surprise

Snazzy – unique in a cool way; fashionable; stylish

Other examples include: *bang, flossy, kicking, sassy, swag, swagger, swank, cool, "GQ"*

Symbols

The Angels are most known for their signature pink robe with their names on their back. Besides the name of the agency, *Victoria's Secret*, which is their main symbol, the models are also associated with their own fashion products which are spread across the world market. The most recently used symbol that has caught our attention is the angelic wings coupled with lace decorated lingerie.

Other symbols include: make-up, high-heels, fashion brands, eyelash/hair extensions, perfume, luxury lifestyle.

Norms

The Angels are expected to behave extremely polite with applaudable etiquette since their very behaviour represents and is associated with the agency they represent. Even though we know that folkways have somewhat weak sanctions, the behavioural norms as well as the dress code can have serious consequences for these models if not followed.

Values

When talking about values, we cannot say with precise certainty that the Angels share their values since values vary on an individual level when talking about a group that is not so close-knit. However, we can say that they share the desire for spotlight and success, and therefore maybe a need for a luxury lifestyle. Furthermore, since we are analyzing an industry that has had abstract ideas about female body expectations since its creation, a slim, fit body and a healthy lifestyle are also worth mentioning as their values.

Rituals

As stated previously, regular exercise and healthy diet are rituals Angels must keep track of. Besides eating a lot of organic products and drinking water, the Angels must update their social media and keep it flawless, since it is a direct promotion for the agency. Walking on runways is also a ritual for models while sharing a catwalk often brings them together. As for rites of passage, being promoted to a Victoria's Secret Angel is the only significant ritual that welcomes them into this reference group.

Normative function

The Victoria's Secret Angels are the elite that all female models crave to become. Their influence can best be seen in the impact they have on young girls and women. Most try to keep up with their fashion trends and others with their healthy diet. Nevertheless, they want what they have and what they are, which usually leaves to the feeling of relative deprivation once they start comparing themselves with the Angels.

Comparative function

As said, most girls compare themselves to one of the Angels. This is usually determined by looking at their physical features and finding the one that they feel associated with. Once they've found the Angel they will look up to, they start copying her and tend to become just like her. At one moment, they realize that they don't have or cannot have one of the wanted aspects the Angel has, which then results in the feeling of relative deprivation.

Feeling of relative deprivation

The feeling of relative deprivation is generally the result of personal dissatisfaction, usually with the appearance of the person. It can also be the result of having too high expectations, since becoming a Victoria's Secret Angel is not a process that happens overnight. This can lead to social exclusion and discouragement but probably won't include any type of collective behaviour such as riots or rebellion.

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Teacher's note:

The student Tomislav Teški has analyzed the key features of the reference group exceptionally well, stressing both its positive as well as negative functions in the contemporary Western culture. This is fully in accordance with his overall academic achievement marked by dedication, highly-developed analytical skills as well as broad interests and exceptional cognitive abilities.

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