

Module code: **LUBS3305**

Is thin no longer 'in'?

A study exploring the difference between marketers' and non-marketers' opinions of model size on advertising effectiveness, brand perceptions and purchase intentions

This dissertation is submitted in accordance with the Leeds University Business School's regulations. I confirm that this is all my own work, and, where quotes or citations have been made, they are appropriately referenced.

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Abstract

The ideals of thinness promoted by advertising in the media have caused concern within society and more recently, resulted in brand campaigns featuring more average-sized and plus-sized models. This qualitative study was set out to test the advertising effectiveness of thin, average and overweight models, on women of two different occupational categories - marketeers and non-marketeers. The overall aim was to discover whether thin is still the ideal in advertising. Converse to the literature, the results show that thin models are indeed the most effective. Additionally, the results find that working as a marketeer significantly increases the internalisation and preference of the thin-ideal. Implications, limitations and areas for future research are highlighted.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| 1. Introduction | 6 |
| 2. Literature Review | 7 |
| 2.1 – History of the Thin-Ideal | 7 |
| 2.2 – Media Influence | 9 |
| 2.3 – Plus-Size Movement | 11 |
| 2.4 – Theoretical Framework | 12 |
| 2.5 – Current Studies of Advertising Effectiveness | 14 |
| 2.6 – Influence of Occupation on Internalisation of the Thin-Ideal | 15 |
| 2.7 – Opportunities for Further Research | 16 |
| 3. Methodology | 18 |
| 3.1 – Aims and Hypotheses | 18 |
| 3.2 – Data Collection | 18 |
| 3.3 – Sampling Approach | 20 |
| 3.4 – Data Analysis | 20 |
| 3.5 – Advantages/Limitations of Chosen Approach | 21 |
| 4. Results | 22 |
| 4.1 – Hypothesis 1: Advertising Effectiveness of Model Size | 22 |
| 4.2 – Hypothesis 2: Effect of Occupation on Model Size Preference ... | 25 |
| 4.3 – General Findings | 26 |
| 5. Discussion and Managerial Implications | 29 |
| 5.1 – Limitations | 34 |
| 5.2 – Suggestions for Further Research | 35 |
| 6. Conclusion | 36 |
| 7. References | 37 |

8. Appendices:

| | |
|--|----|
| - Appendix A: Image Source List | 46 |
| - Appendix B: Brands Supporting the Plus-Size Movement | 49 |
| - Appendix C: Vogue March 2017 Magazine Cover | 54 |
| - Appendix D: Interview Questions | 55 |
| - Appendix E: Interview Round 1 | 56 |
| - Appendix F: Interview Round 2 | 59 |
| - Appendix G: Interview Round 3 | 62 |
| - Appendix H: Interview Question Justification | 65 |
| - Appendix I: Participant Consent Form (Blank) | 66 |
| - Appendix J: Breakdown of Results | 68 |
| - Appendix K: Excerpts of Interview Transcriptions | 70 |
| - Appendix L: Research Ethics Application Form | 76 |
| - Appendix M: Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form | 83 |

List of Figures:

| | |
|---|----|
| - Figure 1: Examples of the female form over time | 8 |
| - Figure 2: Examples of #thinspiration | 10 |
| - Figure 3: Examples of #fitspiration | 10 |
| - Figure 4: Graph showing purchase intentions vs size of model for various product types | 23 |
| - Figure 5: Graphs showing the effect of model size on product purchase intentions for different occupations - comparing marketeers vs non-marketeers | 25 |

1. Introduction

Focus of the media has increasingly been drawn to the importance of equality, sustainability and diversity, which has led to a general shift in behaviours that are more sustainable, inclusive and beneficial for society (Hill and Lee, 2012). An example of this includes the recent rise in veganism and vegetarianism for ethical and environmental reasons (Janssen et al., 2016). Additionally, the fashion industry has seen an increase in the awareness of sustainability via the media, educational practices and consumers (Thomas, 2008), encouraging a movement towards a more natural image. This was referred to by Winge (2008, p.511) as “green is the new black”. Brands have realised they need to become more socially responsible (Cinelli and Yang, 2016) through their methods of manufacturing and also their advertising practices - including the models or airbrushing techniques they use (Paraskeva et al., 2017). Due to the abundance of literature associating thin models with female body dissatisfaction, some brands have recognised the need for change and have started to incorporate different sizes of models in their campaigns (Bian and Wang, 2015).

However, the significant lack of diversity of model sizes in advertising suggests the movement is not yet in full flow. The aim of this paper was to initially understand the literature behind the historical representations of female models in the media and the overall impact this has had on women in society. A subsequent qualitative study was then conducted to test the advertising effectiveness of different sizes of models. Furthermore, it aimed to understand if the differing occupations of participants would affect their responses, to ascertain whether marketers and non-marketers have differing body-size ideals. The results would then determine whether the ideals of marketers could be linked to either promoting or preventing a shift away from the use of thin models in advertising.

2. Literature Review

2.1 - History of the Thin Ideal

Society holds high value to appearances and beauty, causing women to endlessly focus on altering their bodies to fit the societal ideal (Berry, 2008). However, the societal ideal has changed over time (Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Wolf, 2013). Through these changes, the pursuit of thinness has been consistently prominent. However, it has become increasingly extreme in its interpretation (Owen and Laurel-Seller, 2000; Seifert, 2005). This is referred to as the “thin-ideal” (Roberts and Roberts, 2015, p.1).

Prior to 1960, women idealised the voluptuous, curvy body type (Owen and Laurel-Seller, 2000). However, over time, this ideal has changed. Garner et al (1980), showed that between 1959-1978, there was a noticeable shift towards women idealising becoming thinner. Subsequent studies further supported the growth of the thin-ideal (Bissell and Rask, 2010; Sypeck et al., 2004; Wiseman et al., 1992). Today, the thin-ideal is still extolled, especially in Western countries where thinness is associated with feminine beauty (Roberts and Roberts, 2015). However, although still pervasive, recent media coverage suggests that change may be underway.

1952 ————— 1956 ————— 1959

1965 ————— 1967 ————— 1972

1990 ————— 2012 ————— 2017

Figure 1: Examples of the female form over time (see Appendix A for source list)

2.2 - Media Influence

Social influences, including the mass media and advertising, reinforce the portrayal of the thin-ideal (Dittmar and Howard, 2004a). Studies by Pritchard and Cramblitt (2014) and Fernandez and Pritchard (2012) showed a relationship between media influence and an aspiration for thinness. Marketeers choose tall, thin models in their advertisements, which depict a specific shape/type of woman, insinuating to regular women that this is the only acceptable body size (Kilbourne, 1999). Reinforcement in the media has therefore led women to believe that this modelesque body type is the norm (Sohn and Youn, 2013), even though it is unattainable for most (Grabe et al., 2008).

Over time, as awareness and knowledge of healthy eating and fitness has increased, magazines have featured more diet and exercise articles encouraging women to lose weight (Luff and Gray, 2009; Wiseman et al., 1992). Consequently, the media creates “a sense of inadequacy” in women (Bissell and Rask, 2010, p.650), becoming a source for body dissatisfaction (Homan et al., 2012; Levine and Harrison, 2004) and leading to dieting behaviours to reach the desired thin body shape. As a result, thin media images are catalysing the prevalence of eating disorders including bulimia and anorexia nervosa (Homan et al., 2012; Johnson and Wardle, 2005) and body image distortion/dysmorphia (Groesz et al., 2002).

It is important to take into account the context and/or type of media and the prevalence of body image issues. Models on magazine covers (see Figure 1) have shown a shift across time not only in body shapes, but also fashion styles requiring the thin-ideal - with an increase in the amount of models' skin on show (Sypeck et al., 2004) from clothing styles such as mini-skirts and crop-tops (Seid, 1994).

The rise in body dissatisfaction over recent years has, in particular, been attributed to the rise in social media (Fardouly et al., 2015; Fardouly et al., 2017; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015), which has outpaced the impact of traditional media (Fardouly et al, 2017). Thin images of models are shared on social media websites and labelled “thinspiration” (see Figure 2), promoting weight loss and disordered eating (Ghaznavi and Taylor, 2015). However, more recently the focus has turned towards “fitspiration” (see Figure 3), showing toned, athletic figures of women, suggesting a movement promoting both physical and mental health (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). However, it has been argued that these women still represent unattainable figures - being paradoxically slim, muscular and lean, consequently perpetuating negative emotions in female viewers because they may still feel inadequate (Robinson et al., 2017).

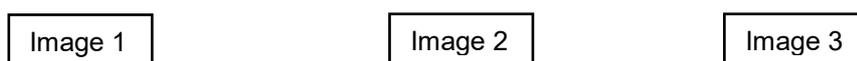


Figure 2: Examples of #thinspiration (see Appendix A for source list)



Figure 3: Examples of #fitspiration (see Appendix A for source list)

2.3 - Plus-Size Movement

The negative physical and mental health connotations associated with being too thin or lean has resulted in some companies using more realistic body shapes in their recent campaigns (Sohn and Youn, 2013). Brands who have incorporated this shift towards more attainable, average and athletic body shapes include Nike, E45, Dove, Glossier, Lane Bryant and This Girl Can (see Appendix B). Plus-size models, such as Ashley Graham (see Appendix C), are promoting the curvy-ideal (Betz and Ramsey, 2017) and generating social media followings of over three million (Instagram, 2017a). Ashley Graham appeared as Vogue and Cosmopolitan's first ever plus-size model on their magazine covers as they attempt to promote size-diversity (Vogue, 2017; WWD, 2017). She has been known for her social media movement towards the acceptance of all body sizes with her campaign #BeautyBeyondSize (Instagram, 2017b). However, these movements are not without backlash, with criticisms from the public of Vogue photo-shopping Ashley Graham's figure (WWD, 2017) and encouraging her to pose with her hand on her leg to create a thinner illusion (see Appendix C). This not only shows the risk of repercussion, but arguably more importantly, the issue that although companies are supposedly promoting the diversity of body shapes, they are still manipulating the images to look thin.

However, some studies have shown adverse responses to larger model use. Janssen and Paas (2014) and Aagerup (2011) found larger models being detrimental to brand image, as they resulted in women not wanting to identify with the brand. This perhaps links with the negative, indolent connotations associated with 'fatness' that Owen and Laurel-Seller (2000) suggest. On the other hand, there has been supporting evidence for the effectiveness of larger (than thin or average) models in advertising. Peck and Loken (2004) and Holmstrom (2004) found the use of larger models leads to less negative body feelings and comparisons amongst female consumers, possibly due to a higher perceived similarity/less discrepancy with themselves - explored next in the theoretical framework.

2.4 - Theoretical Framework

Social Comparison Theory

Why do marketers believe that thin models work? The inadequacy women feel from seeing thin models in advertising sits closely with the Social Comparison Theory, which addresses the human tendency for people to compare themselves against others (Festinger, 1954). Richins (1991, p.72) states that this theory is “directly applicable to the notion that consumers compare themselves with persons portrayed in ads”, often measuring themselves against unrealistic standards. They internalise the differentiation between their own body and the idealised model and as a result, are motivated to behave in accordance with the advertised approach to reach the desired image (Bissell and Rask, 2010). The insecurity created compels the female consumer to purchase the product (Wolf, 2013). However, this theory was published over sixty years ago, thus questioning its applicability to the latest generation of consumers.

Building on this, Festinger (1954) suggests that people evaluate themselves based on perceived similarity to the comparison. The higher the similarity, the higher the social comparison. However, if there is significant disparity between the two, they are less likely to compare themselves, thus becoming alienated from the product and less likely to purchase it. Therefore, in order for marketing to be effective, the model should not be too far from the consumer; they must not be seen as entirely unattainable (Aagerup, 2011). This creates a tension in advertising: it must be aspirational, but not impossible. However, this may not hold true for all female consumers, as many may still compare themselves to the model, even if she is unattainable (e.g. a supermodel). Of more relevance may be the type of product being advertised. If an unattainable model is advertising a cheaper, attainable product, then the aspiration generated by the supermodel may still compel the consumer to purchase the product. An example of this is Kate Moss advertising a mass lipstick brand (e.g. Rimmel).

Self-Discrepancy Theory

Higgins (1987) suggests there are three types of self-schema (perceptions one has of themselves):

1. Actual self - how we currently are
2. Ideal self - how we would like to be
3. Ought self - how we think we should be

It is the discrepancy between one's Actual Self and the latter two selves (Ideal and Ought) that drives certain behaviours. The media broadcast of thin, beautiful women results in female consumers being "culturally conditioned" (Pipher, 1994, p.78) to believe thinness is the norm and an acceptable ultimate ideal. Therefore, the media's unavoidable presentation of thin models is "constantly reinforcing a discrepancy for most women and girls between their actual body size and the ideal body" (Dittmar and Howard, 2004b, p.478). As a result, they are inclined to make actions to reduce the disparity between themselves and the ideal image (Bissell and Rask, 2010). Consequently, parallels are often drawn between the increasing thinness of the ideal body size and the increasing levels of body dissatisfaction (Bessenoff, 2006; Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004). However, it could be suggested that some female consumers (possibly those of an older age) are content with their size as it is, even if it is not the 'ideal' size. In these cases, the self-discrepancy is still recognised by the consumer, but not strong enough to result in negative feelings or initiate any actions.

2.5 - Current Studies of Advertising Effectiveness

It is generally assumed by companies that the use of thin models is effective in terms of advertising (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004). However, most of the existing literature uses 'thin' and 'attractive' interchangeably. Despite studies (Baker and Churchill (1977), Joseph (1982), Petroschius and Crocker (1989), Till and Busler (2000)) presenting correlational linkages between model attractiveness and advertising effectiveness, the subjectivity of different perceptions of attractiveness and thinness reveals an issue in the validity of these papers. Research has revealed a lack of empirical evidence in proving the efficacy of model thinness due to this misperception; it has been assumed that thin equals attractive (Dittmar and Howard, 2004b). One study which did focus on weight rather than attractiveness, by Aagerup (2011), found thin models were more effective than average-sized models when advertising jeans.

However, Roberts and Roberts (2015, p.3) state "ascribing to a "thin sells" ideal is a gross over-simplification of how women respond to mass media". Some literature has challenged the assumption of thin-ideal efficacy and found that thin models were not more effective than average-sized models (Bian and Wang (2015), Lennon et al (1999), Peck and Loken (2004), Roberts and Roberts (2015), Sohn and Youn (2013), Yu et al (2011), Yu (2014)). These studies either found that average-sized models were more effective or no different than thin-sized models and as a result, they suggest the further use of average-sized models in advertising. It should be noted that these studies all used mass products to test advertising effectiveness, with the exception of a slightly higher-value designer handbag by Roberts and Roberts (2015).

These studies use terms such as "thin-sized", "average-sized" and "larger-sized". The subjectivity of these terms mean that not all articles may be referring to exactly the same sizes. It should be noted that for the purpose of this paper, the terms are used in general.

An important study inspiring and supporting research in the use of average-sized models was by Halliwell and Dittmar (2004). By using digitally manipulated models' body sizes and testing the purchase intentions and consumer perceptions for a deodorant, they found that thin models were not more positively perceived than average-sized models. There is a larger volume of more current evidence against the use of thin models, than evidence supporting the use; suggesting that thin may no longer be the ultimate ideal (Betz and Ramsey, 2017). This shift in outlook has been exemplified in the recent campaigns earlier suggested.

2.6 - Influence of Occupation on Internalisation of the Thin-Ideal

Many experiments earlier discussed assume that all female consumers are equally affected by internalisation of the thin-ideal; defined as the extent to which one cognitively believes in thinness being the societal ideal and acts in accordance to this ideal through certain behaviours (Thompson and Stice, 2001).

However, Pritchard and Cramblitt (2014) suggested that susceptibility of negative responses to media images affects some individuals more than others. It has been suggested that the way in which women respond to different sized models depends on their own internalisation towards the thin-ideal in the first place (Roberts and Roberts, 2015; Yu, 2014). Studies such as Dittmar and Howard (2004a) and Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) implied that women with high exposure to the media have high internalisation of the thin-ideal and that advertising campaigns showing thin models leads to negative psychological effects, but has little effect on product purchases. However, Roberts and Roberts (2015) contradicted this and found that higher internalising individuals were more receptive to purchasing products influenced by thin models.

But, what influences internalisation? Dittmar and Howard (2004b) hypothesised that occupation could affect internalisation of the thin-ideal. Their breakthrough study tested the difference between an occupation often exposed to the thin-ideal (fashion advertisers) and one that was not (teachers). Their findings showed that after looking at thin model images, the more exposed profession (advertisers) had higher internalisation and therefore reported higher body-focused anxiety in comparison to the less exposed profession (teachers). They found little difference of advertising effectiveness of the model sizes between the two occupations. Therefore, the discussion focussed largely on the psychological effects the thin model had on fashion advertisers, with little focus on advertising efficacy, presenting an opportunity for further investigation. Additionally, this study was conducted back in 2004 and the evidence of shifting ideals in regards to body size over time encourages the need for review.

2.7 - Opportunities for Further Research

This reveals that little analysis has been conducted on the effects that occupation has on the internalisation and perceptions of the thin-ideal. Roberts and Roberts (2015) supports the need for further research in this area, suggesting future exploration of model size and advertising effectiveness should include the effect of demographic, psychographic and media habits on thin ideal internalisation. Thus, occupation is used as a testing variable in this study.

In terms of methodology, most of the research in this field is based on quantitative data. However, this study uses qualitative methodology in order to explore an untried avenue; to provide a different, hopefully richer, perspective on female response to advertising.

In addition, much of the literature calls upon the need for future research to include different/multiple product types (Baker and Churchill, 1977; Bian and Wang, 2015; Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Son and Youn, 2013), especially weight/appearance related against non-weight/appearance related products

(Janssen and Paas, 2014; Yu, 2014) and also mass against higher-value products (Aagerup, 2011). Therefore, this study uses various products.

Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) and Dittmar and Howard (2004a) also point toward the need for further research to include a range of body sizes (rather than only thin and average). Consequently, this study adds an overweight body size in the testing.

3. Methodology

3.1 - Aims and Hypotheses

Based on the findings and gaps within the literature, the aim of this research was to understand how a model's body size affects their advertising efficacy and if an occupation in marketing influences the perceptions of model body sizes.

As a result, the following hypotheses were configured:

Hypothesis 1

Average-sized models in advertising will be more positively viewed than thin or overweight models in terms of advertising effectiveness (brand perceptions and purchase intentions).

Hypothesis 2

Due to a higher thin-ideal internalisation, marketers will have stronger purchase intentions and brand perceptions towards thin models in comparison to non-marketers.

3.2 - Data Collection

As highlighted earlier, this experiment used qualitative methodology in the form of interviews (see Appendix D for interview questions). Ten interviews were conducted; five from female marketers and five from female non-marketers. The interviews were semi-structured. The same questions and images were presented to all participants, but discussion was encouraged through the use of open-ended questions, asking "why" the participant had their particular feelings. Participants were of a mixed range of sizes, as size was not a selective criteria.

The interview was split into three sections. Section One (Appendix E) focused on the participants' feelings towards models of different sizes. They looked at three digitally manipulated full-length images of the same model (thin, average-size and overweight) and answered questions on their opinions and preferences between the women. These were the control set of images.

Section Two tested the effect of model size and product type on advertising effectiveness. This followed Roberts and Roberts' (2015, p.12) approach by measuring advertising effectiveness through "the subject's attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand and their likelihood of purchasing the product portrayed in the ad". This section had three rounds. The first round looked at the three control images again, focusing on the jeans (weight-related product) the model was wearing. Round Two (Appendix F) asked the same questions whilst showing a deodorant advert (mass, non-weight related product) and Round Three (Appendix G) showed a diamond necklace advert (high value, non-weight related product). Each advert was manipulated to show the model in the three body sizes.

Section Three linked all areas together and ascertained the participants' overall opinions in regard to model sizes in advertising. It also asked whether their answers would have been the same ten years ago - to test if there had been a shift in the thin ideal over time. A breakdown of interview question justification can be found in Appendix H.

A pilot interview was conducted to check for any issues within the methodology. Initially, the interview included different models (who looked similar) to represent the three different sizes. However, this resulted in the interviewee's response involving other factors such as attractiveness and facial expressions, rather than comparing the models on their weight. To correct this, the same model was used and her body was digitally manipulated to fulfil multiple body size criteria, without looking unrealistic. This made the interview more controlled, with consistent focus on size rather than attractiveness, which previous studies highlighted as an important factor (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Sohn and Youn, 2013). The pilot

interview also showed some difficulties with wording. The penultimate question was originally “Do you think plus-size women should be used in advertisements rather than thin women? Why?”, however this was found to be too leading/biased. Therefore, it was changed to “What sized women do you think should be used in advertising and why?”.

3.3 - Sampling Approach

A purposive sampling technique was used and participants were specifically chosen (Saunders et al., 2009). Five of the participants were selected from a well-established marketing team, all of whom had considerable experience and success with various market-leading brands throughout their careers. The other five participants were from a variety of non-marketing occupations, including an academic, nurse, human-resource manager, sports coach and university student. Research by Aagerup (2011) and Yu et al (2011) called upon the need for a variety of ages and ethnicities. Therefore, the participants chosen were between the ages of 20-60 and included British, European and Asian ethnicities. Each participant completed a consent form prior to the interview (see Appendix I).

3.4 - Data Analysis

The interviews were voice-recorded and later transcribed to allow for in-depth analysis. The study used thematic analysis; a “method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2008, p.79). The responses from the interviews were collated and analysed for any commonalities, discrepancies or unique attributes. Themes were formed from these findings, to compare with the current literature.

3.5 - Advantages/Limitations of Chosen Approach

According to Festinger's (1954) Similarity Theory, the body weight/size of participants may affect their opinions and perceptions. The participants' sizes were not recorded in this study due to ethical reasons, as participants may have felt uncomfortable stating their size. This was likely to have limited the participant take-up rate and therefore not included.

The marketers used in the study all had experience working with a variety of different types/sizes of models in various sectors during their careers. The previous study similar to this (by Dittmar and Howard (2004b)) focused solely on fashion advertisers who may have been exposed to just one type of fashion model in their careers. This study provides a more diverse outlook from marketing, rather than just fashion. Although the marketers selected have worked across different sectors in their careers, at the time of the study they all worked within the same company. This may have influenced likeminded views.

Another limitation that should be taken into consideration was the validity of answers to hypothetical questions. For the question "Which product would you buy?", the participant may have answered according to how they would like to act, rather than how they act in reality. Additionally, they may have acted in accordance to how they thought the interviewer might have wanted them to respond - in order to avoid any judgement.

4. Results

Each interview was analysed and common features were coded and grouped into specific themes. These themes were split into three sections: Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 and General Findings. A breakdown of the results for advertising effectiveness can be found in Appendix J and excerpts from a few of the interview transcriptions in Appendix K.

4.1 - Hypothesis 1: Advertising Effectiveness of Model Size

Theme 1: Thin is still 'in'

When it came to advertising effectiveness (testing purchase intentions and brand perceptions) there were mixed responses regarding the thin and average-sized models. It should be noted that results showed little discrepancy between purchase intention and brand perception, so both were grouped together for analysis.

When generally describing the models, seven out of the ten participants said that the thin model looked the best due to having a good body, whilst the remaining participants said the average model looked better as she had a normal, natural look. Non-Marketeer C specifically said she had a “pretty girl-next-door type of image”. However, positive descriptions given for the thin model were also often paired with jealous, negative feelings, such as “I envy her body to be honest. I would really like to have a body like that” (Marketeer D) or “I need to be slimmer” (Non-Marketeer B). This is in accordance with the literature stated on p.13 regarding self-discrepancy.

The overall response of the multivariate questions for advertising effectiveness (purchase intentions and brand perceptions) indicated a 63% overall preference for the thin model. As a result, Hypothesis 1 was not supported, refuting the consensus of the literature (see p.14).

Theme 2: Empathy towards Average-Sizes

Although thin models were deemed the most effective, the average-sized models evoked the most empathetic, passionate responses – such as “she makes me feel empowered” (Non-Marketeer A). Other common words used by both marketeers and non-marketeters to describe the average-sized model included “attainable”, “natural” and “realistic”. Also, participants often felt ethically compelled to support the average-sized model. However, when they were asked to make a decision, they chose the thin model. Non-Marketeer D exemplified this (see full quote in Appendix K.1):

“There’s a little girl part of me that wants the prettiest doll, even though my head ... feels that we should celebrate the diversity of women ... you pick the prettiest ones and they tend to be the most glamorous shot and that tends to be the thinner woman. And that kind of crushes me.”

Theme 3: Product Type

A significant finding from the study was the considerable influence the type of product had on the participants’ choice of model (see Figure 4). When looking at purchase intentions, seven out of ten participants chose the thin model for the jeans, often with the reason being “to look slim like her” (Marketeer A). For the deodorant, seven participants chose the average-sized model. Six of those choices were because the model looked “normal”. For the diamond necklace, the results were almost unanimous, as nine participants chose the thin model.

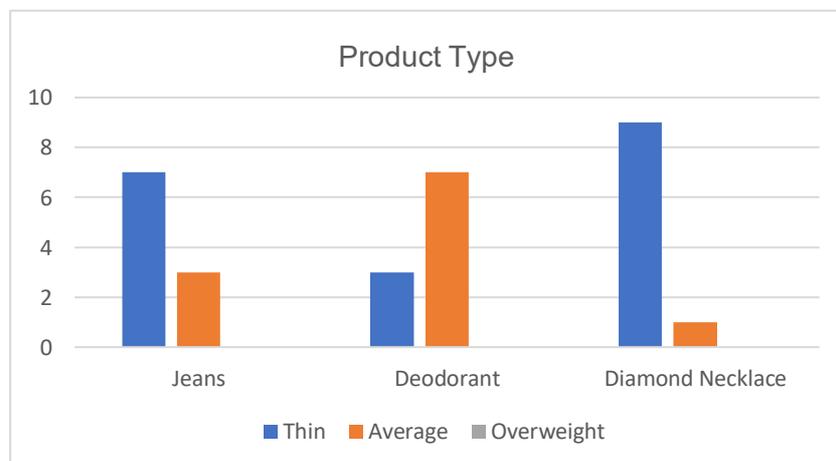


Figure 4: Graph showing purchase intentions vs size of model for different product types

Theme 4: Similarity of Product and Model

In order to make their purchase decision, participants often associated the similarity of the product to the model. A clear example of this was Marketeer B (see excerpt in Appendix K.2) saying:

“I think especially with diamond jewellery, it’s more elegant and delicate on someone that is elegant and delicate. So it suits the woman and it suits the brand”.

Further justifications for the choice of the thin model were also due to her being described by most participants as either “glamorous”, “cool” and/or “trendy”, therefore giving the brand a similar feel. The participants, specifically marketeers, were more emphatic about their choice of the thin model for the diamond necklace than any other product/model choices. An example of this was by Marketeer D, who said “Oh, one-hundred-percent Model A”.

4.2 – Hypothesis 2: Effect of Occupation on Model Size Preference

Theme 5: High Exposure results in Thin-Ideal Internalisation

Appendix J and Figure 5 compares the purchase intentions of the five marketeers and five non-marketeers across the different product types. The first chart shows a preference for the thin model in 11 out of the 15 total marketeer responses (five responses for each of the three different product purchase intentions). The second chart shows that for the non-marketeers, eight out of the 15 total non-marketeer responses favoured the thin model. Marketeers referred to the fact that they often see thin models due to their job roles, so the thin-model images were not out of the ordinary for them. Therefore, the stronger overall preference marketeers had for thin models (in comparison to non-marketeers) suggested their higher level of exposure resulted in an internalisation of the thin-ideal. As a result, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

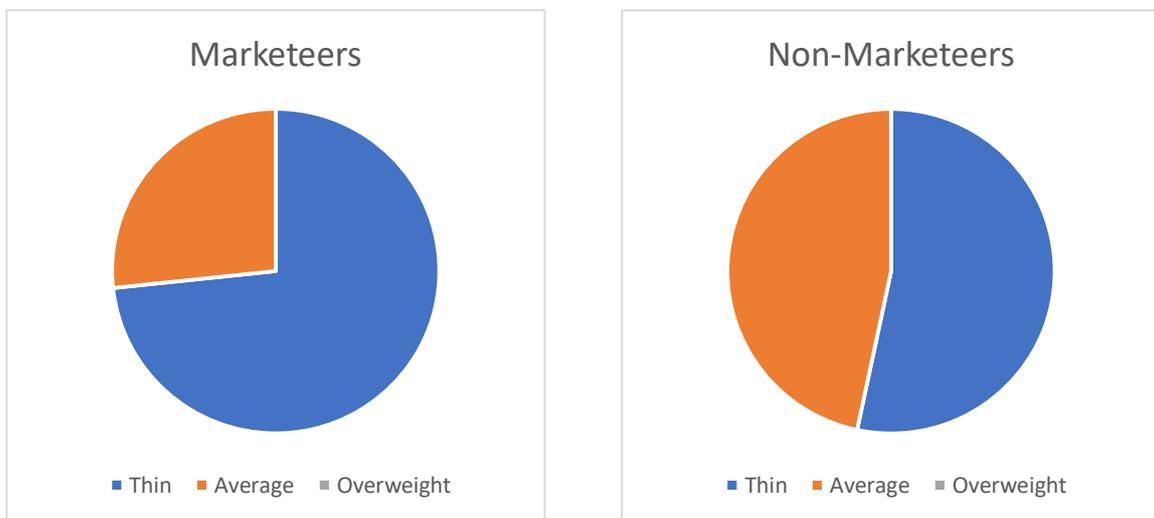


Figure 5: Graphs showing the effect of model size on product purchase intentions for different occupations - comparing marketeers vs non-marketeers

Theme 6: Marketeer Experience

Marketeers also applied their occupational knowledge of models, for example, Marketeer C referred to her experience of using thinner models in designer brands, because they had larger budgets to work with and could therefore afford to cast expensive, experienced models from model agencies. These models were often very thin in order to fit in the “size-zero” clothing. As a result, she perceived thinner models to be more valuable. Marketeer C and A mentioned that they regularly work with thin models.

4.3 – General Findings

Theme 7: Aversion of the Overweight model

Mixed feedback was obtained for the overweight model. Some affirmative descriptions were given, including: “good for her, she still looks confident” (Non-Marketeer B) and “pretty and positive” (Non-Marketeer C). But when participants were asked to choose their preferred model, there was only one participant (Non-Marketeer D) who chose the overweight model and this was mainly due to a resemblance of the model to someone she knew.

However, there were also some negative opinions, particularly given by marketeers, such as “I don’t think she looks that good at all really” (Marketeer E). As Owen and Laurel-Seller (2000) suggested, many of the participants used negative expressions to describe the larger model, such as “tubby” (Marketeer C) and “fat” (Marketeer B).

Participants also felt more hesitant and uncomfortable speaking about the overweight model than the other models. An example of this was, when asked to describe the models in two words, Non-Marketeer C (see Appendix K.3) gave quick, assertive answers for the thin and average-size, but was uncertain and frequently paused for her overweight model answer. Also, when asked how the overweight model made her feel, Marketeer D said “makes me feel a bit uncomfortable”.

Theme 8: Health Aspiration

References towards health being a justification for model preference became a common theme throughout the results. As mentioned, a repeated reason for participants not selecting the overweight models was due to them being described as “unhealthy”. Too thin was also referred to as unhealthy, with two mentions of “anorexic” models being previously shown in the media. Whereas, a common reason for the choice of both the thin and average-sized models was because they looked “fit” or “healthy”. Five participants specifically said they had noticed a stronger focus on health and fitness nowadays than in previous years – supporting the “fitspiration” movement. Marketeer C said she often sees the phrase “strong not skinny” in advertising now.

Theme 9: Shift from ‘Skinny’ to Real

Almost all participants mentioned, with some emphasis, that the media previously showed much thinner models than it does now. Although, for the question which asked if their model preference would have been the same ten years ago, it was not fully apparent if participants were all referring to the same time periods in their answers. This did not seem to affect their responses, as the majority still stated that a wider variety of shapes, ethnicities and sizes have been used recently. Almost all participants said they would like to see a diverse range of shapes, sizes and types of women/models in advertising campaigns. There were also references to current brands airbrushing less and embracing the realness of women, for example Marketeer A said:

“Whereas now, what you see in the media is brands trying to have more average women, like have you seen how Boohoo and MissGuided, they’re doing things like not airbrushing their models’ stretchmarks and stuff - I think that’s really good”.

Overall, the findings of the study were interesting as they did not entirely support the literature predictions. They revealed a preference towards thin, rather than average-sized models, especially amongst marketers. The next section will discuss the implications of these results and how they may be analysed and interpreted.

5. Discussion and Managerial Implications

Beginning with Theme 1 and Hypothesis 1, the general finding of the study was the overall effectiveness of thin models compared with average models. This refutes the general consensus of the literature, which supported the use of average-sized models over thin. However, this qualitative study only interviewed ten participants, whereas other studies within the literature quantitatively used much larger sample sizes and therefore could be considered to have higher reliability. Although participants felt socially and ethically compelled to support the average-sized model over the thin model, they still ended up choosing the thin model. This 'head vs heart' situation shown in Theme 2 suggests the conflicted view that perhaps society is not quite as accepting, or supportive, of body diversity as it perceives itself to be. Instead, the drive to be thin overpowers any other feelings.

So why did thin win? Although at odds with other studies, the results were in line with the theoretical models covered in the literature review. It was thought that the well-established Social Comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) may not be as valid today as it once was. However, results showed a strong correlation with Festinger's theory, as participants often compared themselves to the model, aspired to be most like the thin model and therefore preferred her product to purchase. Additionally, the levels of participant body dissatisfaction when viewing images of thin models, and satisfaction when viewing average-sized models, aligned with Higgins' (1987) Self-Discrepancy theory. However, participant body dissatisfaction was not enough to overcome the strength of aspiration presented by the thin model. This disappointingly suggests that brands may continue to commercially benefit through future advertising campaigns that result in consumers feeling unhappy about themselves.

However, Theme 3 interestingly showed that for some product types, specifically mass products, the thin model was not the most effective. This supported the consensus of the literature, where the majority of studies also used mass products (e.g. Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) tested a deodorant). Furthermore, many of the examples of brands that have incorporated average-sized/plus-sized models are also selling mass products, such as Dove toiletries, E45 skin care, Glossier make-up and Nike apparel (Appendix B). This suggests that mass brands could therefore benefit from using average-sized models.

On the other hand, the findings for the weight-related product (jeans) refuted the general consensus of the literature. However, it did support a study by Aegerup (2011) who also discovered the efficacy of thin models advertising jeans. Although the validity of this one contesting study could be questioned, it could also be argued that there have been campaigns where low-value products have been enhanced by a more glamorous endorsement, for example, Kate Moss and Rimmel lipsticks.

Finally, the high-value product (diamond necklace) was again at odds with the consensus of the literature, as the results showed that the thin model was substantially most effective. These results do not support the only other study found to test a high-value product (a designer handbag) by Roberts and Roberts (2015), who found no difference in efficacy between thin and average-sized models. However, it should be noted that these results cannot be reliably compared due the different high-value products used.

Compared with the literature, this study has covered new ground by testing multiple product types. The findings showing differences in model size efficacy between product type have interesting implications for brand managers, as they may be inclined to alter the sizes of models they use according to the products they promote. Consequently, their brands should be able to generate appropriate product perceptions and therefore have a positive effect on sales.

Furthermore, a key finding within this study was the higher advertising efficacy of thin models in the eyes of marketers compared with non-marketers. As a result, Hypothesis 2 was supported. This contradicted Dittmar and Howard's study (2004b), who found thin models were not more effective than average-sized models for fashion advertisers. The results of this study suggest that participants with a higher internalisation (the marketers) were more receptive to advertisements featuring thin models, which instead supports Roberts and Roberts' (2015) findings. However, care should be taken with this comparison as Roberts and Roberts did not take occupation into consideration as a variable affecting internalisation. Furthermore, it should also be noted that internalisation was not technically measured in this study, so there is a possibility that some non-marketers may have had high internalisation, regardless of occupation. Another interesting finding was that repeated exposure may reinforce an ideal (Theme 5), as it would appear that some marketers had become conditioned into believing in the advertising efficacy of thinness. This was particularly apparent when marketers reflected on their own work experience when justifying their choices for the thin models. Therefore, the results from this study make a powerful new contribution to the literature, as they are the first to show that marketers could be enforcing the thin-ideal within society.

Combining the results of both hypotheses raises the question - why are marketers including thin models in their mass market campaigns, if those in non-marketing professions (and likely to be more representative of consumers) are less persuaded by thin images? Participant feedback in Theme 6 suggests that marketers working for high-value brands with large budgets feel they have to use expensive models from modelling agencies, who tend to be very thin (to fit in sample sizes). Interestingly, it could be argued that model agencies themselves may be perpetuating the thin-ideal in order to retain their partnerships with marketing teams. This raises the question: are model agencies providing only one type of model-look and therefore preventing any possible shift? Would opening up a larger, average-size model marketplace negate the need for model agencies?

It may be that marketing departments are also stuck in perpetuating the thin-ideal. The risk of stepping outside of the box may seem to be too high, even though marketeers are supposedly encouraged to be creative. Another reason may be linked to Theme 7's findings of the adverse effects overweight models had on brand image - supporting the observations of Janssen and Paas (2014) and Aagerup (2011). The negativity towards overweight/plus-size models could be a reason why not all brands use them, and those who do, only do so half-heartedly (e.g. the Vogue example in Appendix C).

Are marketeers avoiding the use of overweight models because they perceive them as ineffective, or, is it because they see them as unhealthy? The results from this study imply both. Repeat participant comments, by both marketeers and non-marketeers, reinforced an aspiration for health and fitness (Theme 8). This "strong not skinny" idea suggests considerable support for the "fitspiration" trend highlighted by Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015). Although the term "healthy" is a little subjective, it could imply a movement away from being too underweight or overweight. This supports the motivational campaigns including "This Girl Can" (see Appendix B), which have been encouraging female exercise participation through turning it into a social activity and also a fashion statement - with many women dressing in active-wear in their everyday attire. Could this active-wear trend, endorsing fitness, replicate the role hot-pants and crop-tops had in endorsing thinness? Could the support of healthy lifestyles result in a movement towards the health-ideal, rather than the thin-ideal?

This health-ideal could be seen as a more attainable and relatable look for the consumer and, if used in advertising campaigns, could result in less body dissatisfaction than using thin models. On the other hand, the rising levels of global obesity (Doytch et al., 2016) may challenge this notion. Although this study suggests an increased awareness of health and fitness, there is no hiding from the looming obesity crisis. Is it possible that what may have been seen as an 'unhealthy' or 'overweight' size, could soon become an 'average' size? Is it

realistic to think that society is being led by a health aspiration, when it could possibly be heading in the opposite direction?

The rise of recent multi-media campaigns such as Boohoo, Dove and Glossier promoting the acceptance of diversity in women's bodies, suggest that the next generation of marketers may be culturally exposed to a different ideal of size. In addition, the dramatic increase in the overall use of imagery in social media could mean this next generation may have an even stronger internalisation than their predecessors - but hopefully of a healthier, realistic body ideal. Although the ages of participants were not focused on in this study, an informal trend was noticed regarding the acceptance of body diversity by some of the younger participants. This was exemplified by one of the younger marketers in the sample, Marketeer A. Very positively, she referred to the Boohoo and MissGuided campaigns which not only use a variety of body shapes, but also boycott the use of airbrushing and embrace natural beauty and stretchmarks. It should therefore be noted that campaigns are beginning to take virtuous positions like this and are specifically targeting these messages at younger audiences.

The revolutionary change from the fuller-figure once set by icons such as Marilyn Monroe, towards the thin-ideal set by icons such as Twiggy, suggests that change can occur in societal ideals. Theme 9 saw participants state that thinness is less present in advertising than it once was and, arguably more importantly, they stated a desire to see a more diverse range of women represented in advertising campaigns. Therefore, the recent push of campaigns promoting size diversity, along with the general sociocultural shift towards broader inclusivity of women in terms of skin colour, hair, age, height, disability and ethnicity begs the questions: could this be the start of a new revolution? What will the next generation of marketers adopt as the new ideal? This study strengthens a possible move away from the thin-ideal, towards a more diverse and/or attainable ideal. In this light, one could hopefully expect to see more enlightened multi-media advertising campaigns aimed at the new generation of societally-diverse consumers, who may internalise the importance of these values more than prior generations.

5.1 - Limitations

A few limitations were recorded as a result of this study, which should be taken into consideration for future research. Firstly, due to the qualitative nature of the research, this study had a small sample size and only interviewed ten women. This may have limited the variation in the responses and the reliability of the results in comparison to other studies within the literature. Additionally, the marketeers selected were from the same company, which may have slightly biased the results. Consequently, future studies may be inclined to firstly, use a larger pool of participants to gain a wider variety of results and secondly, select marketeers from different companies to get a broader range of experiences.

Furthermore, another limitation was the sample's split of occupation (five marketeers and five non-marketeers) which is not representative of the overall population. As a consequence, when claims are made regarding the overall effectiveness of thin models, it should be taken into consideration that although the marketeers had a stronger preference for thin models, they represented 50% of the sample, whereas in society, marketeers are only a small fraction of the population. Therefore, this study's overall findings cannot be deemed as an exact representation of society.

5.2 – Suggestions for Further Research

Due to this study's findings supporting a move towards "fitspiration" (the internalisation of health and fitness-led ideals), future studies may be inclined to repeat this study with the addition of an athletic body shape. It would be interesting to see the effect of this athletic body shape on consumer perceptions and advertising efficacy.

Another interesting area future research could take into consideration is the difference in body-ideal internalisations of different generations of women, especially marketeers. Future studies may be inclined to include different ages of women to understand if they have different perceptions of the thin-ideal. This may lead to observations on some of the points earlier suggested in the discussion of this study, shedding more light on whether thin is truly no longer 'in'.

6. Conclusion

In today's society, that is slowly adjusting its ideals, there is no doubt that a shift in advertising and modelling is currently underway. Over the last fifty years, stick-thin, size-zero models have become idealised and described in magazines and the media as the "thin-ideal" and "thinspiration". Converse to studies within the literature, the results of this study support the notion that thin is still 'in'. The results show that the efficacy of thin models within advertising, alongside the high levels of internalisation of the thin-ideal in current marketeers, could be preventing a full shift away from thinness.

On the other hand, the study also highlights the potential opportunity for the newest generation of marketeers to introduce health and fitness-led societal ideals, with the aim of promoting healthy body positivity within society. The results suggest that these new marketeers, who have been brought up in a more inclusive and accepting society, may have internalised different societal ideals than current marketeers. The younger generation, at large, may provide light at the end of the tunnel for society in terms of the acceptance of diversity amongst women. The future looks bright for not only the representation of different body sizes of women, but also the appreciation of women in general; irrespective of shape, height, disability, ethnicity or age. Eventually, there is the potential that thin could no longer be 'in', and instead, strong female empowerment and diversity may win.

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8. Appendices:

Appendix A: Image Source List

Sources: Figure 1 – Examples of Female Form in Magazine Covers

- 1952 Life Magazine:
<http://time.com/3880752/marilyn-monroe-life-magazine-covers-photos/>
- 1956 Photoplay Magazine:
https://reelrundown.com/celebrities/Blond_Bombshells
- 1959 Photoplay Magazine:
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- 1965 Sports Illustrated Magazine:
<https://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-body/pictures/sports-illustrated-swimsuit-issue-covers-through-the-years-w161669/1981-w162723/>
- 1967 Seventeen Magazine:
<http://www.seventeen.com/celebrity/g1713/65th-anniversary-cover-archive/?slide=27>
- 1972 Life Magazine:
<http://time.com/4160215/1960s-1970s-life-fashion/>
- 1990 Cosmopolitan Magazine:
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- 2012 Style Magazine:
<https://www.fashiongonerogue.com/karlie-kloss-stars-in-the-sunday-times-style-september-2012-by-eric-guillemain/>
- 2017 Cosmopolitan Magazine:
<https://fashionandstylepolice.com/2016/12/20/ashley-gralam-covers-cosmopolitan-uk-january-2017-issue/>

Sources: Figure 2 – Examples of Thinspiration

- Image 1:
http://www.ioniannews.com/features/article_c23e7d38-0da3-11e2-9b67-0019bb30f31a.html
- Image 2:
<https://danicastewart.wordpress.com/2015/04/11/thinspiration/>
- Image 3:
<https://fashionmagazine.com/fashion/they-saidwe-said-the-real-reason-why-voque-italia-took-down-karlie-kloss%E2%80%99-photo-is-revealed/>

Sources: Figure 3 – Examples of Fitspiration

- Image 1:
<http://www.thisisinsider.com/fitspiration-social-media-negative-effects-body-image-2017-11>
- Image 2:
<https://livefitandlovefood.wordpress.com/fitspiration/>
- Image 3:
<https://livefitandlovefood.wordpress.com/fitspiration/>

Sources: Appendix B – Brands Supporting the Plus-Size Movement

- Nike Plus-Size:
<https://news.nike.com/news/the-nike-plus-size-collection>
- E45 Skincare:
<https://medium.com/@havasldn/e45-taps-brit-boxing-icon-nicola-adams-for-straight-up-brand-refresh-2675acb00b84>
- Lane Bryant Underwear – Plus is Equal:
<http://plusisequal.com/>

- Glossier - Body Hero Beauty Range:
<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/beauty-hair/a12240616/glossier-body-hero-range/>
- Dove Real Beauty Campaign:
 - Women: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/dove-real-beauty-campaign-turns-10_n_4575940
 - Shower Gel Bottles: <https://www.dove.com/uk/stories/campaigns/dove-beauty-diversity-.html>
- This Girl Can - Sport England Social Media Campaign:
<http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/>

Source: Appendix C - Vogue March 2017 Magazine Cover

- <https://www.vogue.com/slideshow/model-diversity-ashley-graham-gigi-hadid-kendall-jenner-march-cover-photos#9>

Appendix B: Brands Supporting the Plus-Size Movement

(see Appendix A for image source list)

- Nike Plus-Size

- E45 Skincare - Nicola Adams Straight Up Skincare

- Lane Bryant Underwear - Plus is Equal

- Glossier - Body Hero Beauty Range

- Dove Real Beauty Campaign

- This Girl Can - Sport England Social Media Campaign

Appendix C: Vogue March 2017 Magazine Cover

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Section 1:

Perceptions of Different Sized Women, Self-Image and Internalisation of the Thin-Ideal

- 1a) What two words would you use to describe woman A
- 1b) What two words would you use to describe woman B
- 1c) What two words would you use to describe woman C

- 1d) How does woman A make you feel?
- 1e) How does woman B make you feel?
- 1f) How does woman C make you feel?

- 1g) Which woman do you think is the most attractive? Why?
- 1h) Which woman do you prefer (i.e. be friends with)? Why?

Section 2:

Purchase Intention and Brand Perception of Different Products

Round 1 - Jeans: (weight related product)

- 2a) Which product would you buy? Why?
- 2b) Which brand do you prefer? Why?

Round 2 - Deodorant: (mass, non-weight related product)

- 2c) Which product would you buy? Why?
- 2d) Which brand do you prefer? Why?

Round 3 - Diamond Necklace: (high value, non-weight related product)

- 2e) Which product would you buy? Why?
- 2f) Which brand do you prefer? Why?

Section 3:

Overall Opinion and Shift of Thin-Ideal

- 3a) What sized women do you think should be used in advertising and why?
- 3b) Do you think your view would have been the same 10 years ago?

Appendix E: Interview Round 1

ROUND 1

Woman A, Brand A

Woman B, Brand B

Woman C, Brand C

Appendix F: Interview Round 2

ROUND 2

Woman A, Brand A

Woman B, Brand B

Woman C, Brand C

Appendix G: Interview Round 3

ROUND 3

Woman A, Brand A

Woman B, Brand B

Woman C, Brand C

Appendix H: Interview Question Justification

| Section of Interview: | Purpose: | Corresponding Literature: |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Section 1: Perceptions of Different Sized Women, Self-Image and Internalisation of the Thin-Ideal</p> | <p>To understand how women react to different sizes of models, in terms of how they perceive those models, and how they feel about themselves as a result of seeing the models. Testing the differences in perceptions from an internalisation of the thin-ideal.</p> | <p>Self-Image: Theoretical Frameworks, Bessenoff (2006), Halliwell and Dittmar (2004). See p.12.</p> <p>Internalisation & Receptivity: Roberts and Roberts (2015), Dittmar and Howard (2004a) & (2004b). See p.15.</p> |
| <p>Section 2: Purchase Intention and Brand Perception of Different Products</p> | <p>To test the overall advertising effectiveness of different sized models.</p> <p>Understand if there is a difference in model size efficacy for different product types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Jeans – weight related product b) Deodorant – mass product c) Diamond Necklace – high value product | <p>Advertising Effectiveness: Bian and Wang (2015), Lennon et al (1999), Peck and Loken (2004), Roberts and Roberts (2015), Sohn and Youn (2013), Yu et al (2011), Yu (2014). See p.14.</p> <p>Product Types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Jeans: Aagerup (2011) b) Deodorant: Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) c) Diamond Necklace: Roberts and Roberts (2015) |
| <p>Section 3: Overall Opinion and Shift of Thin-Ideal</p> | <p>To understand what sizes of models that women (of both occupations) would like to see in advertising. Test if there has been a shift in body ideals over time and whether thinness is still idealised within society.</p> | <p>Shift in Thin-ideal: Sypeck et al (2004), Wiseman et al (1992). See p.7.</p> |



Participant Information Sheet

A Study Exploring the Difference Between Marketeers' and Non-Marketeers' Perceptions of Model Size on Advertising Effectiveness

You are being invited to participate in a research study. In order for you to decide whether you would like to participate, it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what it involves. Please read the following information carefully and ask questions if there is anything unclear or that you would like further information on. Please take as much time as you need to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research project is part of a final year Management with Marketing Dissertation at the University of Leeds. The purpose of this project is to understand how different sized models used in advertising affect the opinions and perceptions of women in different occupations.

Why have you been chosen?

Five marketeers and five non-marketeers have been chosen to participate in this study. You have been chosen to participate as your occupation fits into one of these categories and because it is believed you will provide insightful input towards the results of this study.

Do you have to take part?

It is entirely your decision if you would like to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to withdraw at any time you wish to. You do not have to give any reason for withdrawing and it will not affect you in any way.

What do you have to do?

The research study will include one interview that will last no longer than thirty minutes. The interview will consist of three rounds, each time showing a different model. In each round, the model used will be shown in three body sizes. You will be asked a set of open and closed-ended questions regarding your honest opinions towards the different sized models and the various brands/products they are advertising. You may answer as detailed as you feel most comfortable with. The more detail you are able to provide, the more in-depth and beneficial the results will be towards the overall analysis.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of this study will be completely anonymous and will not require personal details apart from stating if your occupation. Your name or the brand/company you work for will not be asked or required. Responses will be gathered and cross-compared and results will be stated in the research paper.

Will you be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed in order to make links and cross-comparisons in the analysis of the results. The transcript of the interview may be included in the research paper's appendix. There will be no other use of the audio recordings without your written permission.

Is this study ethically approved?

Yes, this project has been reviewed and approved by The Leeds University Research Ethics Committee.

Who should you contact for more information?

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher if you require any further information or have any questions.

Researcher:

Dissertation Supervisor:

Consent Signature:

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in this interview and research project. You will be given a copy of this information sheet and consent form to keep.

I confirm I have read and understood this information sheet and hereby give my consent to take part in this interview and research project:

Signature:

Date:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.

Appendix J: Breakdown of Results

| Participant: | Model Choice per Product Type | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------|---|------------------|--------|---|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|--------|---|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|--------|---|
| | Jeans | | | | | | Deodorant | | | | | | Necklace | | | | | |
| | Purchase Intention | | | Brand Perception | | | Purchase Intention | | | Brand Perception | | | Purchase Intention | | | Brand Perception | | |
| | A | B | C | A | B | C | A | B | C | A | B | C | A | B | C | A | B | C |
| Marketeer A | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | |
| Marketeer B | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | | Blue | | |
| Marketeer C | Blue | | | Blue | | | | Blue | | | Blue | | Blue | | | Blue | | |
| Marketeer D | | Blue | | Blue | | | | Blue | | | Blue | | Blue | | | Blue | | |
| Marketeer E | Blue | | | Blue | | | | Blue | | | Blue | | Blue | | | Blue | | |
| Non-Marketeer A | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | |
| Non-Marketeer B | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | |
| Non-Marketeer C | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | |
| Non-Marketeer D | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | | Purple | | |
| Non-Marketeer E | Purple | | | Purple | | | | Purple | | | Purple | | Purple | | | Purple | | |

Product Type:

1) Jeans

Total Purchase Intentions

= **7/10 preference for thin model**

= 3/10 preference for average model

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

Total Brand Perceptions

= **8/10 preference for thin model**

= 2/10 preference for average model

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

2) Deodorant

Total Purchase Intentions

= 3/10 preference for thin model

= **7/10 preference for average model**

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

Total Brand Perceptions

= 3/10 preference for thin model

= **7/10 preference for average model**

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

3) Diamond Necklace

Total Purchase Intentions

= **9/10 preference for thin model**

= 1/10 preference for average model

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

Total Brand Perceptions

= **9/10 preference for thin model**

= 1/10 preference for average model

= 0/10 preference for overweight model

TOTAL:

= **39/60 responses preferred the thin model**

= $39/60 * 100 = \underline{\underline{63\% \text{ overall preference for thin model}}}$

Purchase Intentions of Marketeers vs Non-Marketeers (see Figure 5):

1) Marketeers

Jeans

= **4/5 preference for thin model**

= 1/5 preference for average model

Deodorant

= 2/5 preference for thin model

= **3/5 preference for average model**

Diamond Necklace

= **5/5 preference for thin model**

= 0/5 preference for average model

TOTAL:

= **11/15 responses preferred the thin model**

= 4/15 responses preferred the average model

2) Non-Marketeers

Jeans

= 2/5 preference for thin model

= **3/5 preference for average model**

Deodorant

= 1/5 preference for thin model

= **4/5 preference for average model**

Diamond Necklace

= **4/5 preference for thin model**

= 1/5 preference for average model

TOTAL:

= 7/15 responses preferred the thin model

= **8/15 responses preferred the average model**

Appendix K: Excerpts from Interview Transcriptions

Key:

| Symbol: | Meaning: |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| I | Interviewer |
| P | Participant |
| (...) | Pause during speech |
| [specified action inserted] | Non-verbal action |
| *interrupts* | Interruption |

K.1 - Excerpt from Interview with Non-Marketeer D

P – as soon as you put something in front of me, I go ooooh pretty, ooooh shiny, and there's a little girl part of me that wants the prettiest doll, even though my head, as a feminist and a woman, and somebody who's not a size eight or under twenty, feels that we should celebrate the diversity of women. When you sort of waft something in front of me and don't ask me to think as a, you know, as an analysing feminist but you just say you know, these shoes or those shoes, you pick the prettiest ones and they tend to be the most glamorous shot and that tends to be the thinner woman. And that kind of crushes me, but this is what you're researching isn't it.

K.2 - Excerpt from Interview with Marketeer B

I – [hands out laminations of Round 3 images – Appendix G] Final round, is, so this woman is, showing/advertising an expensive diamond necklace. So, which diamond necklace would you buy?

P – Um, A. *laughs*

I – And why's that?

P – Um, I think because, just it fits her better, it looks more elegant. Um, and she's really attractive and I would want to look attractive in it.

I – Mhm. Um, and which brand would you prefer?

P – Brand A again.

I – Yeah?

P – Um yeah I think it's more, I think especially with diamond jewellery it's more elegant and delicate on someone that is more elegant and delicate. So it suits the woman and it suits the brand.

I – Yeah. Okay, cool. Okay, so this is now your general opinions really and not basing it on the pictures, just general. Um, what sized women do you think should be used in advertising, and why?

P – Ermm, I think it depends on the product. Obviously some clothes are for plus sized models, some things are for plus sized models, some things are for thin models. Um I don't think that there should be a blanket size for everyone. But, er, for like average clothes on like Asos, where um everything is for like a normal person, it probably does work better for marketing, like to sell, if the models are thinner, so maybe like a 10, instead of like a 16. Um, but I don't think it should be that everybody looks the same because I think that's when there starts to be problems with people's perceptions of how they look.

I – Okay so you'd say like a variety, but on the slimmer side?

P – On the slimmer side, if its specifically for plus size clothes then obviously like, use as many plus size models as you like. But for normal, normal average sized clothes, um, I think that they'll sell better if they're on the slimmer side.

I – Okay, cool. And final question, do you think this view, um, do you think your view would have been the same, like, ten years ago?

P – Umm, I think like maybe ten years ago there was probably a lot of even thinner models, like anorexic models. Not necessarily anorexic but that body shape. Um, whereas now, like eight to ten, ten to twelve, is still slim but doesn't look ill. I think there's a line there. I think we're moving to more like healthy looking thin, than like real thin.

K.1 - Excerpt from Interview with Non-Marketeer C

I – So, first round [interviewer hands out laminations of Round 1 images - Appendix E]. Um, we've got Woman A, Woman B and Woman C

P – *interrupts* okay

I – which you'll see is the same woman but digitally manipulated

P – *interrupts* okay

I – so I'm just going to ask you some questions about how you feel about her. So, um, what two words would you use to describe Woman A? So, just pick two words.

P – Ur, pretty and skinny.

I – Yep. What two words would you use to Woman B?

P – Pretty and normal.

I – Yep. And what two words would you use to describe Woman C?

P – Urrrr (...) pretty and (...) urrrmm (...) bigger

I – Cool. Um, how does Woman A make you feel?

P – Um, she just, she looks a little bit childlike to me, you know

I – *interrupts* okay

P – like teenager kind of thing

I – *interrupts* okay

P – um, she doesn't look realistic.

I – But how does she make you feel, like, in yourself, like positive or negative or okay etc?

P – Okay, you know, she's pretty and you know, that's fine.

I – And how does Woman B make you feel?

P – Umm, again sort of pretty, and positive, and you know, she just looks nice and got a positive image.

I – Cool. And how does Woman C make you feel?

P – Umm (...) she, she, looks again sort of you know pretty and positive, but um, she just, does look a bit overweight.

I – Cool. And which woman do you think is the most attractive out of all of them and why?

P – Um B because she just looks like a normal kind of girl-next-door, pretty girl-next-door type of image to me.

I – And which woman do you prefer and why? Which one would you kind of wanna be more friends with?

P – Well I think I, again, prefer Woman B, just because she looks normal, she looks healthy, she looks, umm, you know is positive. And she looks natural.

I – Cool. Um, now we're going to look at some products, um, with them, so women.. these women.. [points at laminations] ..looking at the jeans they're wearing

P – yeah

I – um, which products, so which pair of jeans, would you buy? If you were to click on to buy?

P – Um, well, I would go with Woman B.

I – Mhm, and why's that?

P – Just cos they, um, they look like they would fit a normal person.

I – Yeah.

P – Yeah.

I – Cool. And erm, they all represent a different brand. Which brand do you prefer? And why?

P – Again I'm, I'm, sticking with Woman B

I – *interrupts* yeah

P – because she just has a normal, healthy, natural image.

I – Cool, perfect, okay, so now we're going to look at another er, woman and product, so we've got [hands out laminations of Round 2 images – Appendix F] um, Woman A, Woman B, Woman C, and she's obviously advertising a deodorant.

P – Yeah

I – Erm, looking at the deodorants, which product would you buy, same question.

P – Erm, well I guess, er, do I have to choose one of them, or

I – yep

P – um, I'd go with Woman B.

I – Ok, so you'd go with Woman B again

P – Yeah.

I – Same reasons?

P – Yeah, natural, normal.

I – Yeah.

P – Normal kind of girl really.

I – Cool. And again, which girl do you prefer?

P – Woman B, yeah, same reasons.

I – Okay. And *clears throat* final round [hands out laminations of Round 3 images – Appendix G] this woman here is advertising an expensive, diamond necklace. Erm, out of these products, which product would you buy?

P – I think that I like it on Woman A.

I – And why's that?

P – Just because she looks sophisticated and, erm, she carries it off really well. She looks normal and natural, and, but, kind of more sophisticated looking.

Appendix L: Research Ethics Application Form

Appendix M: Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form