



Bryant University

HONORS THESIS

The Impact of Fashion Advertisements on Consumers

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to investigate the expectations, satisfaction, and retention of fashion advertising. The purpose of this paper is to determine if ad type (traditional models vs. plus-size models) and brand type (luxury vs. non-luxury) have impacts on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, purchase intention, and overall expectations of the advertisements and brands. Two-hundred fifty-six participants (62.5% males, 37.5% females) (mean age = 19.9) were recruited from Bryant University and received extra credit in their MKT201 course for completing the survey. Each participant was randomly assigned one stimulus advertisement and was then asked to answer a questionnaire that featured measures of the dependent variables, a manipulation check, and demographic questions. The results of the study indicate that ad type (plus-size models) enhance the attitudes and perceptions associated with the brand or advertisement, regardless of brand type. The results also indicate that ad type (plus-size) models create a higher likelihood to purchase from the brand in the future, as well as significant differences between males and females in regard to their overall attitudes towards the advertisements and brands. The results suggest that brands can have a positive impact on their brand identity and consumer purchase intention when they avoid promoting harmful stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

The way consumers perceive advertisements and brands is dependent on the images marketers portray in their campaigns. When consumers view an advertisement, they develop attitudes on the advertisement, brand, and products. The campaigns marketers develop are designed with the intention to spur positive attitudes and perceptions of their brand in comparison to their competitors. They also encourage customers to purchase any current or future products and continue to remain loyal to the brand. In order to relate and encourage positive identities associated with their brand, advertisers tend to stimulate a mirror or mold approach, by emulating the current society to promote current trends or mold a society's values so positive perceptions are created (Eisend, 2010). Regardless of which approach advertisers take, stereotypes are ultimately created and enforced. The stereotypes in advertisements are not harmful until they lead to expectations and beliefs that are detrimental for the subjects of the social category represented (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). This is especially apparent in one of the most stereotyped industries: fashion advertising.

This study sets out to investigate expectations, satisfaction, and retention of fashion advertising, implementing stereotypes commonly associated with the fashion industry. The stereotypes associated with fashion advertising are specifically focused on brand and ad type, pulling from previous research that studied said stereotypes (e.g., Grau & Zotos, 2016; Huhmann & Limbu, 2016; Jiang et al., 2014; Pounders & Mabry, 2019). It is proposed that non-traditional advertisements (plus-size models), compared to traditional advertisements (models who follow a thin-ideal), enhance satisfaction among both a male and female target audience. This is done by empirical research that investigates the role of ad type (traditional models vs. plus-size models) and brand type (luxury vs. non-luxury) on a male and female target audience. The paper hypothesizes that the ad type (plus-size models) will create higher levels of satisfaction towards both the brand and ad, as well as higher purchase intentions. It is also hypothesized that females will have less favorable opinions on the traditional ad type compared to males as a result of females being the center of gender stereotypes (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Luxury versus Mass Market

When viewing the differences between luxury and mass market brands, consumers notice distinctions in design, quality, price, and exclusivity (Murray, 2016). They also exemplify a level of intangible worth that is not attainable for mass markets (Kim & Phua, 2020). The brand identity associated with luxury brands can inhibit users to purchase those products over mass market goods – the appeal and motivation to purchase those products being driven by self-identity and social comparison (Murray, 2016). Purchasing a luxury brand may generate desired feelings and emotions or reassure how the consumer already feels about themselves – especially those who view themselves as elite and of high social status (Murray, 2016).

Luxury brands' innate social comparison can also evoke an exclusive brand identity (Jiang et al., 2014). The perceptions consumers curate in their minds of luxury brands is based on how companies have framed their marketing initiatives. Luxury marketing is designed to preserve distance between the brand and consumers (Jiang et al., 2014). The distance, as a means of superiority, is meant to keep consumers searching, looking, and wanting so that they have an increased desire for the product (Jiang et al., 2014). The notion of “being out of reach” is emphasized. Contrary to luxury, mass market advertising avoids projecting distance between their brand and consumers. Mass market advertising aims to facilitate campaigns that promote quick access to the product and are accessible to consumers of various income levels (Jiang et al., 2014).

Not only do mass market and luxury differ in their marketing strategies, but they also differ in the effects on consumers. When consumers are shown an advertisement, they develop feelings towards the brand and the advertisement, and they reflect on their own self-identity. In 2014, Jiang et al. examined the perceived rejection, social exclusion, and life satisfaction of consumers after viewing luxury or non-luxury advertisements. The first study, which measured if models in the luxury advertisements were perceived as more rejecting compared to the models in non-luxury, concluded that a higher level of rejection was identified with the luxury stimulus (Kim & Phua, 2016). In regard to social exclusivity, participants who viewed luxury advertisements induced a heightened sense of exclusion and rejection over those who

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viewed non-luxury advertisements (Kim & Phua, 2016). The combination of exclusion and rejection can also be linked to reduced life satisfaction. This ideal was supported through the link between viewing luxury advertisements and life satisfaction. Results showed that those assigned to the luxury group were less satisfied with their lives; however, those who were sensitive to rejection reported lower levels of life satisfaction (Kim & Phua, 2016). The overall results represent the fact that luxury brands may consciously or unconsciously curate advertisements that are consistent with their brand image of exclusivity and prestige.

Gender Stereotypes in Advertising

Stereotypes – a set of concepts associated to a social group that help people understand the world – have had major implications on the advertising industry. Stereotypes, especially those pertaining to gender, are consistently seen in ad campaigns and have been since the 1950s (Zalis, 2019). In the late 19th century and early 20th century, blue was associated with femininity and pink was associated with masculinity (Pickering, 2017). Blue represented the supposed color of the Virgin Mary’s outfit, indicating the relationship of femininity; however, pink was seen as the “boyish” color of red (Pickering, 2017). This gradually changed when advertisers in the 1950s began publishing campaigns and pushing for the contrary (Pickering, 2017).

Advertisers changing the way colors represent genders in their campaigns follows the mirror versus mold theory. Within the theory, it is argued that advertising shapes the values of society (Eisend, 2010). The “mold” argument states that gender roles in advertising reinforce gender stereotypes in society (Eisend, 2010). On the other hand, the mirror aspect of the theory state that advertising reflects values that already exist (Eisend, 2010), indicating that gender stereotypes in advertising “mirror” cultural expectations towards gender (Eisend, 2010). This minor change in society’s expectations has continued to influence the way marketers advertise products to the general public and the continuation of stereotypes associated with gender.

Gender stereotypes are based on preconceived notions of what differentiates women and men. These stereotypes are categorized into four components: trait descriptors (e.g., self-assertion and concern for others), physical characteristics (e.g., hair length and body height), role behaviors (e.g., leader and maternal towards children, and occupational status (e.g. caretaker

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and breadwinner) (Eisend, 2010). In regard to the four components, women are typically portrayed as younger, in “decorative” roles (e.g., laying down), unemployed or employed in traditional female occupations, promote products used at home, and have unrealistic physical characteristics (e.g., thin, blonde, clear skin etc.) (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). On the other hand, men are illustrated as authoritarian and employed in independent roles (Grau & Zotos, 2016) – promoting characteristics related to toxic masculinity. The gender stereotypes that advertisers are perpetuating can become problematic for not only the social categories involved, but for the brands who continue to display these stereotypes.

A study done in 2016 by Huhmann & Limbu, evaluated the role gender stereotypes played on people’s attitude toward the advertising industry in general, as well as the participants level of advertising offense. Attitude towards advertising in general is the overall positive or negative learned feedback towards the practice of advertising (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). The predispositions that are crafted around individuals’ memory and attitudes toward specific advertisements ultimately influence consumer brand attitudes and behavioral intentions (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). The study was constructed around four components: sexism (the idea that women are portrayed as inferior compared to men in their capabilities), role inaccuracy (the belief that men and women are portrayed unrealistically), attitudes towards sex/nudity, and offensiveness (perception that advertising campaigns are irritating, rude, or provocative and cause unpleasant feelings/emotions) (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016).

After viewing various advertisements that contained images connected to the four components, participants answered a questionnaire that asked questions regarding the previously mentioned constructs (e.g., “ads which I see show women (and men) how they really are,” “I find the portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive,” “most ads are poor in taste,” etc.) (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). Results showed that women more negatively evaluate and perceive a lower level of credibility of advertisements with gender stereotypes (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). The results also showed that women who reject gender stereotypes do not approve of portrayals of gender roles and have a lower purchase intention compared to men (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016).

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The results implicate to marketers that they need to portray a different image of their brand in order to induce favorable attitudes – avoiding characteristics that are offensive and degrading to their consumers. The study done by Huhmann and Limbu implies that when women complete the questionnaire for this current paper, they may follow the same trend due to the portrayal of fashion stereotypes in the advertisements.

Empowerment and its Role in Advertising

The previous section discussed the role and effects of gender stereotypes on advertising. The results of studies exclaimed that gender stereotypes– specifically female – are harmful when judgements and expectations stunt the social category’s growth in society (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). When advertisements include stereotypes associated with physical characteristics or portray stereotypical occupations, consumers are more susceptible to reduced body satisfaction or disadvantages in their career (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). As companies are coming to the realization that their advertisements are harmful to their public perception, many are discarding their “traditional” campaigns and changing their marketing strategies.

The SuperBowl, one of the most watched programs in the world, is notorious for broadcasting advertisements that support harmful gender stereotypes to relate to their predominately male audience (Kim & Phua, 2020). According to Ad Age, the 2019 SuperBowl included a variety of advertisements that advocated for women empowerment (Kim & Phua, 2020). Brands such as Always (#likeagirl), Dove (#realbeauty), and Nike (#dreamcrazier) have since developed campaigns to advocate for women and generate conversations centered around female-focused issues (Kim & Phua, 2020). The campaigns have granted female consumers an opportunity and a platform to express their concerns with the expectations and restrictions they face with “traditional” advertisements. While empowerment campaigns are effective in supporting women, are they effective in generating more positive attitudes toward the brand and/or product?

Emulating a similar campaign concept as brands such as Nike and Dove, a previous study by Kim and Phua, (2020), “Effects of Brand Name versus Empowerment Advertising Campaign Hashtags in Branded Instagram Posts of Luxury versus Mass-Market Brands,” investigated

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the effects (e.g., perceived information value, attitudes towards the brands and hashtag type, and level of identification with the brand) of empowerment hashtag messages on consumers. The study used social media-based fashion advertisement campaigns and compared the hashtags on brands that were considered luxury and mass market (Kim & Phua, 2020). In their study, luxury versus mass market cosmetics were examined. The 2 (hashtag type: empowerment vs brand name only) x 2 (mass market (Covergirl) vs luxury (YSL) cosmetic) experiment investigated three hypotheses:

H1: Consumers are likely to perceive greater info value in a hashtag that includes an empowerment campaign message than in one that features brand name only.

H2: Consumers are likely to show a more favorable attitude toward a hashtag that includes an empowerment message than a hashtag that includes a brand name only.

H3: Perceived information value in a hashtag will mediate the effect of hashtag type (brand name vs. empowerment campaign hashtag) on attitude toward the hashtag.

After participants viewed the stimuli and answered the questionnaire, results showed that the empowerment hashtags were evaluated more favorably by consumers and had greater perceived information value (Kim & Phua, 2016). All hypotheses were supported. The results demonstrate that regardless of the brand (mass market vs. luxury), empowerment hashtags contribute to overall positive effects. This research may be indicative of the results for this current paper. Since the current study is using luxury and non-luxury brands, positive variables (e.g., plus-size models) may create overall favorable opinions regardless of brand type.

Defining Femvertising

The term “femvertising” was coined in October of 2014 during an Advertising Week panel hosted by SheKnows (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). During the panel, femvertising categorized advertisements that challenged traditional female gender stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). The concept of challenging female gender stereotypes is not a new phenomenon and has been used in advertising campaigns prior to 2014, even dating back to the 1960s (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). In 2006, Dove launched their Evolution

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campaign and aimed to challenge the physical characteristics that are often depicted in advertising (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). However, the SheKnows panel included additional female gender stereotypes that were related to personality traits, roles, and occupation (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). The panel shed light on stereotypes that are just as harmful as, if not more so than, physical stereotypes. Relating to the Mirror vs Mold theory (Eisend, 2010) previously discussed, femvertising favors the “mold,” and questions traditional female advertising stereotypes acknowledged to be created by advertising (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

In the study done by Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlen, femvertising was considered an advertising appeal. The advertising appeal (femvertising) is used in advertising campaigns whose goal is to empower women by generating sales and concurrently avoiding promoting female advertising stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). Rather than hyper-focusing on a single female stereotype (e.g., body size or attractiveness), the goal of generating sales and empowering women is carried out by employing multiple features (e.g., body size and attractiveness) that negate female stereotypes used in advertising on a holistic level (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). With this being said, this study set out to discover the impact of challenging stereotypes on advertising effectiveness, rather than its societal effects (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

Based on the theory of psychological reactance, Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen developed three studies to examine their two hypotheses:

H1: Femvertising (vs traditional advertising) generates lower (vs higher) levels of ad reactance.

H2: Femvertising (vs traditional advertising) generates higher (vs lower) ad attitudes.

Study one focused on the physical characteristics of female portrayals and compared ad reactance and ad attitudes. Using two print advertisements for underwear, the femvertising condition featured women of different body types and sizes, versus the traditional condition, which featured women that suited the slim, thin-ideal (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

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The models also differed in posture in mood, signifying that femvertising acknowledges multiple aspects of female portrayals and stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). Participants were then randomly assigned a pamphlet with one stimulus ad and then asked to answer questions that measured ad reactance, ad attitudes, and included a manipulation check to measure perceived ad stereotypicality (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

Study two focused on comparing effects of femvertising (vs traditional) using real brands on YouTube. Study two differed from the first study in that participants reported their reactions to the ad after watching one of eight ad conditions and prior to answering the questionnaire. The questionnaire measured the same dependent variables (ad reactance, ad attitude, and ad stereotypicality) as Study 1.

Moreover, Study three replicated the first study in terms of focusing on physical characteristics. However, Study three measured reactions to femvertising (vs traditional ad) using an alternative operationalization of ad reactance (e.g., “The message in this ad limits my freedom of choice,”) and controlling for a variety of explanations in regard to brand familiarity and ad offense (Dahlen et al., 2013). Brand familiarity was assessed prior to being exposed to the target ad (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

Results showed that both hypotheses were supported and the manipulation check for ad stereotypicality was a mediator in regard to ad attitudes, ad reactance, and brand attitude. The results indicating that femvertising advertisements generated lower levels of ad reactance than traditional advertising alludes to the fact that lower levels of ad reactance lead to higher ad and brand attitudes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017) (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). In tandem with previous research, this study emphasized that consumers’ attitudes towards advertisements and brands can be negatively affected by stimuli associated with “traditional” and harmful stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

Based on the prior research, my hypotheses are as follows:

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H1: Plus-size models (vs traditional models) generates higher (vs lower) overall attitude toward the brand in the non-luxury brand type.

H2: Plus-size models (vs traditional models) generates a higher (vs lower) purchase intention in both brand types.

H3: Females (vs. males) have less favorable attitudes and perceptions toward the traditional models (vs. plus-size models) in both brand types.

Experiment Design and Stimulus Development

To test the hypotheses, a 2 (ad type: traditional model vs. plus-size model) x 2 (brand type: luxury vs. non luxury) experiment design was implemented. As a result of this design, four stimuli were created. Within the four stimuli, there were a total of eight advertisements. The first four advertisements used two models whereas the bottom four advertisements used a group of five models. The luxury and non-luxury brands used in the study were Louis Vuitton and Zara, respectively. All advertisements contained the brand logo, used silhouettes of the models, and were colored in black and white. The model silhouettes and black and white color was done to prevent confounding effects (e.g., color of the ads and varying features of the models) from influencing participant responses. In all conditions with plus-size models, the advertisement stated, “Plus Fashion.” The advertisements that featured “traditional” models featured the words “Slim Fashion.” The ads are available in Appendix A.

Procedure

Two hundred fifty-six participants (62.5% males, 37.5% females) (mean age = 19.9) participated in the study. Participants were recruited from a university in the Northeast and completed the questionnaire in a research lab. The questionnaire is available in Appendix B. Participants were told they would receive extra credit towards their marketing course grade. The gap in genders is due to the university having a predominately male student-body. Each participant was randomly assigned one stimulus advertisement and was then asked to answer a questionnaire that featured measures of the dependent variables, a manipulation check, and demographic questions. Participants had to stay on the advertisement page for twenty seconds before beginning the questionnaire. This was done to ensure that participants had an accurate

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depiction and understanding of the advertisement since it would not be shown again in the questionnaire.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of seven questions that measured ad attitude, ad perception, ad reactance, brand attitude, brand perception, perceived purchase intention, and perceived intention to recommend the brand to friends and family. All variables were measured using a 7-point Likert Scale. Ad attitude was measured by using the items unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, and dislike very much/like very much. The same items were used to measure brand attitude. Ad perception was measured using the items such as expected/unexpected, common/uncommon, typical/atypical, non-sexist/sexist, empowering/degrading etc. Please see Appendix B for additional items. Furthermore, participants were asked “To which extent do you agree with the following statements about the Ad?” and used the items, “This ad is different from the norm,” “This ad is unique,” and “This ad shows independence.” These items were used to measure ad stereotypes. The items used to measure brand perception differentiated from those used to measure ad perception. The questionnaire asked, “Please rate the following characteristics based on your perception of the brand based on the Ad...” and used the words “Luxurious,” “Prestigious,” “Sophisticated,” and “High Status.” In order to evaluate purchase intention and likelihood of recommending the brand, the items: unlikely/likely, impossible/possible, and improbably/probably were used. The questionnaire also included a manipulation check to ensure that the independent variable was understood by participants. The check measured the perceived brand identity, model type, and familiarity with luxury brands.

RESULTS

After participants had taken the survey, the data was collected and filtered to reflect the responses associated with the top or bottom four. In the case of this study, only the bottom four advertisements (five models) were analyzed. With that said, the number of participants decreased to one hundred twenty-eight (63.3% male, 36.7% female) with a mean age of 19.6. To test H1, question four, “Please evaluate your overall attitude toward the brand” was analyzed. The average answers for each item were calculated and the differences between

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each item were documented. The participant answers for the traditional model type were heavily weighted towards the negative side of the 7-point Bipolar Likert Scale, the average answer for all five items being 3.3. On the other hand, the reported answers for the plus-size model type were weighted much more heavily – the average answer being 4.92. The difference between the two conditions being 1.62.

The level of purchase intention was measured through asking participants the question, “How likely are you to consider purchasing products from this brand in the future based on the Ad you saw at the beginning?” When studying the luxury condition, the intention of participants purchasing a future product, regardless of model type, was relatively low. The average response between the traditional model type and plus-size model type being 3.27 – indicating unlikely, impossible, and improbable opinions. However, the advertisements containing plus-size models had a higher average of purchase intention at 3.43, 0.33 greater than the traditional model type. Similar to the luxury brand type, non-luxury also reported low purchase intentions. The average purchase intention reported for plus-size model ad type was 3.73. Whilst still low, it was 1.03 greater than the traditional model type. Although participants reported low purchase intentions overall, plus-size models still generated a higher purchase intention in both brand types – supporting H2.

To test the underlying assumption that females have less favorable attitudes and perceptions toward the traditional ad type than males (H3), a chi-squared test was performed for each condition, 95% confidence interval. In the analysis, gender (male versus female) was used as the independent variable and ad perception and attitude as the dependent variables. In regard to the first two conditions (ad type: traditional model vs plus-size model, brand type: luxury), results showed there were only significant differences in the ad type: traditional model. The items that returned $p < 0.05$ were non-discriminatory/discriminatory ($p = 0.046$), not offensive/offensive ($p = 0.042$), not interesting/interesting ($p = 0.037$), not entertaining/entertaining ($p = 0.033$), and not boring/boring ($p = 0.034$). The result of the chi-squared test confirmed that there is a significant difference between males and females in the traditional, luxury condition; therefore, supporting the proposed hypothesis.

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When analyzing the remaining two conditions (ad type: traditional model vs. plus-size model, brand type: non-luxury), the chi-squared test reported significant differences in both ad types. In terms of ad attitude, the conditions did not share similar items. The first condition had a significant difference in the item “dislike very much/like very much” ($p=0.031$). The second condition returned the items negative/positive ($p=0.018$) and bad/good ($p=0.026$). Furthermore, the items that returned $p<0.05$ for the ad type: traditional model were typical/atypical ($p=0.012$), empowering/degrading ($p=0.006$), non-stereotypical/stereotypical ($p=0.015$), not discriminatory/discriminatory ($p=0.025$), and offense ($p=0.022$). Parallel to the plus-size, luxury advertisement, the plus-size non-luxury advertisement returned no significant differences in ad perception. The result of the chi-squared test confirmed there are also differences between males and females in the traditional and plus-size, non-luxury condition. Overall, the chi-squared tests support the notion that females have less favorable attitudes and perceptions toward the traditional ad type (slim models) than males. However, when examining the average answer reported for each item, it is clear that men and women both favor the plus-size model type – regardless of the brand type.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This paper was designed to provide a discussion of fashion ad stereotypes and their effect on a male and female target audience. The results of the study, which was a 2 (ad type: traditional model vs. plus size model) x 2 (brand type: luxury vs. non-luxury), showed that plus-size models generate higher levels of brand attitudes, ad perceptions, and purchase intention. The results also showed there are significant differences between the perceptions and attitudes of advertisements between males and females.

The paper contributes to the existing literature on fashion advertising by focusing on not only female, but also male participants. This paper focusing on both males and females fills gaps in the literature that only use female participants. The study revealed that males are less likely to report negative ad attitudes and perceptions and have a different evaluation of the stereotypes associated with fashion advertising. This can be attributed to the previous research which suggests that females are more susceptible to be portrayed negatively in advertisements, especially in industries that are male dominated (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). As a result,

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females have developed a general disposition and adverse reaction to advertisements that provoke gender stereotypes. Adverse female reactions to the advertisements that used traditional, slim models also aligns with previous research influenced by psychological reactance theory (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). Psychological reactance theory states that people are motivated to restore their personal freedom when said freedom is threatened or eliminated (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017). If a female target audience is introduced to stereotypes that limit their personal freedom, tension towards the ad is created and eventually leads to ad reactance and low levels of ad attitudes (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017).

In conjunction with the significance between males versus females, the results of this paper contribute to the previous research explaining the negative evaluations associated with traditional advertisements. This paper concludes and supports previous research that consumers appreciate body inclusivity and body positive messages (Pounders & Mabry, 2019). The findings reflect that brands typically dominated by models who fulfill the “thin-ideal,” can strengthen a brand’s identity and elicit favorable attitudes. It can also be inferred that there may be a change in what is considered beautiful in a normative society (Pounders & Mabry, 2019).

The overall results of this paper suggest that consumers take the messages brands advertise in their marketing campaigns and process them to create opinions of the product and brand. Consumers will then behave and interact with the brand relevant to their evaluation from the advertisement. The results suggest that brands can have a positive impact on their brand identity and consumer purchase intention when they avoid promoting harmful stereotypes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

The marketing industry is consistently evolving – as it did in the 1950s when femininity and masculinity were depicted through pink and blue, respectively. Marketers cannot continue to perpetuate the same stereotypes when society is attempting to evolve and move away from those harmful stereotypes. Consumers are making it apparent that they will support brands that support them. Despite research that argues marketers mirror society (Eisend, 2010), it is

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clear from the study results that mold takes president over mirror in this particular – more favorable attitudes being associated with “non-traditional” models. Marketers need to take their audience into account as well as the changing trends in society when designing advertisements. The finding that plus-size models can lead to higher purchase intentions and more favorable brand attitudes should encourage marketers to adapt a different, less “traditional” approach. Regardless of brand type, and the exclusive brand identity associated with luxury goods (Kim & Phua, 2020), marketers should consider adapting a more conscientious approach to their campaigns.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the study supporting all three hypotheses, one limitation may have affected results. Although the study focused on the significant differences between males and females, the participants were predominately male. The demographic being male dominated is attributed to the university’s student body being populated by an approximate 60% men (vs. 40% women). The lack of female respondents may have contributed to skewed responses and the Chi-squared test. Future research should seek out a more balanced demographic to balance the results and have a more accurate p-value. Furthermore, the study only compared the bottom four conditions. Future research is needed to better understand the effects of model type on luxury and non-luxury brands. Analyzing the top four stimuli with two people may have had different implications on the overall results. Additional studies are also needed to explore the difference with an older demographic. In this study, the mean age was 19.6 – university students. While marketers are making strides to develop campaigns that stray from stereotypes and include empowerment messages (Kim and Phua, 2020), older generations have been accustomed to consistently seeing advertisements that promote those stereotypes. Future research should compare the results of an older age-group to university students to determine if older cohorts are affected by the ad stereotypes even after being exposed to them for a majority of their lifetime. This present study has created a variety of opportunities for future research that will hopefully be investigated to develop a better understanding of the effects of traditional ad types on consumers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Stimuli



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SLIM FASHION



ZARA



PLUS FASHION



ZARA



SLIM FASHION



PLUS FASHION



ZARA
SLIM FASHION



ZARA
PLUS FASHION



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Please evaluate your overall attitude toward the Ad.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Unfavorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorable |
| Negative | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Positive |
| Bad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good |
| Unpleasant | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Pleasant |
| Dislike very much | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Like very much |

Please rate your perception of the Ad based on the following characteristics.

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Expected | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unexpected |
| Common | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Uncommon |
| Typical | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Atypical |
| Not interesting | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Interesting |
| Not entertaining | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Entertaining |
| Boring | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Not boring |

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| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Non-Sexist | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Sexist |
| Empowering | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Degrading |
| Non-Stereotypical | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Stereotypical |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Not discriminatory | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Discriminatory |
| Not-offensive | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Offensive |
| Encouraging | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Upsetting |

To which extent do you agree with the following statements about the Ad?

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This Ad is different from the norm. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This Ad is unique. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This Ad shows independence. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please evaluate your overall attitude toward the Brand.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Unfavorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorable |
| Negative | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Positive |
| Bad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good |
| Unpleasant | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Pleasant |
| Dislike very much | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Like very much |

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Please rate the following characteristics based on your perception of the Brand based on the Ad you saw in the beginning.

| | Not at all | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree | Very much so |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Luxurious | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Prestigious | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sophisticated | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| High status | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How likely are you to consider **purchasing** products from this brand in the future **based on the Ad you saw at the beginning?**

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Unlikely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Likely |
| Impossible | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Possible |
| Improbable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Probable |

How likely are you to **recommend** this brand to your friends and family **based on the Ad you saw at the beginning?**

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Unlikely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Likely |
| Impossible | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Possible |
| Improbable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Probable |

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The **brand featured** in the Ad is...

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Non-luxury | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Luxury |
| Downscale | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Upscale |
| Cheap | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Expensive |

The **models featured** in the Ad are...

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Nontraditional | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Traditional |
| Slim-size | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Plus-size |
| Atypical | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Typical |
| Non-stereotypical | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Stereotypical |

How familiar are you with luxury brands?

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not familiar at all | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very familiar |
| No prior experience with | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Extensive prior experience with |

I know a lot about luxury brands.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|

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How would you rate your knowledge of luxury brands relative to other people?

One of the least
knowledgeable people

One of the most
knowledgeable people

Please answer the following questions. The answers to these questions will be kept confidential.

What is your age?

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Prefer not to answer

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