



Osaamista
ja oivallusta
tulevaisuuden
tekemiseen

Tinja Oinonen

Body Positivity in Social Media Marketing

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<p>Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää kuinka kuluttajat kokevat kehopositiivisuuden sosiaalisessa mediassa ja kuinka brändit voivat sisällyttää kehopositiivisuuden sosiaalisen median markkinointiinsa.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö jakautui kolme osaan, jotka olivat teoreettinen tietoperusta, määrällinen tutkimus ja sen havainnot sekä johtopäätökset. Viitekehyksessä käytiin läpi tutkimusongelmaan ja tutkimuskysymyksiin liittyvää tietoperustaa sosiaalisesta mediasta, brändi kuvasta ja identtisestä, sekä kehopositiivisuudesta sosiaalisessa mediassa.</p> <p>Kuluttajatutkimuksen avulla saatiin syvällisempiä havaintoja aiheesta. Havaintojen keräämiseen käytettiin määrällistä eli kvantitatiivista menetelmää ja aineistoa täydennettiin laadullisilla eli kvalitatiivisilla kysymyksillä. Kyselyyn vastasi yhteensä 481 naista, jotka olivat iältään 18–35-vuotiaita.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön havainnoista voitiin todeta, että kuluttajille on yhä kasvavassa määrin tärkeää, että brändi jakaa heidän eettiset arvonsa, ja täten myös kehopositiivisuus on tärkeä arvo kuluttajille. Kyselystä ilmeni myös, että kehopositiivisuudessa on kyse kokonaisuudesta, mikä tarkoittaa sitä, että kehopositiivinen sosiaalisen median markkinointi on vain osa suurempaa kokonaisuutta kehopositiivisessa brändi kuvassa. Säännöllisyys ja aitous ovat avaintekijöitä onnistuneessa kehopositiivisessa sosiaalisen median markkinoinnissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen perusteella on suositeltavaa, että muoti- ja kauneusbrändit sisällyttävät kehopositiivisuuden brändi-identiteettiin, sosiaalisen median markkinointistrategiaan, tuotekehitykseen ja mallien valintaan.</p>	
Avainsanat	sosiaalisen median markkinointi, kehopositiivisuus, brändikuva

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<p>The objective of the thesis was to recognize how consumers experience body positivity in social media. Another aim was to find out how brands can incorporate body positivity in their social media marketing.</p> <p>The thesis was divided into three sections: the theoretical knowledge base, quantitative study and its findings, and conclusions. The knowledgebase was reviewed on social media, brand image, and body positivity in social media related to the research problem and research questions in the framework.</p> <p>The consumer survey was conducted for more detailed consumer insights. A quantitative method was used to collect the findings and was supplemented with qualitative features. A total of 481 women aged 18-35 responded to the survey.</p> <p>The quantitative study's findings indicate that consumers find it increasingly important that brands share the same ethical values as them and thus also body positivity. Nevertheless, body-positive social media marketing is only part of the bigger picture of brand image. Consistency and authenticity are the fundamental capacities in successful body-positive social media marketing.</p> <p>Based on the study, as a recommendation, fashion and beauty brands should incorporate body positivity in terms of brand identity and social media marketing strategy, product development and model choices. Embracing diversity is continuous work.</p>	
Keywords	social media marketing, body positivity, brand image,

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1 Introduction

1.1 Body positivity movement is putting pressure on the brands' marketing

The importance of body positivity is gaining more and more exposure every day. The increase of body positivity campaigns in social media has influenced more consumers to support brands that embrace people to accept themselves in the way they are. Body positive movement has made consumers more aware of not accepting society beauty standards. It is a fact that brands must be aware of this and initiate the example in their social media marketing campaigns and advertisements. (Pascual, 2020.) There is much research conducted about the connection between the beauty standards perceived on social media and young women's body image. Research shows that these beauty standards on social media can lead to low body satisfaction and even eating disorders. (Geerkens, 2019.) This subject already has a significant meaning for brands' marketing, especially for fashion and beauty brands whose products are strongly related to appearance. For example, lingerie brand Victoria's Secret has received its part of criticism and feedback regarding its model choices and how products are sold and advertised (Luzon, 2019.)

1.2 Goal and exclusions

This thesis's research problem is the usage of body positivity in social media marketing and its impact on brand image. The aim is to get consumer insights about the body positivity subject in social media marketing. This thesis aims to determine whether brands could do to be more body positive in their social media marketing and the means for that.

To get consumer insights survey was conducted. In this thesis, the research and the survey data are used to conclude consumer perspective and make conclusions about how brands could include body positivity in social media marketing based on the survey and theoretical study. The survey's objective is to receive female consumers opinions and experiences about body positivity in social media marketing. The conclusions are based on the research and survey results.

The thesis aims to get an answer to the following questions:

- How do consumers experience the subject of body positivity in social media?
- How can brands be more body positive in their social media marketing, and what they should consider?
- Does body positive content in social media marketing affect the brand image?

The following topics are excluded from the thesis; traditional marketing, brands' websites, and digital catalogues will be excluded from this research. The study will focus on brands' social media marketing content, which means that consumers' content and influencers collaboration content will be excluded. Even though men are experiencing body image issues, this thesis will focus on female experiences, i.e., the male perspective is excluded.

1.3 Type of thesis

This thesis was a research-based study. The thesis was divided into three sections: the theoretical knowledge base, quantitative study, findings, and conclusions. The framework knowledge base was reviewed on social media, brand image, and body positivity in social media related to the research problem and research questions. The theory was collected from various studies, literature about the topic and online resources. A quantitative survey was used to collect consumer insights about the topic. The platform used to collect the survey data was Webropol. The data were analyzed with SPSS and Webropol data mining tools.

This thesis's target group is millennial and Generation Z females (i.e., women born between 1980 and 2012). The particular reason for this is that fast fashion brands often target these generations to gain brand loyalty from a young age to adulthood (Kohan, 2020). Further, these generations have been exposed to social media since a young age (Post Beyond, n.d.).

2 Overview of social media marketing

2.1 Social media marketing as a marketing channel

Social media, as a concept, is difficult to determine. Social media refers to a web-based platform that allows its users to consume and publish content, communicate, and interact with other users and brands. (Lin & Rauschnabel, 2015.) Advertising in social media gives the possibility to react and communicate, instead of mass media, for example, tv and radio advertising, where people are passive recipients (Hausman, 2017). Interacting in social media can happen through liking, commenting, or sharing the content with other social media users (Hintikka 2007). Communicating in social media channels happens in real-time or sequentially and independently from a geographical location. With its speed, affordability, and interactivity, these qualities make social media a successful marketing channel. (Rongas & Honkonen, 2016.)

Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing. It includes various social media channels, which all have different aspects, and the content published in those channels varies from videos and images to texts and quotes to paid advertisements. (Wordstream n.d.) Social media, as a marketing channel, is powerful when used to its fullest potential. It is used to gain brand visibility, reach many people, target different sized audiences with different characteristics, and draw potential customers' attention. (DeMers 2014.)

Marketing in social media opens many opportunities and has excellent potential, but it also comes with risks. As social media provides its users with a chance to react and communicate, it allows consumers to share their experiences and opinions about products or brands. It can lead to both positive and negative feedback or a conversation. As stated before, one of social media's qualities is speed, which means that positive and negative reviews can spread wide and fast. These reviews can have a massive impact on brand reputation. (Kotiranta-Hautamäki 2015.) Hence, interaction and the relation between a content provider and the recipient must always be kept in mind when creating social media content. The content does not only reach the audience passively. That is why it is essential for the brands to think about their values and how they prefer to present themselves on social media and handle these kinds of situations. This is why staying up to date on social media trends and guidelines is crucial to brands nowadays. (Wordstream n.d.)

2.2 Social media target audiences

Reaching the target audience is easier now more than ever. Social media offers an opportunity to reach target audiences better than mass media. This is because, through the large social media platforms, brands can target advertisements to the exact audience they want to reach. The target audience is an identified group that the brand wants to appeal to. This can be based on demographics such as age, job title, income level, education, location, behaviour or interests, or all of before. The social media target audience consists of the people who are most likely to be interested in the brand's product. (Riserbato, 2020.)

Developing a brand's social media target audience is an essential step in creating successful marketing campaigns. Furthermore, brands should focus their efforts on the right social media platforms and content. Social media is an essential platform for brands to engage with the target audience and learn more about them. Once the brand is aware of its target audience, it can create a well-balanced content plan that appeals to the target audience and begins implementing it to its guidelines. (Rozario, 2020a.)

A brand must speak the same language as the audience, making them more likely to interact with the brand on social media, develop brand loyalty, and ultimately purchase the product (Riserbato, 2020). Significantly younger (i.e., millennials and Generation Zers) social network users in social media environment react to social media advertising that is clearly tailored for them and targets them individually (Lin & Rauschnabel, 2015). Targeting younger consumers gives the potential to instil loyalty at a young age and allow customers to grow with the brand. Younger generations (i.e., millennial and Generation Z) are more trend and brand-conscious than older consumers. (Kohan, 2020.) When it comes to different generations of consumers, social media habits and engaging with brands differ. Understanding these differences is the key in order to reach them on social media. (Rozario, 2020a.)

2.2.1 Millennials

Millennials are born between 1980-1994 (Knapp, 2018). They are the first generation to have access to social media during their youth and adopt it as a part of their main communication form. Since millennials started adapting to social media usage at an early age, it is relevant for them in both professional and personal lives. (Post Be-yond, n.d.)

They prefer their content to be a form of communication and inspiration. The most popular social media platforms among millennials are Facebook and Instagram, which they use multiple times a day. (Cox, 2019.)

When it comes to purchasing choices, millennials trust their peers and influencers rather than large brands using traditional advertising in social media (Post Beyond, n.d.). The survey conducted by Animoto found that 75% of millennials' purchase decisions were influenced by a brand's social media presence (Rozario, 2020b). The study conducted by Dana Rebecca Designs shows that social media ads heavily influence millennials. Based on the study, 72% reported that they had bought fashion and beauty products through Instagram posts. (Post Beyond, n.d.)

Study shows that millennials are more likely to become brand loyal if a brand communicates with consumers sincerely on social media. They value sincerity, influencer recommendations, peer and brand values. (Arnold, 2017.) Millennials are raised with one central notion: empowerment and individualism (Van den Bergh & Behrer, Mattias, 2011 p. 7).

2.2.2 Generation Z

Generation Z is the generation born between 1995 and 2012 (Knapp, 2018). Generation Z is mostly the generation that has essentially always had access to social media or at least from a young age (Post Beyond, n.d.). As they have grown along with the internet, it is normal for people of that generation to use social media as a source of information and inspiration (Djafarova, 2020). They use social media as the primary form of entertainment. They are also more likely to watch videos on YouTube than open the television. A study shows that 44% of Generation Z are reading their social media hourly. (Post Beyond, n.d.)

Generation Z prefers to communicate with images and appreciate brands' communication on social media, primarily through micro-influencers, as they are found to be most authentic (Djafarova, 2020). Since they prefer to follow brands on Instagram, this is an opportunity for brands to reach this generation (Marketing Charts, 2019). Thus, Generation Z has a lifelong exposure to social media marketing; the social media savvy and recognize easily unabashed brands' advertising and disregard them. They are more informed and aware than previous generations about social media advertising. Hence,

they do not trust brand messages easily. (Djafarova, 2020.) The survey conducted by Adobe found that Generation Z was even more likely to turn on social media to discover products than millennials (Marketing Charts, 2019).

2.2.3 Common qualities

Millennials and Generation Z are the youngest consumer generations, and even they have their differences, they have more similarities than other generations. As mentioned before, both generations have been exposed to social media since their youth.

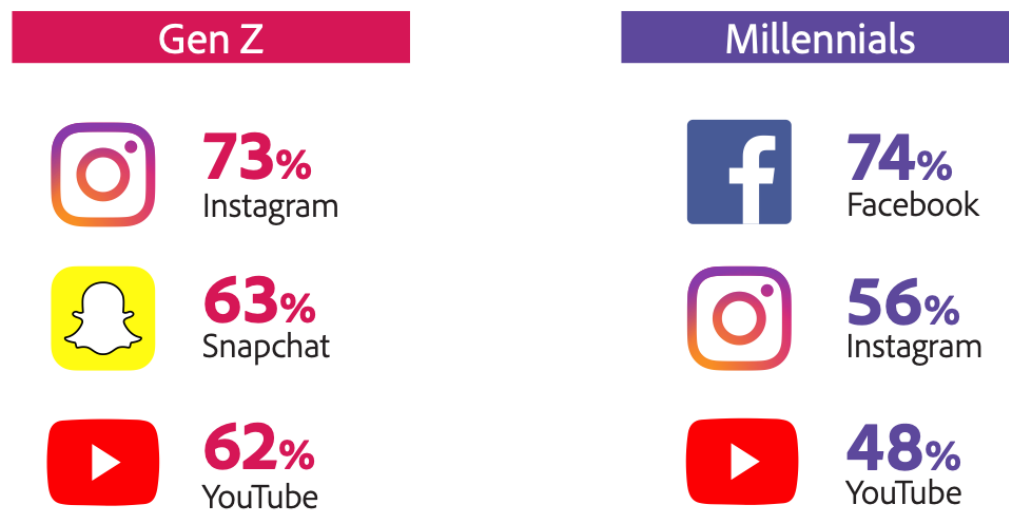


Figure 1. Actively used social media platforms (Adobe, 2019)

Millennials and Generation Zers use different social media platforms multiple times a day and approximately the same amount of time. However, while millennials spend their time on a broader range of different social media platforms, Generation Zers spend their time on fewer platforms. (Cox, 2019). In a survey conducted by Adobe (2019), respondents were asked, "Which social networks, forums, or messaging services do you actively use today?". According to the survey, the most used social network among Generation Z was Instagram (73%), and among millennials was Facebook (74%). (Adobe, 2019.)

Do you think there is a place for companies interacting with individual people on social networks, forums and/or messaging sites?



Figure 2. Statistics to question “Do you think there is a place for companies interacting with individual people on social networks, forums and/or messaging sites?” (Adobe, 2019)

When it comes to brands communicating with consumers, millennials and Generation Zers are open to engaging with brands on social media (figure 2). In contrast, only 33% of boomers (i.e., generation born between 1946 and 1964 (Adobe, 2019).) said yes to the same question. (Adobe, 2019.)

What would the company have to do to win you back?

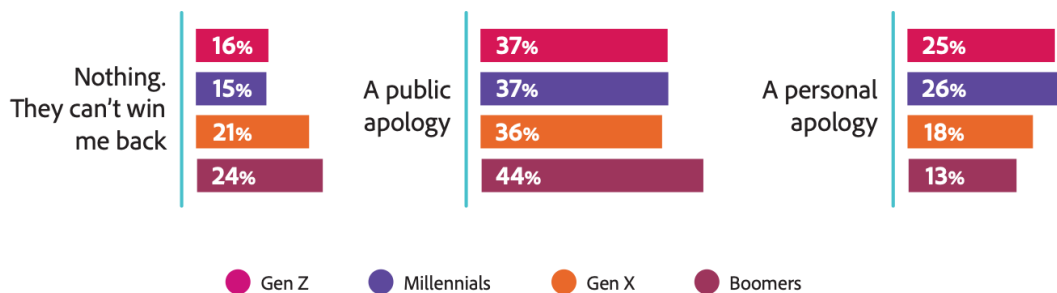


Figure 3. Statistics to question “What would the company have to do to win you back?” (Adobe, 2019)

Respondents in the survey conducted by Adobe were asked what it would take from a brand to win consumers trust back after the failed advertisement. As stated before, millennials and Generation Zers have similarities in viewing things on social media. According to a study (figure 3), younger generations are more likely to give a second chance to

brands before boycotting them than older generations. A brand apology, public or personal one, goes a long way. (Adobe, 2019.)

These generations are often targeted by lingerie brands, such as Aerie and Victoria's Secret, which are targeting women from women age 18 to under 35 with hopes of keeping them as customers as they grow old. Millennials and Gen z value body positivity, the inclusion of all body types, and diversity. These factors must be accomplished before they browse online. A brand's contributions to social justice, sustainability, and gender equality are increasingly affecting these generations purchasing decisions. (Kohan, 2020.)

2.3 Fashion and beauty brands on social media

Together, social media and fashion and beauty industries have also brought awareness about diversity and inclusivity, including race, body positivity, sexuality, and gender. Social media has changed how fashion and beauty brands market their products and communicate with consumers. The impact will continue, and it will allow brands to speak to millions of consumers around the world, take part in trends, create them, and impact society. (Jenkins, 2020.) Research by Helal et al. (2018) revealed that consumers find social media an essential form of communication between a consumer and the brand, making consumers aware of what the brand represents and the core values. Social media offers brand exposure but also a brand depth for consumers to identify with. (Helal & Ozuem & Lancaster, 2018.)

Social media offers a platform for consumers to share their thoughts about the issues that they care about. It is creating real pressure for brands to be able to keep up with conversations with consumers. While consumers are increasingly aware of how their behaviour impacts the issues, it is crucial to ensure that brands' product and brand image will meet their values and beliefs. (Jenkins, 2020.) Studies have shown that consumers tend to identify with distinct brands in forming an aspired social identity. This consumption may be a compelling attribute within a consumer's journey to build oneself. (Helal et al., 2018.)



Picture 1. Screenshot of the lingerie brand Aerie's Instagram post in March 2021

Fashion and beauty brands are encouraged to create stimulating social media content to sustain relationships and ensuing brand communities. Studies show a positive correlation between visually engaging content and consistent emotional impressions among consumers on Instagram. (Helal et al., 2018.) An excellent example of a brand that is already engaging with its consumers through emotionally engaging content, social media content is lingerie brand Aerie (picture 1).

2.3.1 Brand identity

The brand itself defines brand identity. According to researchers Sääksijärvi and Samiee (2011), brand identity is how brands aspire to be perceived it is the central idea of a brand and how it communicates this idea to stakeholders (i.e., consumers, employees and management) (Blomkvist & Johannsson & Lindeberg, 2012; Baker & Hart, 2008 p. 314.) Researchers also proposed that the brand identity's purpose is to establish a relationship between the brand and the customer (Blomkvist et al., 2012). It is about what the brand stands for and how it can endorse the brand values across all its scope. (Baker et al., 2008, p. 314.) Brand identity includes values, aim and moral image. Together these components constitute the principle of uniqueness that differentiates the brand from the

others. (Blomkvist et al., 2012.) Overall, brand identity is integrated from several components, and it is not just a logo or legal instrument (Baker et al., 2008 p. 314).

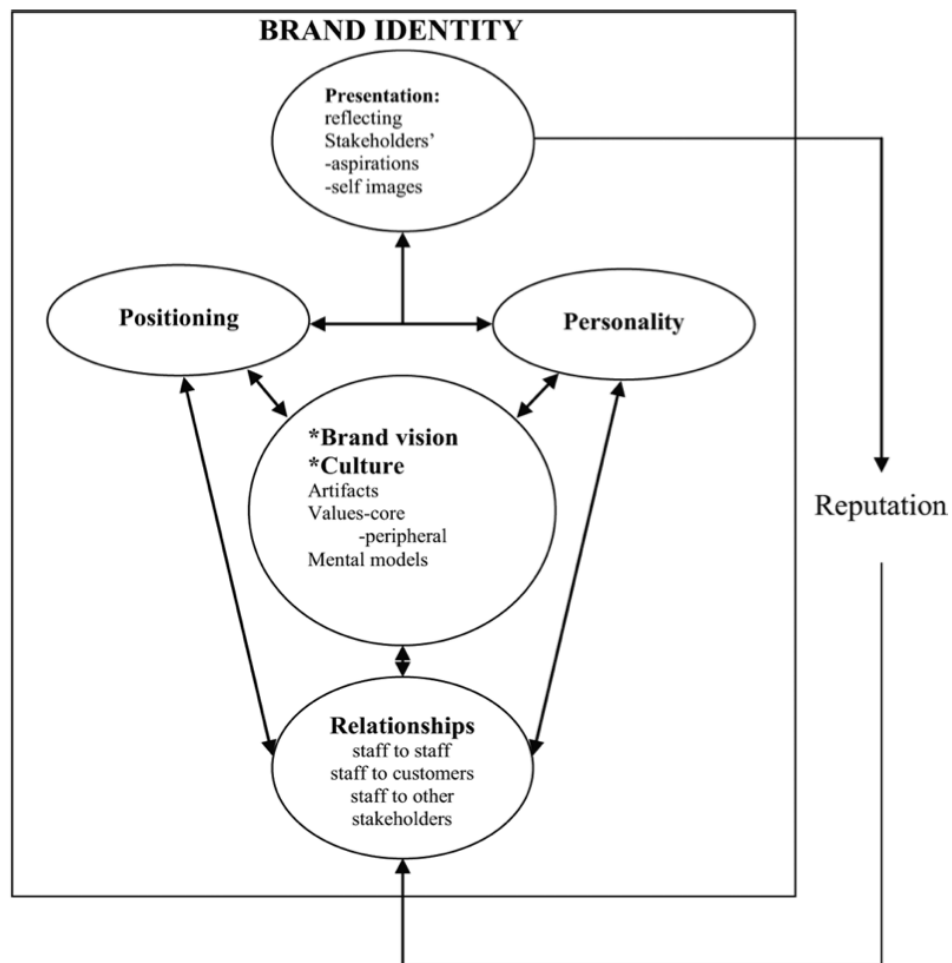


Figure 4. The Process of Managing a Brand model (Blomkvist et al., 2019)

De Chernatony (1999) developed a model called “The Process of Managing a Brand” (Figure 4). According to the model, brand identity is built in four aspects: personality, positioning, vision & culture and relationship. All of these aspects influence each other. The core aspects of vision and culture determine and drive the brand’s desired positioning, personality and relationships. Brand image causes consumers to form opinions about the brand, which De Chernatony (1999) refers to as reputation. The reputation can be either positive or negative. Either way, it has a direct impact on the brand and its identity. Overall, the model showcases the significance of brand managing, which is essential, especially when it comes to negative brand images and the brand’s reputations. (Blomkvist et al., 2012.)

It has been argued that if brands are focusing on brand identity as an internal and aspirational construct that radiates from inside-out, brand management will fail to appreciate the influence of customers in shaping the dynamic context in which identity is a relational construct formed and shaped with interaction with consumers. (Helal et al., 2018.) For brands to keep up with the conversation and keep up with a brand reputation, reacting and communicating with consumers on social media is crucial for identifying and developing brand identity. Researchers have recognised a need for a more relational and social identity perspective to conceptualise emerging computer-mediated marketing environments. (Helal et al., 2018.)

2.3.2 Brand image

Brand portray shapes the image of the brand perception on social media (Helal et al., 2018). Brand image is a set of how consumers view brands' identity, purpose, and values that they interact and engage with. While the brand itself defines brand identity, brand image cannot be fully controlled. Each consumer will perceive the brand differently depending on their personal beliefs, ideas, impressions, and how the brand ties into that equation. (Gaid, 2019.) However, in De Chernatony's model (as seen in Figure 4), brands can influence consumers aspirations and self-perception that together represent the brand image (Blomkvist et al., 2012). Having a solid brand image that resonates with the brand's audience is essential. A strong brand image has many benefits for the brand. It improves recognition, generates referrals and eventually increases revenue. (Gaid, 2019.)

What brands can do to impact their brand image is to create a strategy that gives the best possible chance of meeting consumers' values possible, which can ultimately increase the brand's chances of success. Brand strategy should be made based on research that implements the traits and needs of the audience of the brands. (Gaid 2019.) Adopting an image perspective forces brands to face the challenge of consumers perceptions. Due to their perceptual processes, the sent message of the social media post or campaign is not necessarily understood as the brand was intended. It thus compelled checking consumer' perceptions and taking action to encourage favourable perceptions. (Baker et al., 2008 p.315.) Brand's strategy should implement reputation management and include a plan of how to be consistent in social media. One of the ways is matching the visual aesthetics with brand tone and copies. The brand's general vibe must be consistent and similar on all the platforms, but especially in social media, where consumers

have the chance to communicate with the brand. The brand tone is a critical factor, and that is why all the content should support it. When the brand is consistent and reliable, consumers will find the brand worth of their loyalty. (Gaid, 2019.)

As consumers are becoming more distrusting about the content they see on social media, brands must work on their brand image to build credibility with every content piece. (Adobe, 2019.) Content promoted in different social media platforms continuously influences brand image, which creates a closer connection to consumers. The instant exchange that social media content offers make consumers feel closer to the brand. (Helal et al., 2018.) Brands that are more inclusive towards their audience receive more positive reactions and may get more support from their customers (Pascual, 2020).

3 Body positivity

3.1 What is body positivity?

The Body Positivity movement as we know it today has its early roots in a feminist movement that began in the 1960s in the United States. The fat acceptance movement was already tackling body image issues and discrimination regarding fat shaming. (Geerkens, 2019.) The body positivity movement emerged in 1996 in the United States when a feminist activist organization named Body Positivity Movement was founded. The organization's goal was to help people love themselves and their bodies and be more gracious to themselves. Eating disorders were the main reason for founding the organization. Both founders had their own experiences on this topic; Connie Sobczak has personal experience in eating disorders, and psychotherapist Elizabeth Scott is specialized in eating disorders. The body positivity movement fights against polished advertising. According to activists, people will accept themselves and other people if exposed to advertising using more relatable and different sized models in society, media, and politics. (Sarhimaa, 2016.)

In the past, sizes 0-2 (XS in international sizing) were viewed as standards. The ideal body type was not only about the size; it also meant the overall look. Slim or skinny was a norm during the 1940s up to the 2000s. In the early 2010s, the ideal body image started to evolve to embrace more curves, but skinny ones stayed still supreme. (Pascual, 2020). In its current form, the body positivity movement started to emerge around 2012, initially focusing on challenging unrealistic beauty standards. As the movement started to grow

in popularity, the original focus on accepting higher weight began to shift towards a message, “all bodies are beautiful.” (Cherry, 2020.) Body positivity movements have been impacted a lot by Fat Acceptance activists campaigning specifically for non-skinny people’s exposure to society and acceptance (Sarhima, 2016).

The term body positivity refers to the assertion that all bodies are beautiful. According to that, all people should feel good about their bodies, regardless of the ongoing society trends about an ideal body type, size, and appearance. One of the many goals of the body positivity movement is to challenge social norms about ideal body type. The movement's primary goals are to promote the idea that all bodies are good bodies regarding unrealistic body standards. (Cherry, 2020.)

Instagram played a vital role in the rise of the body positivity movement as its form as it is viewed today. In recent years some brands have only just stopped photoshopping models in social media posts. In contrast, like Dove and Aerie, some brands did not only stop doing that, but they have developed extensive social media marketing campaigns incorporating and embracing body-positive messages. (Cherry, 2020.)

3.2 Promoting body positivity in social media marketing

Brands are being put under pressured to do their part regarding body image issues. While some brands have already taken steps toward more body-positive social media marketing and seen results already, some brands are still stuck on the “one-size-fits-all” mentality. (Luzon, 2019.) Social media content influences significantly younger generations. Unrealistic beauty standards and attitudes of society are accessible in social media content. The body-positive movement is using social media for good and creating content that fights back to these standards. (Dennis, 2020.) It is argued that body positivity should not be seen as a new trend and something to be taken lightly. It is becoming borderline expected that brands do their part regarding this issue and promote body positivity in their social media marketing. (Blackhart, 2019.)

3.2.1 Why brands should include body positivity in brand identity?

Representation has a considerable impact, and as consumers are more and more conscious of the media they consume, they become more aware of the brands that are communicating with them in a positive manner. Consumers want to see more real people

and people who look like them, and brands that are giving that to them are likely to reap the benefits. (Blackhart, 2019.)

Body exclusivity is interwoven in the fashion industry, but consumers have begun to demand more from brands in recent years. They will not stand for body shaming or cultural insensitivity from brands. As consumers have become more and more vocal and critical through increased social media usage, brands should act on their unsatisfied customer base. (Luzon, 2019.) Brands should become examples of embracing different types of bodies and appearances instead of causing more pressure about “the ideal body type.” As stated before, consumers want to see more diverse people in social media marketing. Hence brands must be embracing that bodies come in different shapes and sizes likewise different ethnicities, genders and disabilities. (Pascual, 2020.)

The lingerie market is one of today’s most prominent markets where body positivity has a considerable role. The lingerie market has a direct impact on the economic state. Strong elective spending for intimate apparel items is stable; when the economy struggles, revenues decline. It is predicted that revenue for the lingerie market will rise over the next few years. With more intense competition, the brands with a better chance of survival will offer an emotional connection to the brand, promote social responsibility, and encourage individuality, inclusion, and body positivity. (Kohan, 2020).

It is time for brands to take any action regarding the body positivity movement and prioritize body positivity in their social media marketing strategy to modernize the retail industry and increase consumer trust (Luzon, 2019). Consumers these days are expecting more from fashion brands and people at their helm (Elan, 2020). As the body positivity movement has risen, fashion and beauty brands are no longer able to get away from not being diverse and inclusive. They are called out for social media campaigns that are unreliable and represent the sizing that most consumers would not fit into. (Dennis, 2020.) The issue of diversity plays a role in body positivity as well. Through constant exposure to different bodies represented by different ethnicities, people are beginning to accept themselves and others in the way they are. (Pascual, 2020.)

3.2.2 How brands can promote body positivity in social media?

In order for brands to evolve their marketing strategies towards body positivity, it is crucial first to understand the complex relationship between consumers and brands. This relationship has undergone significant changes in the past several years. The fashion industry has played an enormous role in teaching consumers what it means to "fit in" to society. With the rise of social media, in conjunction with the increased pressure to act, young people have tasked leading brands to practice social responsibility and adapt to the changing times. (Luzon, 2019.)

Authenticity is the quality that body-positive brands are routed for. Brands are promising to deliver social media campaigns that are unretouched. As Aerie's brand president stated at the launch of AerieREAL: "Our newest bra models are part of our brand's ongoing commitment to show real, authentic women, who are at the core of everything that we do". The purpose of this kind of content is to show real women wearing the line. User-generated content amplifies the voices of real women. It has already been adopted by Body Positive lingerie brands' social media presence (e.g., Aerie and Savage X Fenty Instagram profiles). The objective is to capture the authenticity of real women and provide unretouched content in social media campaigns. (Gorman, 2020).

There are steps that brands can take to promote body positivity in times of change, especially by addressing the emotional context attached to sizing. Shopping for clothing can be an intense experience for many people. With evolving fashion trends, consumers desire to fit in society is at an all-time high. That is true, but if brands feature diverse body sizes, they should have the products to fit those bodies available to the public. Everlane brand entered in lingerie markets in 2018 and featured curvy model in their social media ads. However, when plus-size women had intentions to purchase items shown, they ended up being disappointed to discover that sizing did not reach plus-sizes. (Blackhart, 2019.) Clothing pieces should be designed to fit different body types and have a proper sizing system. Brands must include diversity in social media marketing. However, if their products do not match what they advertise on social media, it will be fatal to brands because consumers will feel disappointed when they find out that their needs are not fulfilled. If fashion brands want to become more relevant and target women of all different shapes and sizes, they need to consider their brand identity and product development in an ensemble. (Pascual, 2020.)

Since body positivity is not only size-inclusive, but also vital to notice all ages, abilities, races, and genders. Trans men and women often feel overlooked in advertising as well. (Blackhart, 2019.) In recent years transgender and non-binary models have been active in their platforms to raise awareness on gender inequality, sexual harassment and body shaming, aiming to redefine industry views on what it now means to be a supermodel. (Campuzano, 2020.) Brands should look at these communities as well when they cast for diverse models (Blackhart, 2019).

When brands start to implement body positivity in their social media marketing, brands must understand that they cannot expect or ask for recognition when they use diverse people in their campaigns. Consumers will most likely give recognition to the brand when they discover these actions. If the brand is not retouching (i.e., photo manipulation to change the look) models, they should not announce it. Consumers do not like it when brands pat themselves in their back when they start implementing diversity in their campaign. Consumers do not find it groundbreaking anymore. Brands should be focusing on posting pictures, including diverse bodies and use the captions to implement what differentiates their product from their competitors. Customers will do the rest on social media. As stated before, consumers like to share things they care about on social media. This way, it is more authentic and gives more real credibility to the brand. (Blackhart, 2019.)

Brands should bring up conversation on different social media platforms. Depending on the markets they are in, there is always a perspective that brands can bring in considering body positivity. People want to feel good, and by tapping into the language that makes consumers feel good, brands can draw their attention organically and authentically. (Blackhart, 2019.) Brands can engage with consumers by using a two-way conversation on social media platforms. One way is to use image captions with questions that provoke the consumers to interact with the brand by sharing their options, preferences, and feedback. Brands should react and reply to these comments actively. (Bar-nett, 2019.) Brand executives should have a strategy to act on social causes. Brands can utilize a few key strategies in their social media platforms to raise awareness of body positivity. These include creating social media events or campaigns that embrace body positivity, having a clear message with supporting pictures and content to create credibility for the brand and using hashtags such as #bodypositivity in posts to raise more awareness. (Ribek, 2019.)

This follow-through is especially vital in platforms like Instagram, where the main focus is on the posted pictures and videos. Brands that promote body positivity on social media need to ensure that they are using diverse models in their adverts and other content to represent diversity the actual human population. It is crucial to notice different kinds of models with different abilities, complexions, and figures when choosing models for social media campaigns. (Ribek, 2019.)

Hence body positivity in social media marketing is a complex matter. There are a few pitfalls in body-positive marketing that brands should notice while planning social media marketing campaigns. Simply because a brand starts using more body-positive language and features diverse bodies in their social media, it does not mean that the brand is considered body positive. The key to a successful body-positive campaign is authenticity. Meaning, "fake it till you make it" mindset does not work. Social media savvy consumers can tell when a brand is merely phoning it to get their base's attention, and they are quick to call it out on social media. (Blackhart, 2019.)

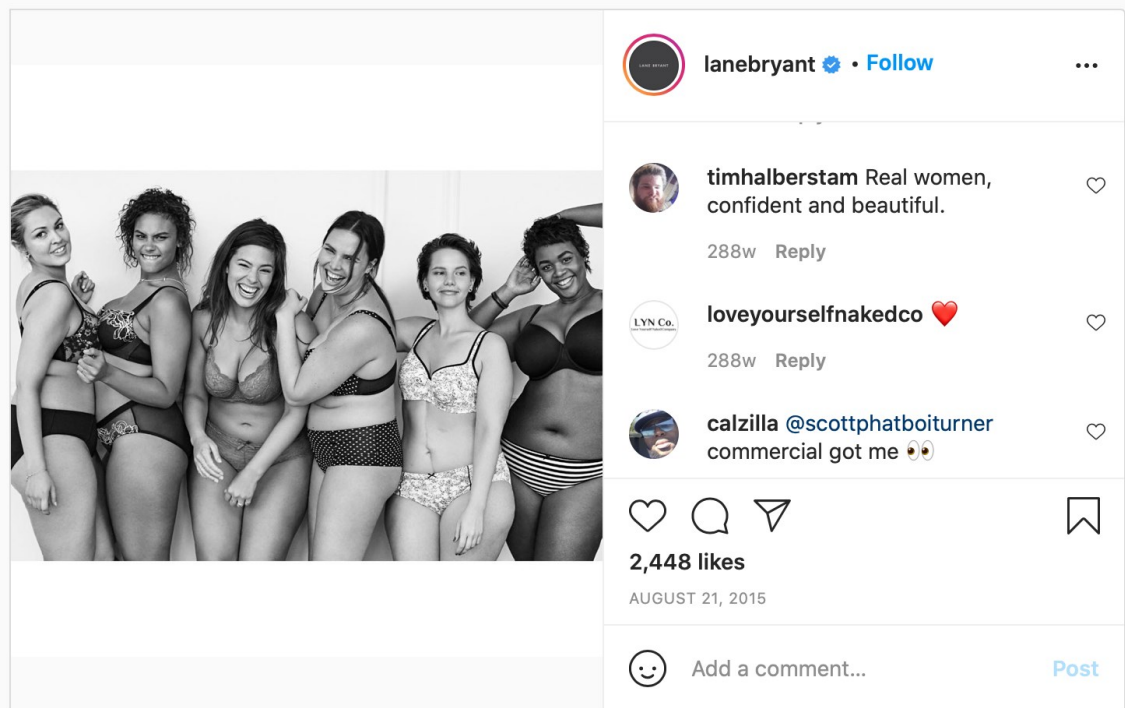
3.2.3 Examples of body positivity campaigns on social media

Regarding body-positive marketing, only a handful of brands have actively incorporated the idea of body positivity and diversity into their business model over the past few years. One of the prominent examples is the lingerie brand Aerie. Aerie is one of the earliest leaders in promoting the visibility of women of different shapes and sizes. While many brands still photoshopped and airbrushed their models, Aerie launched no airbrushing "Aerie Real" campaign in 2014. (Luzon, 2019.) Aerie Real campaign got a positive lift from consumers through this campaign (Pascual, 2020). After four years, Aerie reported a record high 38% increase in same-store sales for the first quarter of 2018. As a triumph for the brand that can be equated to its dedication towards empowering women, CNBC reported that Aerie's revenue rose from \$200 million to \$500 million in 2017. (Luzon, 2019.) In 2019, the company's sales increased by 20%, and the brand delivered 21 straight quarters of double-digit growth (Kohan, 2020). Aerie is one example of many brands making a concerted effort to understand their customers and adjust to the era of body positivity and make an enormous success (Luzon, 2019). Aerie encourages young women to love and accept their bodies and has refined beauty standards. The brand has built a relationship with today's consumers appreciating social responsibility, body positivity, and supportive community. Part of the Aerie's mission is to empower all women to love their bodies and their authentic selves. (Kohan, 2020.)



Picture 2. Victoria's Secret the Perfect "Body" campaign (Peterson, 2014)

In 2016, Dove launched a vast campaign named #mybeautymysay. The campaign was advocating self-love, body positivity, acceptance, and standing up for oneself. Women in modern society have been judged based on their appearances and even had their beauty used against them. (Aggarwal, 2018.) The campaign had a video ad where they featured nine different stories of women who stood up for their beauty. The campaign goal was to invite all women to speak openly against the stereotypes surrounding society's expectations of beauty. The campaign had a great reception from consumers; they found it authentic, inspirational, and also loved its message. (Douka, 2018.) Thus, the campaign was not Dove's first campaign that advocated body positivity. They are known to react to other brands' campaigns. In 2014, they had a campaign named "The perfect real body" to respond to Victoria's Secret "The Perfect Body" (picture 2) campaign. As a response to Protein World's unsuccessful ad, Dove created an ad that stated that everybody is beach ready. (Pascual, 2020.)



Picture 3. Screenshot of the Lane Bryant #ImNoAngel-campaign in Instagram in August 2015

In 2015, Lane Bryant launched a campaign called "#ImNoAngel" (Picture 3). The campaign's main goal was for the plus-sized woman to celebrate their sexiness and to become comfortable in their skin. (Pascual, 2020.) The campaign featured many adored plus-sized models. The campaign aimed to change the definition of "sexy" as we see it. The "I'm No Angel" campaign spread rapidly, and women from all across the world posted pictures using the hashtag #ImNoAngel to embrace their imperfections, truly aiming to redefine sexy. (Aggarwal, 2018.)

There has been a considerable revamping in marketing tactics in the lingerie industry, and not all brands have done their part. One of the brands that has received much criticism around the body positivity topic is Victoria's Secret. Critics primarily address the body image they display in their advertisement. (Luzon, 2019.) Through time, sexy supermodels and conspicuous fashion shows made the brand famous. Brand's supermodels have been causing idolization of the skinny and tall "perfect" body type. Victoria's Secret has also been criticized for its "sexually charged" ad campaigns and the perfect body's perpetual romanticism. Furthermore, the lingerie brand has been accused of targeting its ads to men more than women, meaning that they suggest that the brand's "sex sells" mentality over comfort and embracing its customers. (Luzon, 2019.) In 2014 Victoria's Secret launched a campaign named "The Perfect Body" (Picture 2) and featured

only skinny and tall supermodels. After critics, they changed their campaign name to "Body to Everybody." (Pascual, 2020.)

Victoria's Secret, which is the brand that has been setting the standards in intimate apparel for decades, has failed to change with times, and the numbers prove it. S&P Global Market Intelligence has reported that shares of Victoria's Secret and Bath & Bodyworks owner lost 12,4% in value in the first quarter of 2019. Victoria's Secret's proven failure to adapt to the body positivity movement's sentiments hinders its ability to connect with consumers. Moreover, it is argued to have even more damaging effects down the line. (Luzon, 2019.) Victoria's Secret had an eventful year in 2018; at its worst, sales dropped, was criticized for its racy ads and runway shows, and most of all failed to adapt its marketing to new social expectations. After 2018 events, Victoria's Secret looked at everything from marketing to brand positioning to improve their brand. (Elan, 2020.)

In 2019 Victoria's Secret made several changes to be more inclusive and diverse in their social media marketing. They announced a new model, which is not plus sized, but consumers were thrilled as consumers noticed her be curvier than usual. Since the announcement was made on Instagram, the most engaged consumers higher than their average. Later the year, Victoria's Secret hired its first openly transgender model. These actions are signalling that finally, the brand started listening to its most critical customers. At the end of the year 2019, they also announced that they are cancelling a controversial and criticised annual fashion show. They also announced that they would develop new ways to communicate with their customers and create a new dynamic content that pushes fashion boundaries in social media. Since the brand has noticed the effect on their revenue, they seem to start changing things. The brand's Instagram looks different from models are racially diverse and smiling, colours are calming, and lingerie is styled in a noticeably looser. Nevertheless, some might argue that the brand's attempts to pivot towards a more diverse beauty idea still do not sit right with its recent history. Part of the issue is structural; the company is still primarily run by men. It is argued that it will take far more than a cosmetic U-turn for Victoria's Secret to be considered body positive in today's society. (Elan, 2020.)



Picture 4. Screenshot of the Savage X Fenty Instagram post in March 2021

While Victoria's Secret has been struggling to catch up with new social norms of diversity as a brand, Savage X Fenty has integrated inclusivity in its brand identity from the very start (Bayley, 2020). Savage X Fenty entered the lingerie market on May 11, 2018, built on inclusive-yet-sexy lingerie promise (Gorman, 2020). The brand has used a diverse cast of models since the beginning. The models represent a variety of gender identities, ethnicities, disabilities, ages, body shapes and sizes. Since diversity is part of the brand identity, it makes models and lingerie cater to consumers in a genuine and approachable way. (Bayley, 2020; DiValentino, 2019.) Brand's lingerie has sizes ranging up to 3X and 44DD, while Victoria's Secret size range was up to XL and 38DDD (Gorman, 2020). As Victoria's Secret's attempts to become more diverse by casting a few models of colours, consumers seem to be sceptical about the authenticity of the changes, as diversity is a continuous process and has to be done for genuine reasons. While Savage X Fenty targets consumers by resonating with whom they identify with, Victoria's secret targets resonate with whom they aspire to be. (DiValentino, 2019.) One of the many reasons why Savage X Fenty is considered as a body-positive brand where Victoria's Secret is not is because its brand values are reflected at the top. Robyn Fenty, also known by her stage name Rihanna, is a spokesperson for the diverse vision that her brand promotes. (Elan, 2020.)

4 Body positivity in social media marketing

4.1 Methods

In order to best respond to the research problem, a quantitative online sample survey was conducted. The material for the online survey was collected from both online and literature sources. The survey is based on the research done by the subject. The questions are compiled to answer the research questions. Through the medium of population size is grand, the sample survey was used to present the population. The goal sample size for this survey was 300.

For reliable research results, the following criteria is must be met: the population is well defined, questions in the online survey answer to the research question and are unambiguous, the sample is carefully defined and presentable to the population, and its size is big enough, results are repeatable, and data is collected and analyzed professionally. (Heikkilä, 2014).

The quantitative survey was supplemented with three qualitative questions making it a total of 16 questions where only two were mandatory. To support quantitative research, the explanatory study will be used to get more in-depth questions like “What is the reason for this phenomenon?”. To get better insights into consumers’ thoughts, social media content was included to find out the emotions that the content evoked in consumers. The survey will have a secular limit for the past five years since those are the years when body positivity in social media has become more popular (Cherry, 2020).

The research target group was defined as millennials and Generation Z. The survey targeted 18-35-year-old women. Also, transgender and non-binary women were included. This age group was selected since research shows that many fashion brands target this age group to gain brand loyalty from a young age to adulthood (Kohan, 2020). Hence, this age group does not present the whole age variety of either generation. This study will give general insights from both. Geographical location was not defined while setting the target group, thus the global nature of social media.

The survey was open from 30th of September 2020 to 5th of October 2020 and received 481 relevant answers. The survey was shared in the author's personal social media channels (Instagram and Facebook) and two relevant Facebook groups, where group

members' demographics matched the target group. Most of the answers were from Finland or Finnish people, but many of them were living globally. Also, many of them were living in Finland, but with a nationality from different countries.

The survey's goal was to get consumer insights about body positivity in social media marketing and ultimately find if there is a correlation between female consumers' opinions and experiences about body positivity in social media marketing and the brand image of fashion and beauty brands. Besides, to get insights into what consumers hope they would see from brands in social media marketing and how brands can implement these results. The conclusions were made through the research and survey results.

The tool to create the survey and to analyze the data collected was Webropol. The survey information was mainly analyzed by percentage per different answer. Frequency tables and crosstabulations are also used to get in more depth in data. Crosstabs are used for comparing the results of different respondent groups. Results are defined using a sample that represents the population. The sample survey aimed to obtain the same results as the whole population. (Heikkilä, 2014.)

4.2 Survey outcome

The survey gained a total of 481 responses. The respondent's demographics were defined by age, gender and nationality, and the country of residency, age being the most relevant demographical definition. Age groups were divided in four; 18-20-year-old (13,7%), 21-25-year-old (50,5%), 26-30-year-old (26,2%) and 31-35-year-old (9,6%). Hence, the survey was targeted to 18-35-year-women. Other gender definitions were taken into notice too. Most of the respondents identified themselves as females (98,6%), and the rest of the respondents (1,4%) preferred either not to say or defined to be other.

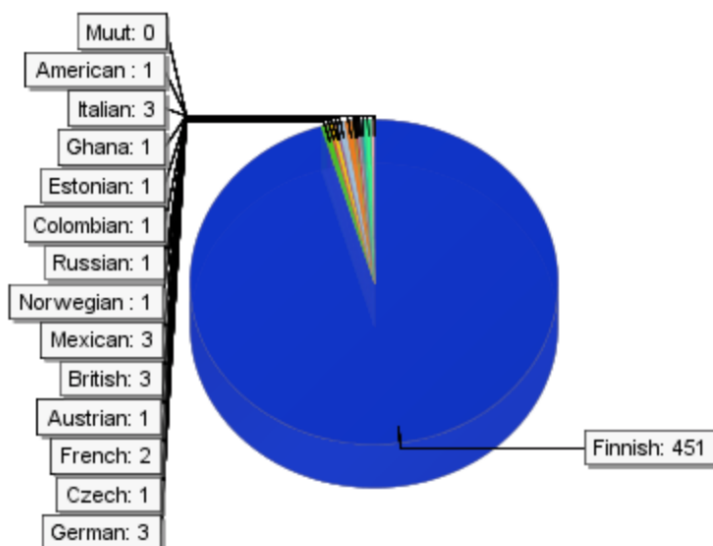


Figure 5. Nationalities of the survey respondents

As one of the demographical questions, respondents were asked about their nationality and country of residency. As seen in figure 5, most of the respondents identified themselves as Finnish ($n=451$) and the rest of the respondents as various nationalities such as French, German and British. Some of the respondents who identified being Finnish lives in other countries than Finland and vice versa, some who answered being other nationality live in Finland. Altogether, most of the respondents live in Finland ($n=435$). Even though respondents were from different countries and nationalities, there was no difference seen between answers.

The respondents were asked whether they follow different fashion and beauty brands on social media, and 45,0% answered that they follow some of the brands, 29,2% told they do not have the interest to follow brands on social media, and 25,4% told they follow brands to get inspiration and get information about new products. Respondents pointed out that, they are following brands in social media if they find brands' content inspiring, educational or entertaining.

Based on the survey, diversity is seen presented sometimes in social media in the brands content. Respondents were asked if they agree with the claim, "I think that different body types, ethnicities and other appearance qualities are presented well in social media marketing by fashion and beauty brands." On a scale of 1-5, (1= Strongly disagree, 5=

Strongly agree). The average was 2,82, and the median was three, meaning many respondents (41%) were hesitant about the claim. They did not disagree or agree with the claim. Almost 38% of respondents did either strongly disagree (4%) or disagreed (33%) with the claim. This indicates that 19% of the respondents agreed, and 3% strongly agreed with the claim.

**I think that different body types,
ethnicities and other appearance qualities
are presented well in social media
marketing by fashion and beauty brands.**

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	21	4.4	4.4
	2.00	160	33.3	37.6
	3.00	197	41.0	78.6
	4.00	91	18.9	97.5
	5.00	12	2.5	100.0
	Total	481	100.0	

Table 1. Frequency table of the claim “I think that different body types, ethnicities and other appearance qualities are presented well in social media marketing by social media and beauty brands.”

As seen in table 1, the frequency was highest at 3 (n=197) and second highest on 2 (n=160). Based on these results, it can be assumed that consumers feel like there is not enough diversity in social media advertisement, even though there might be brands that have already started to take diversity noticed in their social media marketing.

According to the survey, 71% (n=339) of respondents find it essential that they can relate to the models in used social media marketing, 15% (n=73) of respondents found it a somewhat essential factor, and 14% (n=68) did not find it essential to them. The Average was 3,85 and the median 4. Overall, respondents found it even rather essential to relate to the models in social media marketing.

The claim, “I often feel like I cannot relate to the models used in social media marketing”, was presented to respondents. With 3,8 average and median was 4, 67% (n=322) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the claim, and only 13% (n=64) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the claim. Meaning, most of the respondent found that they often cannot relate to the models in social media marketing.

I often feel like I cannot relate to models used in social media marketing.: Strongly disagree - Strongly agree

	It is impor... Strongly ... 1: (N=23)	It is impor... Strongly ... 2: (N=45)	It is impor... Strongly ... 3: (N=73)	It is impor... Strongly ... 4: (N=179)	It is impor... Strongly ... 5: (N=160)
1 (3%)	17 % N=4	9 % N=4	3 % N=2	2 % N=4	1 % N=2
2 (10%)	9 % N=2	11 % N=5	7 % N=5	12 % N=21	9 % N=15
3 (20%)	13 % N=3	31 % N=14	29 % N=21	16 % N=29	16 % N=26
4 (37%)	26 % N=6	33 % N=15	38 % N=28	45 % N=80	30 % N=48
5 (30%)	35 % N=8	16 % N=7	23 % N=17	25 % N=45	43 % N=69
average	3.52	3.36	3.73	3.79	4.04

Table 2. Question 7 “I often feel like I cannot relate to models in social media marketing.” (x) and question 6 “It is important to me that I can relate to the models that fashion and beauty brands use in their social media marketing.” (y).

Respondents were asked if they find it essential and then asked if they often feel like they cannot relate to the ads seen on social media. The statistically significant differences between the respondent groups are indicated with red ($p > 0.01$) or violet ($p \leq 0.05$) cell colour. As seen on table 2, the highest frequency ($n=80$) was on “Agree” (4) to both of the claims and second-highest frequency ($n=69$) on “Strongly Agree” (5). This means that most of those respondents who find it essential to relate to the models used in social media marketing also agreed or strongly agreed with the claim that they often feel like they cannot relate to the models used in social media ads. It can be concluded that even though the respondent finds it essential that they can relate to the ads shown in social media, their needs are not met as well as they would like to.

According to the survey, 70% ($n=335$) of respondents would consider buying more from a brand if their advertisement on social media were more diverse and relatable, and 20% ($n=95$) of respondents did not think it would affect their purchasing choices. Other (Maybe, it depends. On what?) option was answered by 10% ($n=43$). Respondents, who answered on the open answers, expressed various factors that impact their purchasing choices. Many respondents found the brand's ethical values and social responsibility essential factors besides diversity and size inclusivity.

” I do not find it extremely important, but of course, it would be nice to see advertisements with similar women to myself and I would most likely be “pulled” to brands who use models like me.”

As stated in the example above, some respondents also pointed out that they have noticed being more drawn into the products modelled by models that have similar appearance qualities. They also mentioned that usage of diverse models does draw more attention to the brand in social media. Those respondents exposed to the models who represent their body type did not feel body positivity as an issue personally or did not feel like it would negatively affect their purchasing choices. However, those who could not relate to the models used in social media marketing said that they would reconsider purchase if there were models who looked more like them and better see how the product looks. That is how they can imagine how the product would look on them and get exposure to the thought that their body type is embraced. However, consumers still find it essential to be exposed to the other body types, too, since it implements that being different and having different qualities is normal. To an increasing extent, consumers want to see genuine models without retouching, over posing, and diverse appearance qualities in brands' social media marketing ads.

Respondents were asked what following qualities they would like to see more in social media marketing. The number of respondents was 478, and the selected answers in 3247. As mentioned before, body positivity is about embracing all types of bodies and appearances, but it is most of all still seen as embracing different body shapes and sizes. Respondents were asked what qualities they would like to see more in social media advertising, and 94% of respondents answered that they would like to see more different body shapes and types, and 77% said they would like to see more different heights. These are the factors that make the models in ads easily relatable to the consumers.

Other qualities respondents wanted to see more were different skin colours (70%), different skin conditions like stretch marks, cellulite, and different skin conditions. Different disabilities and gender-neutral were the least desired qualities with 52%, and 50% of respondents wished to see more of these qualities. This does not necessarily mean that these are not essential qualities have in social media advertisement. As conducted before, consumers find it necessary to relate to the advertisement, and qualities like disabilities and gender-neutral are minority factors. This is probably not found as necessary by most consumers as it might not touch them at all.

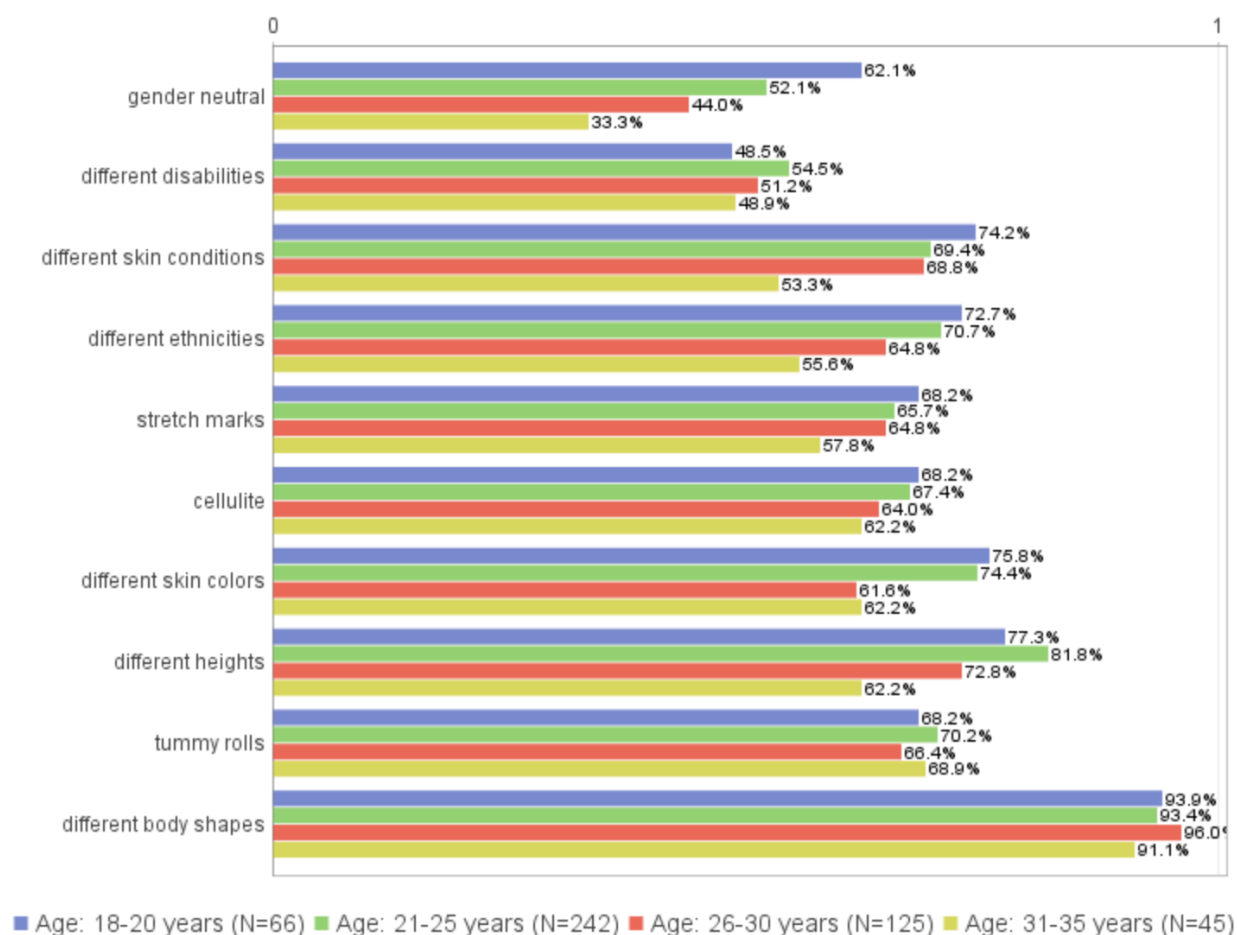


Figure 6. Question 9 answers in percentage per the age group

As seen in figure 6, there are some differences between the age groups. The most significant difference is on “gender-neutral”. In contrast, 62% (n=66) of 18-20-year-olds found it more essential to see more gender-neutral social media marketing, only 33% (n=45) of 31–35-year-olds. Overall, younger age groups (Generation Z) wanted to see more diverse qualities than older age groups (millennials) averagely.

According to the survey, 87% of consumers either agreed or strongly agreed with the claim that body positive social media marketing has potential to create better brand image in the eyes of consumers. Thus, it does not automatically mean better brand image if brand uses more body positive advertisement in social media. Respondents stated that it has to be authentic and fit to the brand identity. Content that brands are using in social media marketing has to be consistent and genuine according to 78% of respondents. Ineffective social media marketing brand identity is implemented to social media marketing to achieve a better brand image.

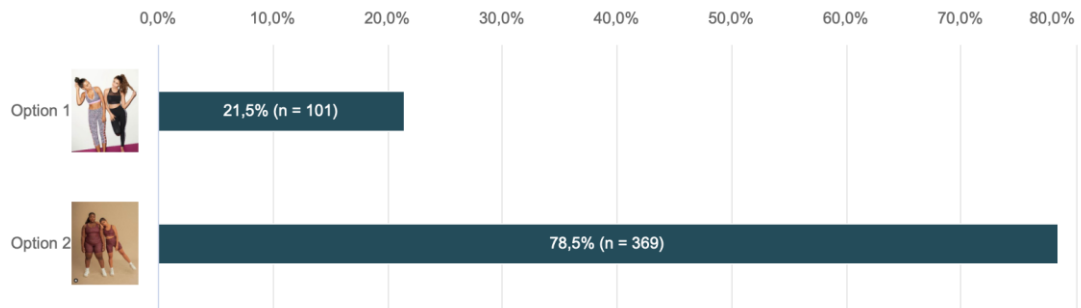


Figure 7. Statistics of the question 12

Respondents were asked which sports ad is more appealing to them and why (see Appendix 1). Options were one where (Option 1) two traditional sized models were wearing the same product in different colours/patterns, and another one (Option 2) had two different sized models. They were representing two different ethnicities wearing the same products. The majority of respondents (79%) chose option number 2, where two different sized models were presented. Besides the point that option 2 represented a wider variety of consumers, it was also pointed out that since it as a sports ad, they would like to see positivity and excitement in the ads. Especially when it comes to sports ad, besides selling the actual product, they also want to be sold an idea or lifestyle were working out is fun and makes them happy. According to the survey, consumers like the idea that when ads include different sized models, it is selling the idea that sports and fitness are not only for the stereotypical fitness people but also for everyone. One of the respondents answered: *“Everyone can look good on sportswear no matter on their size or other appearance qualities.”*. However, some respondents pointed out that sportswear ads have bigger people courage to be obese and not having a healthy lifestyle. They think it can give a bad image of what it looks like to be healthy. The main reasoning for choosing either one of the options where they can relate to the ad more and see how the clothing would look on their body. Many respondents still said that they would like to see both ads in their social media feeds since it presents different bodies. The key is to use a diverse set of models rather than only showcasing one type of body, skin colour, height or other specific qualities.

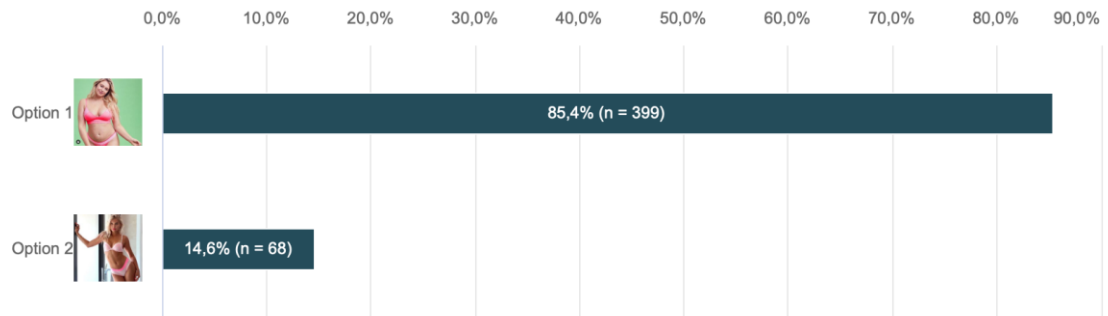


Figure 8. Statistics of the question 14

Respondents were asked which lingerie ad they would rather see in their social media feed and why (see Appendix 1). Options were one where (Option 1) a natural-looking plus-sized model without or minimal amount of photo retouching and less posed (Option 2) traditional lingerie model, with retouching and more posed. The majority of respondents (85%) chose option 2, where the model was more natural. Words “real” and “more relatable” were repeated when respondents answered why they chose an ad with the natural model (Option 1). A model with more traditional features (Option 2) and more photoshopping did still appeal to respondents. Thus, many of them acknowledged that they chose that one just because society has defined that to be desired body for lingerie.

Which ad would you rather see in your social media feed? (Click the picture)

	Which one... Option 1: (N=99)	Which one... Option 2: (N=366)
Option 1 (85%)	78 % N=77	87 % N=320
Option 2 (15%)	22 % N=22	13 % N=46
average	1.22	1.13

Table 3. Frequency table of the questions 12 (y) and 14 (x)

As seen in the table above (Table 3), the highest frequency (n=320) was on those respondents who answered Option 2 to Question 12 and Option 1 to Question 14 (see Appendix 1). In question, options were the ones where models were more diverse and presented an example of body positivity in social media marketing. The second highest frequency (n=77) was on Option 1 from both questions.

“What it comes to advertisements, the overall feeling of the pic or video is the most important. When the model looks happy and confident, clothes look good too. Would love to see different body types and shapes in social media, but there is nothing wrong with skinny models either. It is also a body type. Scars, stretch marks etc are okay too, but not like they would have to pop out from the advertisement. Also when it is about advertising clothes, I think every brand should use any kind of models they really want, its about how the brand itself wants to be seen.”

These ads had positive energy in common, which several respondents mentioned finding important when they view social media ads. As stated above, consumers find the ensemble of the advertisement the most important. The lowest frequency (n=22) was on those ads representing traditional social media marketing advertisement, meaning models are specific body type and ad photos are heavily edited. The statistically significant differences between the respondent groups are indicated with red ($p>0.01$) or violet ($p\leq 0.05$) cell colour.

Lastly, respondents were asked to share their thoughts about body positivity in social media marketing in an open question to get more qualitative data. Respondents shared their thoughts (n=93) about the topic, and six major themes appeared. The themes were: the importance of relatable content, health concerns, photo retouching, embracing diversity, brand's ethical values and sizing matter. These six themes and examples of the qualitative responses will be discussed more in the conclusions.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Consumer perspective

Based on the research and the survey, conclusions were made from the consumer perspective. According to the research made about the topic and survey, body positivity is already essential to consumers but will possibly rise to be a more crucial part in the future. Based on the survey, consumers think that is an improvement regarding the issue of body positivity in social media marketing. As younger consumer generations, Generation Z and millennial consumers are aware of the aspects that impact their body image. Social media marketing is one of the factors that they recognize to impact their way of viewing what is considered a “normal” body. Consumers are finding it essential to be

exposed to all different kind of bodies and qualities, even though they recognize that there is somebody types that get more exposure than others.

" I think it is important to give realistic image of female body, but it means all kind, skinny, meduim size, plus size, loose skin, skinny legs big belly, big legs not that much belly fat. Issue is that there is and there always will be the bodytype that everyone wants to have. I think that we should just try to make that bodytype as achievable and healthy as possible. So we wouldn't worship extra skinny but not too big eahter cause neither one of them is healthy."

As stated in the example above, consumers want to see different kinds of models in social media content, but it is crucial to notice health factors. As body positivity is still associated with the fat-shaming movement, consumers are worried that body positivity will encourage an unhealthy lifestyle. Consumers are afraid it might lead to admiring overly obese bodies. Thus, consumers want to see naturally thin people too but are also worried that it might encourage eating disorders and admiring unhealthy thin people.

" It is unfortunate how often people misunderstand the concept of body positivity. It is not (generally speaking - there are always few outliers) to glorify fatness or unhealthiness, but to make all feel accepted and good about themselves, no matter what body they are in."

" Body positivity in advertisement should be more about normal bodies with skin conditions, scars and cellulite. To me it seems like a movement for cancelling "fat-shaming" which is not ideal, because it's not healthy to be too thick nor too thin. In my point of view, normal still healthy-looking bodies are called "plus size" for no reason, and women with larger chest are automatically considerer "plus size", even when rest of their clothes can differ in size from extra small to large. On the other hand it's good to have different size quides like plus size, petite and tall so everyone can find their perfect fit."

The bottom line on the health factor is that, even though consumers want to see all types of bodies in social media marketing, they want healthy models. Favouring any unhealthy body in social media marketing is not desired in the eyes of the consumer.

” I have one breast. I've had breast cancer. I hear many people being ashamed of their scars and having cancer. — Also, I don't understand why even for us, media and everybody wants us to have two breasts. It's difficult to live with prosthetics. Why not make lingerie and other clothes for one those who have only breast?”

Different disabilities are part of being diverse, and as stated in the example above, consumers would like to see social media marketing regarding different disabilities. However, as stated in survey results, 51% of respondents answered that they would like to see more different disabilities in social media marketing. Compared to other qualities mentioned, exposure to different disabilities on social media marketing was found less essential quality. This might be because the consumers who represent these qualities are minority from the population. The majority might not find this as essential as the other qualities mentioned, but consumers find it as essential part of embracing diversity in social media marketing.

“The more diversity (in social media marketing) the better, because more people can relate to the models (in ads). I bet that it would mean a world to someone to see someone similar to them in an ad and everybody should be able feel represented.”

Based on the survey results, the consumer finds it essential that they can relate to the social media content. However, they often feel like they cannot relate to the content they see. Through relating to the content consumers can imagine better how the product would look on them. As stated in the example above, through diverse content, consumers will get exposure to similar appearance qualities that they can identify themselves to. However, consumers still find it essential to be exposed to the other body types, too, since it implements that being different and having different qualities is normal.

“I also think it's a shame that skin is the one of the first things to be photoshopped in advertisement to look like nothing in real life. Vitiligo seems to be the only one that isn't photoshopped and it even doesn't affect the skin condition, only the pigmentation.”

To an increasing extent, consumers want to see genuine models without retouching, over posing, and diverse appearance qualities in brands' social media marketing ads. As stated above, consumers find it important that they are exposed to different skin conditions too, like acne and blemishes.

" I was sad to choose those options that I chose. I liked those skinny bodies and i dream of having a body like that. I also think that it isn't very healthy behavior and I'd like to stop thinking like that."

" I find it particularly difficult not to be influenced by all the standards society set for women. I want to evolve and be in a place where I wouldn't care that much anymore, but it takes time and I admit I still have work to do on the way I view myself and others."

As stated before, consumers sense of body image has been shaped by society through the years, meaning it needs lots of exposure from brands to overwrite years of giving this unrealistic type of body to consumers. According the survey, some respondents pointed out that they still want to see traditional models since it represents the dream body and the ultimate ideal body to them. This might be since they have been exposed to those body expectations since young age. Changing these unrealistic structural qualities in fashion and beauty industries takes consistent and aware effort from brands to change. However, this is the effort that brands need to start seeing, or they might drop out of the consumers' favour. Consistency plays a vital role in this situation.

According to survey, brands should not leave skinnier models out form their ads in the name of body positivity, since then the situation could turn upside down. Then again, some consumers could not relate to the models used in the social media content. Body positivity does not mean admiring anybody or saying that anybody type would be better; it is about saying all the bodies are good and should be proud of it. On this note, it is evident that diversity in all types of ways is essential, including all body types and other qualities, like skin colour and disabilities. Almost as important as using diverse models is the usage of Photoshop. Consumers want to see natural bodies with all the qualities like stretch marks and discolouration.

To sum up everything above, for consumers, the ensemble is essential: in addition to the product, the brand image, values and lifestyle are essential. Being body positive in a brand's social media marketing is part of this ensemble. As concluded before, millennials and Generation Z consumers find it increasingly critical that brands present the same values as them. Body positivity and diversity being some of the values that are increasing the importance.

5.2 Brand perspective

According to the survey and the research on how brands could be more body positive and diverse in their social media marketing. However, there are crucial factors that brands should take into consideration when doing body-positive social media marketing. Body positive content in social media marketing should be genuine and consistent, meaning posting a few ads using a plus-sized model is not enough to impact the brand image. There are many other factors to fulfil before the brand can call itself a body-positive brand.

"I hate "glued-on" body positivity, where a brand or an influencer pretends to be body positive (to get more sales etc.), but really isn't. I think brands/influencers should do their research and really do it properly, or not bother at all. Can't stand fakes!"

According to research, usage of body positive content in social media can improve the brand image in consumer's eyes. However, if a brand wants to use body positivity as a tool to improve its brand image, it should have the same values in its brand identity too. If a brand advertises diverse skin colours, they should have suitable ethical values to fit into it. As stated before, social media savvy consumers will notice this conflict sooner or later, and this might cause more harm to the brand than benefit. As stated in a survey response below, the influential embracing of diversity is about the details and the bigger picture, meaning all the aspects should be taken in the notice. Consumers, especially in social media savvy millennials and Generation Z, will find out quickly if the brand does not meet their values or operates with dishonesty.

"Body positivity is not only about having "bigger" models and "using" them to make a statement. I would look into the deeper meaning of why brands want to include everyone, is it more like a marketing thing or a real wish to be inclusive. Like how many different sizes they actually offer, is everyone paid equally, is the company also inclusive and equal on the inside operations etc. It is a very important topic! But it needs to be more than just having that 1 person of color or 1 normal size model among many "traditional" models that they display while having shady operations that they're trying to hide."

Before considering and planning using diverse models in social media marketing, brands should notice their product variety and if it offers the same value as the ad claims it to have. For example, if the brand posts a picture on social media where they use a plus-

sized model wearing lingerie, but product sizing goes only up to large, consumers will be quick to point that out. As stated in chapter 3.2.2, if products fail to meet consumers' expectations based on the ad they saw on social media, consequences might be fatal.

” It is nice that nowadays you see little bit more non-edited photos on socialmedia. Like for example some influencers have started to post instagram vs reality -photos. So you can see they are not always perfect. Maybe brands could use that too?”

According to the survey made about the subject, most respondents found that social media advertising is more appealing when the models were more relatable and natural (i.e., without retouching). Based on statistics (figure 6) and answers from open questions, it can be concluded that consumers want less retouched and edited social media content. Consumers want to see more natural human body qualities, like stretch marks, skin conditions and tummy rolls. Brands should start providing transparency to consumers and embrace positive body image. It can be argued that since stopping retouching does not require significant changes to the brand identity, this is one of the first things that brands should start implementing to their social media content to be more body positive.

Body positive social media marketing does not straight correlate more sales, but they can impact the brand image and how consumers view the brand. As stated in chapter 4.2, consumers will be more likely to follow brands on social media if they offer some value to them (e.g., inspiration, entertainment or educational content). Combined with the other factors that consumers nowadays find crucial, brands can generate more sales by developing brand identity toward values that meet consumer values through social media exposure.

To conclude, everything stated before fashion and beauty brands should consider integrating body positivity in brand identity and through this influence to brand image. Hence, be consistent and authentic about it. There are pitfalls that brands should be aware of and make a conscious plan to avoid. Being indeed a body-positive brand takes structural changes, consistency and high awareness of social trends. However, based on research done about the subject, it will benefit the brand image, brand reputation and ultimately, revenue.

6 Summary

To sum up, everything stated before fashion and beauty brands should integrate body positivity in brand identity, thus being consistent and authentic about it. There are pitfalls that brands should be aware of and make a conscious plan to avoid. According to the research made about the topic and survey, body positivity is already essential to consumers. However, it has a tremendous change of rising to be a more crucial part of the future.

Online and literature sources were used to build a theoretical base. In examining the sources, special attention was paid to the source's timing and reliability, especially with online sources. There are many publications about social media and body positivity that might be outdated content due to the industry's rapid development and growth. Therefore, the theoretical part's data sources are primarily based on online publications, where data and information provided is the latest and most reliable material about the topic. The articles about the topic have been compared with other sources to ensure the accuracy of the material. Due to the limited literature sources, the number of online sources has increased, and critical media literacy has been used when studying sources.

As stated before, the invalid research population is well defined; questions answer to research questions and results are repeatable. Reliable research of the research sample has to be carefully defined and presentable to the population. The sample size must be large enough, results are repeatable, and data is collected and analyzed professionally.

The survey was half-structured, meaning it contained quantitative and qualitative questions to get more detailed data about the phenomenon. The quantitative questions would not have answered the research problem, but with the qualitative questions, the survey's reliability was high. It can be assumed that the survey results can be repeated.

In survey demographics, geographic location was not explicitly set, which means response from different countries. Majority of answers were from Finland, and the rest of the answers were mostly from Western Countries such as French, Italy and Canada. While setting the sample population, it was expected to have more global answers than Finnish respondents. Thus, social media is global. The survey was also set to be global. Based on the survey results, it was assumed that respondents' geographical location did not significantly influence the results in this survey case. The sample of the survey was

carefully defined by using research made by the subject, and the size of the sample (n=481) was reasonably well presentable of the population.

Data were collected by using the professional web-based tool Webropol and analyzed by using SPSS as well as Webropol Data Mining tool. The resulting percent were rounded to the nearest integer because of the marginal error's possibility.

This study provides a foundation for future studies to investigate the profundity of body positive content in social media marketing and the importance of a good brand image in establishing and maintaining online brand brand-customer interaction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Consumer survey

Body Positivity in Social Media Marketing

The topic of this questionnaire is body positivity in social media marketing. This questionnaire is made for the Bachelor thesis research. All the answers will be totally anonymous, and data collected will be used only for educational purposes. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact tinja.oinonen@metropolia.fi. Please fill open questions in English.

Thank you for your time in advantage!

This questionnaire takes approximately 5 min. Open till 6.10.2020.

1. Age *

- 18-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31-35 years

1. Question was mandatory. Multiple choice question, only one answer. The options were as follows:

2. Gender *

- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other

2. Question was mandatory. Multiple choice question, only one answer. The options were as above.

3. Nationality and country of residency

Nationality

Country of residency

3. Non-mandatory question. Two open questions.

4. Do you follow different fashion and beauty brands on social media?

- Yes, I like seeing their new products and get inspiration.
- No, I'm not really interested to follow brands.
- Some of them.
- Other

4. Non-mandatory question. Multiple choice question, one open, only one answer. The options were as above.

5. I think that different body types, ethnicities and other appearance qualities are presented well in social media marketing by fashion and beauty brands.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

5. Non-mandatory question. Claim, answer on scale from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

6. It is important to me that I can relate to the models that fashion and beauty brands use in their social media marketing.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

6. Non-mandatory question. Claim, answer on scale from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

7. I often feel like I cannot relate to models used in social media marketing.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

7. Non-mandatory question. Claim, answer on scale from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

8. Would you consider buying more from a brand if their advertisement on social media were more diverse and relatable?

- Yes I would, I find it important.
- No, that doesn't affect on my purchasing choices.
- Maybe, it depends. (On what?)

8. Non-mandatory question. Multiple choice question, one short open, only one answer. The options were as above.

9. In fashion and beauty brands' social media marketing, I would like to see more models with the following qualities:

- different body shapes
- tummy rolls
- stretch marks
- cellulite
- different skin conditions
- different skin colors
- different ethnicities
- different heights
- gender neutral
- different disabilities

9. Non-mandatory question. Multiple choice question, multiple answers. Options were as above.

10. I think body-positive social media marketing creates a better brand image in the eyes of the consumers.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

10. Non-mandatory question. Claim, answer on scale from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

11. It is essential to the fashion and beauty brands to be genuine and consistent about the body-positive content they use in social media marketing.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

11. Non-mandatory question. Claim, answer on scale from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

12. Which one of the sportswear social media ad seems more appealing to you? (Click the picture)



Option 1



Option 2

12. Non-mandatory question. Multiple choice question, only one answer. Options were as above.

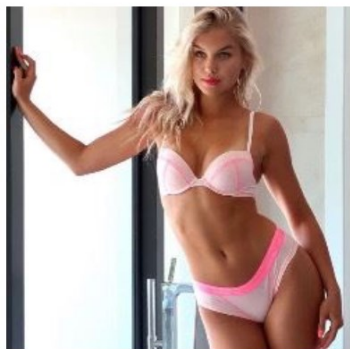
13. Why did you choose that ad from the previous question (write the option number you chose)?

13. Non-mandatory question. Long open question.

14. Which ad would you rather see in your social media feed? (Click the picture)



Option 1



Option 2

14. Non-mandatory question. Multiple choice question, only one answer. Options were as above

15. Why did you choose that ad from the previous question (write the option number you chose)?

15. Non-mandatory question. Long open question

16. Other thoughts about the topic you want to share?

16. Non-mandatory question. Long open question