



UNIVERSIDADE
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THE INFLUENCE OF BODY-POSITIVE INSTAGRAM CONTENT
ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND BRAND ATTITUDE
CASE STUDY: ARMEDANGELS' CONTENT COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Communication
Sciences with the specialization in Strategic
Communication and Leadership

By

Victoria Braunsfeld

Universidade Católica Portuguesa

September 2023



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Under the supervision of Professor Dr. Mariana Victorino

Abstract

Over the past decade, body image literature has begun to focus on body image disorders and examine the construct of positive body image. Similarly, "body positivity" is a growing trend in social media that aims to challenge prevailing societal ideals of beauty and promote acceptance and appreciation of all bodies and appearances. This movement advocates for the portrayal of people in advertising with diverse body shapes, sizes, and appearances, so that the content positively influences their brand attitudes and consumer behavior. Therefore, the target audience is now making demands on companies about the types of body representations they use on social media.

This research combines these issues and examines the portrayal of models in view of the body-positive movement in the external marketing communication of the ARMEDANGELS label, more specifically on the brand's social media. Analysing individual Instagram postings, through this case study, it is shown how the topic is generally portrayed on the company's channel. In addition, an interview with an ARMEDANGELS employee sheds light on the company's perspective on body positivity. Finally, the perspectives of the target group, which corresponds to the German Generation Y, are determined through an online survey. When comparing the results, it becomes clear that body-positive content positively influences the brand attitude and consumer behavior of ARMEDANGELS' target group. ARMEDANGELS representative also recognizes the potential of the content and the relevance of the topic, but the company still needs to manage to implement it on its Instagram account. Based on the results, recommendations are derived for ARMEDANGELS and other fashion industry companies. Accordingly, the results offer theoretical and practical implications for future research.

Keywords: Body Positivity, Communication, Social Media, Consumer Behavior, Brand Attitude, Generation Y

Resumo

Durante a última década, a literatura sobre a imagem corporal começou a centrar-se nas perturbações relacionadas com a mesma e a examinar a construção de uma imagem corporal positiva. Do mesmo modo, a "positividade corporal" é uma tendência crescente nos meios de comunicação social que visa desafiar os ideais sociais de beleza prevaletentes e promover a aceitação e a apreciação de todos os corpos e aparências. Este movimento defende a representação na publicidade de pessoas com formas, tamanhos e aparências corporais diferentes, de modo a que o conteúdo influencie positivamente as suas atitudes em relação à marca e o comportamento dos consumidores. O público-alvo começou, assim, a fazer exigências às empresas sobre o tipo de representações corporais que utilizam nas redes sociais.

Esta investigação combina estas questões e examina a representação de modelos no contexto do movimento da positividade corporal na comunicação de marketing externo da marca ARMEDANGELS, mais especificamente nas redes sociais da mesma. Analisando publicações individuais no Instagram, através do estudo de caso sobre a marca mostra-se como o tópico é geralmente retratado neste canal de comunicação da empresa. Além disso, uma entrevista com um colaborador da ARMEDANGELS esclarece a perspetiva da empresa sobre o movimento da positividade corporal. Por fim, as perspetivas do grupo-alvo, que corresponde à Geração Y alemã, são determinadas através de um inquérito online. Ao comparar os resultados, torna-se claro que o conteúdo positivo para o corpo influencia positivamente a atitude dos consumidores em relação à marca e o comportamento do consumidor do grupo-alvo da ARMEDANGELS. A representante da ARMEDANGELS também reconhece o potencial do conteúdo e a relevância do tema, mas a empresa ainda tem de conseguir implementá-lo na sua conta do Instagram. Com base nos resultados, são formuladas recomendações para a ARMEDANGELS e para outras empresas do sector da moda. Por conseguinte, os resultados oferecem implicações teóricas e práticas para investigação futura.

Palavras-chave: Positividade corporal, Comunicação, Redes sociais, Comportamento do consumidor, Atitude de marca, Geração Y

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Statement of Original Authorship

“I declare that I have used no other sources and aids other than those indicated in this master thesis. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are indicated as such, i.e. cited and/or attributed. This thesis was not submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. I hereby agree that my thesis is reviewed and checked on eventual plagiarism with the help of a plagiarism detection program.”

Lisbon, 14.11.2021

Victoria Braunsfeld

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and justification of the research

Mass media play a dominant role in conveying cultural stereotypes about ideal body image (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Tiggemann, 2004). In particular, social media such as Facebook and Instagram are relevant sources for social media users for critical reflection on one's body image. When using social media, users are constantly exposed to images that convey a typical body ideal, such as the slimness ideal for women and the muscle ideal for men (Cohen et al., 2019). Extensive studies show that this reinforces the slimness ideal. As a result, self-esteem and body image are weakened, and associated psychological distress, including dissatisfaction with one's body, is amplified (Grabe et al., 2008; Sohn & Youn, 2013). Slenderness-idealized media images do not only have adverse effects on body image. Researchers who have conducted studies on advertising have found that exposure to slender and attractive models leads to trusting attitudes and purchase intentions toward the advertised product or brand (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Till & Busler, 2000). Although the negative effects of portraying a thin body image on consumer self-esteem are well known (Grabe et al., 2008; Sohn & Youn, 2013), many brands continue to promote beauty ideals in their marketing campaigns. Companies believe a slender, idealized body image has a more significant positive impact (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Till & Busler, 2000).

Through the body-positive movement¹ in the last ten years, the literature has begun to focus on body image disorders and examine the construct of positive body image. The philosophy behind the body-positive movement on social media encourages women to accept their bodies, celebrate their insecurities (Cohen et al., 2019), challenge beauty ideals, and embrace diversity in appearance and body size (Markey, 2020). This movement has increased body-positive content in marketing campaigns, and more and more companies recognize the issue's relevance. The body-positive movement has had a powerful impact on the fashion industry. Consumers have become more aware of the problem and no longer accept societal beauty standards (Pascual, 2020). Brands are beginning to respond to the movement by

¹ Body-positive movement definition: This movement entails rejecting unattainable, narrowly defined beauty ideals and urging individuals to question prevailing societal messages about beauty, while embracing a broader range of body sizes and appearances as attractive (Cohen et al., 2019; Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

improving clothing offerings to include plus sizes and opting for a size-conscious market (Kohan, 2020). Companies are starting to show to be more responsible for the values they convey in their marketing campaigns.

Studies that have already been conducted about this movement also provide evidence of its positive extent. On the one hand, these indicate that viewing positive body images on social media leads to women showing significantly better body evaluation and overall satisfaction than women confronted with images that conform to the slimness ideal (Rodger et al., 2022). Second, researchers at the time found that average-looking and average-sized models had a positive impact on consumers' brand trust and purchasing behavior compared to extremely thin, very attractive models (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Caballero et al., 1989; Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). However, the movement has also been questioned by some researchers. Webb et al. (2017) questioned whether many images of women's bodies and the emphasis on "loving looks" further reinforce society's preoccupation with appearance over other attributes rather than overriding them. In addition, Haye (2019) argues that the proliferation of body-positive content could be detrimental to one's health and praise unhealthy norms.

The present study addresses a gap in previous research, which has mainly focused on the impact of body-positive content on self-esteem. Few studies have examined the effects of such content on consumers' brand attitudes and consumption behaviors, particularly in the context of social media. Their primary focus has been on traditional advertising formats such as television commercials and they have mainly looked at the underwear and cosmetics industries.

In this study, the German fashion company ARMEDANGELS is used as a case study. A case study by Lohmann et al. (2021) already exists in the literature, which refers to the company ARMEDANGELS. The study connects the topics of gender and sustainability and examines the representation of gender in external marketing communication of the fair fashion label ARMEDANGELS. The result of the study shows that the male gender and the

integration of LGBTQ+ communities² are underrepresented. Interviews with different customers show that AREMDANGELS should break conservative gender roles as well as equal representation of male and female personas (Lohmann et al., 2021). Accordingly, AREMDANGELS should align genders, break with general gender segregation, and implement the integration of LGBTQ+ communities in future marketing efforts (Lohmann et al., 2021).

The current research complements the study conducted by Lohmann et al. by examining the impact of body-positive content on brand attitudes and consumer behavior within the fashion industry, specifically focusing on the brand ARMEDANGELS, focusing on German female Generation Y, representing the company's target group. Generation Y is an interesting target group as they have grown up with social media and are strongly influenced by online marketing campaigns while questioning many things (Hesse, 2019). Furthermore, the social medium Instagram is chosen as the medium to be analyzed in the case study, as social media increasingly provides information on social norms and appearances (Bair, Kelly, Serdar & Mazzeo, 2012).

This study contributes to feminist marketing research and aims to address existing gaps related to body-positive content on social media in the context of consumer behavior. An analysis of the potential opportunities for the body-positive movement is relevant because companies have a great responsibility based on the values, they convey in their marketing campaigns. By examining a concrete case study, this work contributes to applied research and offers insights for brands and companies that want to optimize their communication strategies in social media to influence the perception of their brand and the behavior of their target audience.

1.2. Research objective and research question

The main objective of this research is to understand the impact of body-positive Instagram content on the brand attitude and consumer behavior of female Generation Y in Germany.

² LGBTQ+ communities: LGBTQ+ communities refer to groups of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. These communities are formed to provide support, acceptance, and a sense of belonging for people who may face discrimination or marginalization based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (Parmenter, 2020).

The intention is to find out whether body-positive content positively influences the brand attitude and consumer behavior of the female Generation Y and to what extent companies and specifically the brand ARMEDANGELS should implement this content in their social media content strategy, namely on Instagram.

Accordingly, a further goal is to derive concrete recommendations for action for the practice of the company ARMEDANGELS from the results obtained in the empirical research. With the help of the study results, ARMEDANGELS should be able to understand the importance of the body-positive movement for their existing customers and the target group to be reached and how they can adapt their strategy accordingly to improve their content and communication strategies on social media.

Based on these objectives, the following research question is formulated:

“How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content affect female German Generation Y's brand attitude and consumer behavior in the specific case of ARMEDANGELS?”

The components of the research subject, both brand attitude and consumer behavior, as well as Generation Y, are well-researched topics by themselves. The topic of body-positive content has not yet been extensively researched and the present study aims to combine these aspects to contribute to feminist marketing research.

The following sub-chapters explain how the study is structured and organized and which methodology will be used to answer the research question.

1.3. Scientific positioning

The scientific positioning of this work lies at the intersection of communication science, communication, and consumer behavior. The ontology, epistemology, and methodology are elucidated to understand how fundamental assumptions about reality, the nature of knowledge acquisition, and applied research methods are reflected.

The ontology of this work assumes that social constructions of body images and beauty standards play a significant role in brand perception and consumer behavior. It recognizes that reality is subjectively perceived, and individual beliefs, attitudes, and social norms influence how women of Generation Y interpret brands and their communication.

The epistemological position of this work relies on an interpretive research tradition. Interpretivism is a philosophical and methodological perspective in social sciences that emphasizes that individual interpretations, subjective meanings, and social constructions shape social phenomena and human behavior. Interpretivism postulates that truth and knowledge cannot be regarded as objective entities but depend on individuals' experiences, social context, and cultural norms. The interpretive perspective assumes that people construct their reality and meaning by connecting and interpreting phenomena. This approach values the subjective experiences, attitudes, and interpretations of actors and examines social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Ryan, 2018). Through qualitative and quantitative data analysis, an in-depth understanding of the impact of strategic communication on consumer behavior and brand attitudes is sought.

The methodology of this work encompasses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem, considering different perspectives. The qualitative portion is embedded within the predominant quantitative method, creating a multi-level perspective on the research topic.

By conducting a qualitative content analysis of ARMEDANGELS posts on Instagram and an interview with an employee of the company, an understanding of the brand's Instagram strategy and attitudes toward body-positive content is deepened. Additionally, quantitative survey data is utilized to quantify the influence of these contents on brand attitudes and consumer behavior. The case study method is employed to analyze the specific context of the ARMEDANGELS brand. Different sets of data can be generated from this procedure, which is obtained in a single survey phase and analyzed separately, and then compared.

1.4. Outline of the thesis and applied methodology

This master thesis is divided into seven main chapters. In the first chapter, the introduction, the reader gets a rough idea of the researcher's motivation, background information, and the

context of the chosen topic. This chapter outlines the relevance of the topic as well as the research objective and goals of the thesis. The second chapter deals with the literature, divided into four subchapters. These are "Brand Communication on Instagram in the fashion industry," "Body diverse content on Instagram in the fashion industry," "Brand Attitude and consumer behavior of German female Generation Y", and "Conclusions about the current status of the research conceptual basis." Each of the four chapters includes a summary of key authors and concepts. While the first three subchapters provide a general understanding of the respective topics, the fourth subchapter contextualizes the insights gained from the first three chapters. The third chapter introduces the ARMEDANGELS company and presents its corporate philosophy, business model, communication strategy, and current challenges.

After laying the theoretical foundation, the fourth chapter explains the methodological options of the research. A mixed methodology consisting of a qualitative and quantitative approach was chosen. The qualitative research consists of a content analysis, according to Mayring (2000) of the Instagram account of ARMEDANGELS, and an expert interview with the Head of Influencer Marketing of ARMEDANGELS. This method is used to analyze ARMEDANGELS' Instagram content and understand the company's intentions and how it views its target audience regarding body-positive content. The results of the qualitative research provide the framework to embed and align the quantitative research results in chapter five. The quantitative research consists of an online survey addressing how Generation Y is affected by body-positive content and their attitudes toward brands and consumer behavior. In addition, their current brand attitudes towards ARMEDANGELS will be queried. This methodology is used to answer the research question. In the fifth chapter, the results of the data collection are reported, and in the sixth chapter of the study, the most important results are analyzed, combined, and interpreted. Finally, the seventh chapter summarizes the most important findings and results, lists the study's limitations, gives hints for future research, and discusses practical implications for the ARMEDANGELS company.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of current and foundational literature to support the central object of this study. Moreover, this chapter investigates prior research and different studies

to get a more in-depth insight into the conceptual grounding that supports the findings of this research which, combined with the empirical results, will ground and support the final conclusions of the research.

2.1. Brand Communication on Instagram in the fashion industry

2.1.1. Brand communication

Brands are an essential and accepted part of our everyday world (Hoepfner, 2015). They are intangible and represent an asset that forms the interface between the company and stakeholders to develop loyalty and trust (Zehir et al., 2011). From the perspective of brand communication, Wijaya (2013) defines a brand as a symbol that remains in the minds of consumers and evokes a certain feeling or meaning. Consequently, a brand is more than just a logo, a symbol, a trademark, or the name of a particular product. A brand is a commitment and a promise to its stakeholders that must remain in the market (Iglesias et al., 2017).

Brand communication is the main integrative tool for managing a brand's relationship with its employees, customers, suppliers, media, and community (Zehir et al., 2011). Moreover, Meffert and Bolz (1998) define brand communication as the appropriate placement of a brand in a market to positively influence consumer buying behavior. Overall, communicating with stakeholders starts with communication with the employees of a company. By understanding the brand values, employees can spread the brand message to differentiate the brand from its competitors (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). However, this study focuses on external brand communication, so the internal dialog of brands will not be discussed further below.

Following the definitions of internal brand communication, external brand communication is understood as all activities of message transmission with brand reference between a brand-managing organization and its external target groups (Burmam & Piehler, 2019). The key objective of external brand communication is to raise awareness and attention, provide information, create a brand image, build trust, evoke emotions, convey loyalty, and engage with people. Furthermore, the strength of each of these outcomes depends on the interaction between consumer preferences, the environment, and the content of the message. Thus, the

brand can build trust, reputation, and image. Consequently, all contacts between the brand and the brand recipients influence the impact of the brand and the attitude towards the brand (Batra & Keller, 2016).

All common instruments of external communication are at the brand's disposal, such as classic advertising, out-of-home media, online communication, including social media, direct communication, public relations, sales promotion, trade fairs and exhibitions, event marketing, sponsoring, and product placement (Burmamann & Piehler, 2019). A brand must decide where it wants to create touchpoints with its customers, what kind of messages and tonality are necessary, and what is the right place and time for the messages to be sent (Batra & Keller, 2016).

Recently, development in the market for media offerings has been observed, in which business enterprises themselves are communicating with their various stakeholder groups, from retailers to end consumers, via an increasing number of online media channels³. According to Schmid (2020), companies are becoming media. The reason for this is digitization, which has changed the environment of brand communication and created new challenges and opportunities for companies (Batra & Keller, 2016). According to Redler (2019), digitalization can be understood as the process of penetrating all areas of life with information technology, especially connected with the use of computer networks, the (partly autonomous) use of hardware and software solutions of artificial intelligence, and the establishment of processes based on digital data. As Petry (2016) points out, this means a transformation process of great scope. It involves a process that involves machines in communication, which people and organizations must adapt to (Baecker, 2017). Accordingly, there are strong effects on brand communication which led to much attention being paid to changing the environment of brand communication compared to what it was fifty, thirty, or perhaps even just ten years ago (Keller, 2009). Digitally born consumers are inevitably connected differently than previous generations (Rogoll, 2015). While a 1:1 or 1:n pattern of sender-receiver relationship prevailed in traditional brand communication,

³ Definition Online Media Channels: "Online media channels include such communication vehicles as websites, social media, email, and search engines" (Govoni, 2004).

today, the transition to n:n communication is unmistakable (Hättler, 2012). This development is illustrated by Meffert (2015) in Figure 1.

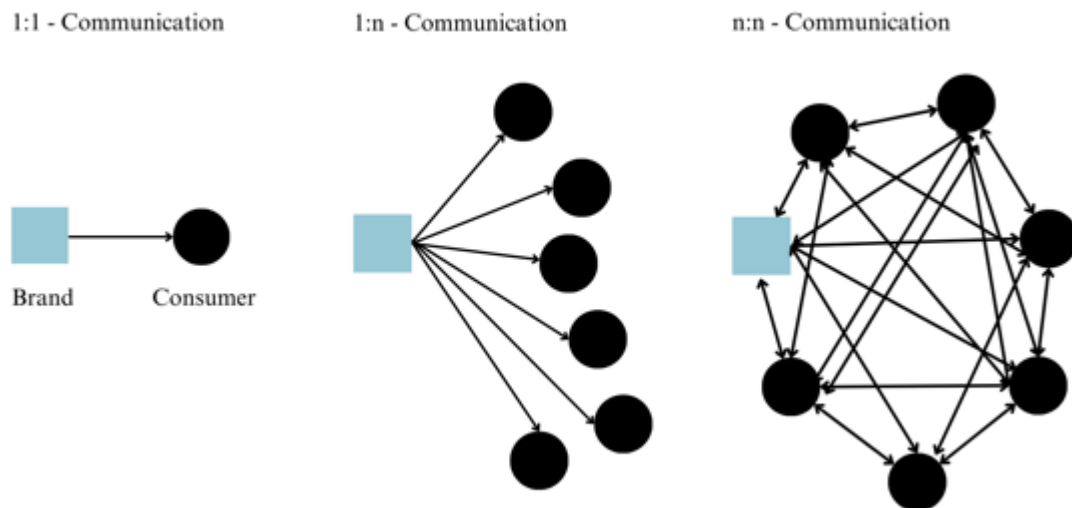


Figure 1 **Interaction Model in Social Networks.** *Source: Own representation adapted from Meffert et al. (2015)*

In today's communication context, an equal exchange occurs between many senders and receivers and, usually, in a global, public framework, with permanent content storage. Nowadays, any user can create and publish content without special technical knowledge. The self-created communication content and the involvement of the demanders in all activities demonstrate the central characteristics of Web 2.0 (Redler, 2019). Nowadays, people are already talking about Web 3.0. This is considered the next phase in the development of the Internet and is based on the core concepts of decentralization, trust and permission freedom, artificial intelligence and machine learning, connectivity and omnipresence, and the greater benefit of users. However, no standardized definition exists (Investopedia, 2022).

Brands are increasingly taking over tasks from the media, such as entertainment, social networking, and informing their recipients, which is why the boundaries between brands and media are becoming blurred. More and more companies are using social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms, as a communication tool to reach their target group and entertain them at the same time (Baetzgen & Tropp, 2014).

2.1.2. Instagram in brand communication

2.1.2.1. *Definition and characterization of Instagram*

Social media are based on the development of the Internet from the so-called Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 2.0 describes the behavioral patterns of Internet users on the World Wide Web, previously shown in Figure 1. Social media summarize Internet-based applications, digital media, and technologies that build on the user behavior of Web 2.0 (Lenzen, 2018, Meffert et al., 2015).

On social networks, users are enabled to share opinions, impressions, experiences, and information through comments, ratings, and recommendations, to gather knowledge, and to create media content individually or collectively (Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft, 2009; Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018). The user's content creation is called "user-generated content" (UGC). This content represents a certain amount of creative work but was not created in a professional environment (Meffert et al., 2015). Social media are characterized by real-time communication, and content can be edited and published in real-time without losing time (Lenzen, 2018). This leads to increased speed, the rapid development of information, and the creation of relationship networks (Kern, 2016; Lenzen, 2018).

Likewise, content is globally available and can be communicated to an unlimited number of people (Kern, 2016; Meffert et al., 2015). Another feature is the possibility of hypermediality. The user is not limited in the choice of communication media and can use videos, images, and audio files (Meffert et al., 2015). Meanwhile, private users not only use social media to exchange information, and companies have also recognized the potential of social networks to get in touch with consumers (Kern, 2016).

As a communication tool, social media can be divided into different communication carriers (Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018). These are distinguished between forums, weblogs, microblogs, social networks, wikis, social bookmark portals, application portals, directory assistance portals, and photo, document, music, video sharing portals (Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018; Lenzen, 2018). The communication carrier social networks will be explained in more detail. Social networks aim to facilitate communication between users via the Internet to establish

and maintain new relationships. Social networks allow Internet users to network via websites by creating user profiles. Friendship invitations or messages can be sent via these. The focus is on information exchange and relationship building (Homburg, 2017).

Instagram is a free social network that allows users to share experiences and activities. To use the photo and video-sharing app, it is necessary to sign up for a free membership, which is only possible from the age of 13 (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016). Although Instagram was founded in October 2010 and is one of the youngest "photo sharing" services, it can already be counted among the sixth largest social networks worldwide (Christoph & Faßmann; Scholz, 2017). The average age of users is between 14 to 29 years. Instagram is mainly used via mobile devices. The web profiles are only available with limited functions. However, since its purchase by Facebook in 2012, work has been done to improve web profiles. The platform's focus is primarily the publication of photo and video material, which is intended to encourage users to "like" or comment on each other, on the one hand, and on the other hand, offers the opportunity to stage a perfect virtual world. This is possible in the form of various functions. In the following paragraphs, we will refer exclusively to the functions relevant to this study, the Instagram Feed, Stories, and Reels (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016).

According to Instagram, the Instagram Feed is defined as a "mobile-first destination where people share photos and videos, connect with their community, and explore the things they care about" (Instagram Business, n.d., a). The Instagram Feed is the app's homepage and the first point of contact with users. Whether private users or businesses use the feed, it can be used differently. For example, Instagram defines the feed for businesses as follows: "For businesses, feed is where you can visually tell your brand story, showcase products, and inspire people to connect more deeply with what you offer" (Instagram Business, n.d., a). Feed Post can be a single image or image series (Instagram Business, n.d., b). In addition, there is also the Instagram Stories feature. Stories allow private users and businesses to upload short, vertical images or videos that disappear after 24 hours. The goal is to make this content quick, memorable, and fun. Companies have the option to run Story and Feed Ads to increase brand awareness, drive traffic to their website, or even tag products for easy purchase directly in the app (Instagram Business, n.d., c). To reach these goals, they can also use shoppable posts by using product tags. Product tags are defined by Instagram Business

as follows: “Product tags let you highlight items from your catalogue directly in your images and videos – including in Feed, reels, stories, and product mentions in your profile bio or feed copy – so people can easily tap on a tag and learn more“ (2023, d). Since August 2020, there has been a new feature on the app, the Instagram Reels. According to Instagram, “Reels are fun, immersive videos that can creatively express the brand story and inform the audience. In addition, profiles can be discovered by other users” (Instagram Business, n.d., e). Users use Reels to participate in cultural trends, collaborate with the community, and discover new ideas. With creative tools like effects, music, and stickers, businesses can create entertaining videos that inspire audiences (Instagram Business, 2022, e).

2.1.2.2. *Instagram as a means of brand communication*

Instagram has 1.48 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2021, a), of which 25 million are business profiles (Statista, 2021, b). As briefly mentioned earlier, business profiles are granted additional features, such as the use of a business feed, links to the website in the story, the provision of business profile statistics, and the placement of Instagram ads (Scholz, 2017). Businesses hope to gain customer feedback through comments, and the "like me" function, and the feedback is incorporated into the development or improvement of products. In the future, this can strengthen the brand image in the long term and open new potential target groups (Kern, 2016; Lenzen, 2018). Other goals include brand loyalty, strengthening customer relationships and communication, and increasing website traffic⁴ (Kern, 2016; Lenzen, 2018; Weinberg, 2014). The goal is to encourage the users to make and share recommendations about different content (Kern, 2016).

To attract the attention of many people, potential customers, or business partners, companies specifically publish their content, products, or services in the form of text, images, video, or audio on social networks (Hettler, 2010; Weinberg, 2014). This content is referred to as "brand-generated content" (BGC). BGC is contrary to UGC, as specialized staff creates them within a professional environment (Meffert et al., 2015). People and emotions are Instagram's focus, and Instagram is perceived as the most emotional social network. Content should create entertaining and exciting brand experiences. In this way, the platform's experience and character should be maintained. It is, therefore, important that brands act like

⁴ Website Traffic: Website traffic refers to the number of visitors browsing a website (gruenderszene.de, 2019).

people. Otherwise, the content can be perceived as disruptive by users. Consequently, is not only the quality of high relevance but also the so-called storytelling (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016).

In storytelling, advertising messages are integrated into stories. Stories touch the reader, can trigger emotions, and thus manage to stay in their memory. According to neuromarketing, this translates into sustainable communication because only stories, and not lists of product benefits, are relevant for the brain. In this way, both customers and potential customers can be reached emotionally (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016). Storytelling can be assigned to content marketing, which is generally considered of immense importance in the digital age, and this importance is not expected to diminish in the future. On the contrary, it is even expected to increase. The discipline is seen not only as a trend but as suitable communication for reaching and retaining consumers in the digital age. In some cases, it is even understood as the communication form of the future (Borst, 2017). According to Reinartz, content marketing is defined as being “responsible for producing content that entertains and informs the user. It is thus a counter design to frontal advertising” (Reinartz, 2015). Thus, content marketing content never has an aggressive or direct advertising message, which means that the focus is not on the products or services of the manufacturer or the company, but on the interests and needs of the consumer (Borst, 2017). Studies show that 75% of companies are increasing their investment in content marketing. The average content marketer spends 28% of their marketing budget on content marketing, while the best content marketers spend 46% on this method (Kinsta, 2022).

This is also highly relevant for the design of Instagram advertisements ("Ads"). Since September 2015, Instagram ads have been available for every company. According to the Facebook Ads Manager, 21 million people in Germany can be reached via Instagram ads (Firsching, 2020). The ads that contain the label "sponsored" can be recognized as paid advertising by consumers (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016). A survey shows the success of the concept: 27 percent of users surveyed have never noticed ads on Instagram. However, of the 73 percent who have noticed the ads, 52 percent do not find them annoying if the content matches their interests (Statista, 2021, c). The ads can appear in the users' "feed" and Stories.

Since June 2015, Instagram has also integrated call-to-action buttons in ads with only one image. These direct-response formats should lead to website visits and offline sales for businesses. On the user's side, this innovation would have the advantage that the user can directly access the website and the product or download the app (Instagram Business, 2016). In early August 2015, Instagram also announced that it had released its advertising application programming interface (API). This means that service providers can now "place ads on Instagram on behalf of their customers, have them start automatically, and analyze performance" (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016, p.19). In doing so, the photo and video-sharing community use the same tools "that Facebook also offers when creating ads" (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016, p.19). In addition, advertisers can draw on the user data already analyzed by Facebook to launch efficient and targeted advertising campaigns on Instagram. Previous studies show that Instagram advertising generally positively influences users' consumer behavior, as the communication object triggers emotions in them. Thus, the corporate and marketing goals of the companies are often achieved. But ads and content marketing are not the only ways to advertise on the platform. Influencer marketing is also one of the most important tools to place products. One definition of influencer marketing is described as "a type of marketing that focuses on using leading personalities to communicate your brand's message to a larger market" (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016, p.20). Since the study focuses exclusively on image content, influencer marketing is not considered.

As previously elaborated, advertising content must be authentic and aesthetic (Frank, 2018). What content is authentic, and aesthetic is at the viewer's discretion (Frank, 2018) and is analyzed in more detail in this study about body-positive content.

2.1.2.3. Benefits and pitfalls of brand communication on Instagram

The social media tool Instagram shows both advantages and disadvantages for brand communication. It registers a significant reach, with an estimated global active Instagram user base of about 1.48 billion in 2023, according to a projection by Statista (Statista, 2023, a). Through Instagram's messaging feature, brands can engage directly with these users to foster customer relationships, answer inquiries, address concerns, and solicit feedback. In addition, Instagram's focus is on visual content, which allows brands to present their story in a compelling and engaging way (Hettler, 2010; Weinberg, 2014). Brands can encourage

users to create and share content related to their products or services to build brand loyalty and advocacy. Instagram's platform also encourages the posting of authentic and relatable content that enables brands to build meaningful connections with their audiences (Meffert et al., 2015).

Additionally, Instagram offers brands the opportunity to collaborate with influencers and leverage their follower base to increase brand awareness and reach. Another benefit of influencer marketing is that brands can send special tracking links to influencers that reference the product being promoted. Using these links, brands can track how many people reach the website via the influencer and how many of them purchase the product. The reach of a post can also be tracked. These features also apply to stories, shoppable posts, or ads that the company itself publishes. As a result, all marketing measures can be analyzed and adjusted based on performance metrics (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016).

However, there are also disadvantages of Instagram for brands. The latest global social media trend report of Hubspot and Brandwatch (2023) points out that the platform is highly competitive, and given the presence of many brands on Instagram, it can be a challenge to stand out and capture users' attention. In addition, new formats, such as reels, are regularly introduced on Instagram, and new trends are constantly developing. Keeping up with the fast pace and with current trends can be an additional challenge for businesses. In addition, businesses are subject to certain Instagram policies that limit their freedom of action. For example, companies are not allowed to use popular songs without having purchased the appropriate usage rights, which can result in high costs for companies. In addition, Instagram's algorithm⁵ is subject to regular adjustments. This algorithm impacts the visibility of branded content, making it difficult to reach and engage with the target audience consistently. The study shows that marketers express a sense of being overwhelmed when it comes to staying abreast of trends, adapting to new features, and keeping up with algorithm updates while also demonstrating the business value of their efforts (Hubspot & Brandwatch, 2023).

Even though, as previously mentioned, it is advantageous that brands can interact directly with the Instagram community and gather feedback. At the same time, however, brands are

⁵ Instagram Algorithm: The Instagram algorithm is an artificial intelligence-driven system that examines user behavior in the app. Based on past interactions, the algorithm decides what users will and will not see in their feeds (Stoll, 2023).

also exposed to public comments and feedback, which can sometimes be negative or critical. This requires timely and effective management (Heinen, 2017).

Instagram offers both benefits and challenges for brand communication. It enables brands to have a wide reach, direct dialog, visual storytelling opportunities, collaboration with influencers, and performance analytics. However, there is a huge competition, fast changing trends, policy restrictions, and algorithm adjustments that complicate brand exposure. Despite direct interaction and feedback, brands are also exposed to negative comments which require an effective management. Brands should be aware of these challenges when using Instagram.

2.1.3. Fashion brand communication on Instagram

2.1.3.1. *Background of the use of Instagram in brand communication in the fashion industry*

Social media have become a fixed part of fashion brands in the current marketing world. Due to the highly dynamic nature of the fashion industry, social media are considered a very efficient and cost-effective communication tool as it is also characterized by fast-paced nature (Pattnaik & Trivedi 2020; Ahmad et al., 2015).

Social media provide numerous opportunities for brands to engage with consumers and build a relationship with them directly. Through direct dialogue, reactions to communication measures to convey brand values or product introductions can be viewed and tracked directly, allowing immediate response when needed. Likewise, brands can benefit from the influence of fashion bloggers on consumer buying behavior and from the quick and easy distribution of content. Due to the numerous advantages, large investments are made in online communication (Haar, 2010). Further, it speaks for the fact that there is enormous growth in the online sector in the fashion mail-order business. Fashion brands should accept that increasing digitalization is not a passing trend. With the Internet as the new leading medium, classic media such as magazines or commercials are gradually taking a back seat. With the awareness that advertising measures reach consumers using the corresponding end devices at any time and that one's brand acquires a universal presence, appropriate measures

can be generated to take advantage of these developments, which cannot be stopped anyway (Focken, 2010).

Already predicted trends in the communication of brands on social media are becoming clearer. Fashion brands should show a face, communicate humanely on the Internet, translate what is said into action, and provide content beyond the mere product to ensure long-term relationships with consumers in the future (Brecht, 2020).

2.1.3.2. Challenges and trends of brand communication on Instagram in the fashion industry

Brand communication on Instagram in the fashion industry has evolved in recent years through various trends. One ongoing trend is a collaboration with influencers, which remains popular. Fashion brands are partnering with influencers whose personal brand identity matches their brand image and who have a large followers base. Through these collaborations, fashion brands hope to increase reach and boost engagement among their target audience. Increased collaboration with micro- and nano-influencers in the fashion industry is also a new development. In addition to larger influencers, fashion brands are increasingly opting for collaborations with smaller but highly engaged and specialized influencers. These influencers have a smaller but highly focused following, which allows brands to communicate more targeted messages and better tailor brand communications to specific audiences (Hubspot & Brandwatch, 2023).

Another significant trend is the use of user-generated content (UGC). Fashion brands are increasingly encouraging their audiences to create their content about products and share it on Instagram. In doing so, they are relying on the power of user recommendations and social proof to increase the credibility and authenticity of their brand. By involving consumers in the content creation process, fashion brands hope to increase the target group's identification with the brand and strengthen their loyalty to the company (Christoph, Faßmann, 2016).

The use of interactive features of the platform is another aspect of brand communication on Instagram. Brands are increasingly using polls, quizzes, and interactive stories to engage with their audience and gather valuable insights and feedback. These interactions create a

direct connection between the brand and the target group, which in turn can lead to more intensive engagement with the brand (Hubspot & Brandwatch, 2023).

With growing consumer demand for sustainable and inclusive fashion, brands use Instagram to communicate their commitment to these values. They share behind-the-scenes content and feature various models or brand ambassadors to illustrate their efforts in these areas. Through this communication, brands seek to align themselves as sustainable and inclusive, thereby gaining the interest and loyalty of their target audience (Casata, 2022).

Finally, fashion brands also use Instagram's shoppable posts to provide a seamless shopping experience for their followers. By integrating shoppable posts, users can explore and purchase products directly on the platform (Christoph & Faßmann, 2016).

While Instagram has become an important platform for promoting fashion brands, it also offers several difficulties to overcome.

One of the challenges is getting noticed among the amount of content available on Instagram. The platform is flooded with billions of users and many posts, making it difficult for a fashion brand to stand out from the crowd. To overcome this challenge, fashion brands need to produce creative and engaging content that catches the attention of their target audience (Hubspot & Brandwatch, 2023).

Another issue is authenticity and credibility. Instagram is known for its "perfect" portrayal of life, often focusing on unrealistic beauty standards and staging. This can lead to a loss of trust among consumers as they look for honest and authentic brands. Fashion brands must therefore ensure that they provide a credible representation of their products and brand in order to gain consumer trust and build long-term relationships (Heinen, 2022).

In addition, Instagram as a marketing channel requires continuous updating and adaptation of content to stay relevant. The platform and its algorithms are constantly changing, and fashion brands must adapt to these changes to achieve effective reach. This requires constant monitoring and analysis of performance and adjusting strategies accordingly (Hubspot & Brandwatch, 2023).

Overall, fashion brands offer immense opportunities on Instagram, but also encounter various challenges. However, by developing creative content, promoting authenticity and credibility, and continuously adapting to changing platforms, fashion brands can succeed and reach their target audience on Instagram.

2.2. Body diverse content on Instagram in the fashion industry

2.2.1. Thin idealized and fitness idealized concepts

The sociocultural etiological model assumes that societal factors convey the message to girls and young women that certain physical features are unacceptable (Hawkins, 1999). Thinspiration and fitspiration are presented in social media as two of the predominant beauty ideals. Thinspiration in this context refers to visual and textual images that are meant to encourage weight loss (Carrotte et al., 2017; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). For example, the ideal of thinness often portrayed in the media is usually 15% below the average weight of women and thus represents an unrealistic degree of thinness. This is most often embodied by tall women with narrow hips, long legs, and thin thighs (Johnson et al., 1989). The slimness ideal portrayed in the media is biogenetically difficult, if not impossible, for most women (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989; Banks, 1992). Fitspiration is motivational imagery and a text designed to motivate people to achieve fitness goals. Previous content analyses of online media have found that images depicting "thinspiration" or "fitspiration" typically feature lightly dressed women with ultra-thin or thin-athletic bodies in sexually objectifying poses (Carrotte et al., 2017; Ghaznavi et al., 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018).

2.2.1.1. *Thin idealized and fitness-idealized content on Instagram*

In social media, a slim and toned body is considered the female ideal of beauty (Ginis et al., 2008). This ideal is overrepresented there. Most images contain messages that glorify the ideal of thin or skinny, well-toned, and promote restrained eating and exercise for appearance reasons (Boepple et al., 2016; Simpson et al., 2017; Wick et al., 2018). Previous analyses of fitspiration and thinspiration content on social media also confirm this. These have revealed that women depicted in these images typically follow ultrathin or thin-athletic body ideals and often pose in an objectified manner (Cohen et al., 2019). The slimness ideal is seen as

desirable, leading women to feel influenced by the media to alter their bodies to fit the body ideal (Grabe et al. 2008). Body fat, especially cellulite and fat rolls, is seen as unaesthetic in the media. Although these are natural body features, women are shamed in advertisements for their weight gain. Social problems are fostered by the taboos maintained by advertising (Chrisler, 2011).

According to the tripartite influence model (Thompson et al., 1991), women internalize the unrealistic beauty ideals of the media and compare their appearance, which leads to dissatisfaction with their bodies. This also supports the social comparison theory, which states that people tend to determine their worth by comparing themselves. Under certain circumstances, people do not select a similar person for comparison, as originally thought. Dissimilar people may be selected for comparison if they have expertise on a topic or are perceived to have more relevant information on a topic than a similar person-for example, comparing oneself to a model because she is thin and attractive rather than to an average woman (Kruglanski & Maysseless, 1990). Therefore, media exposure can often result in an upward social comparison - comparing oneself to someone who is better off (Sohn & Youn, 2013).

Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) provides another framework for understanding the relationship between media images and body image issues. According to objectification theory, the sexual objectification of women in the media causes women to view their bodies as objects that are viewed and judged based on their appearance (known as self-objectification). Both dissatisfaction with one's body and self-objectification has been linked to negative consequences, including eating disorders, depression, sexual dysfunction, and substance use (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Stice & Shaw, 2002). In support of these theories, extensive literature has shown that exposure to thin ideal images of women in the media, such as magazines and television, can lead to increased internalization of the thinness ideal, a negative self-perception⁶, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating behaviors in women (Grabe et al., 2008; Groesz et al., 2002; Harper et al., 2008).

⁶ Self- Perception: Self-perception is defined as a positive and negative attitude toward oneself (Rosenberg, 1965). It encompasses the subjective perceptions, attitudes, and feelings regarding a person's worth and dignity and is one of the most important indicators of emotional well-being (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). Self-perception can be influenced by all indicators (Orth, Erol & Luciano, 2018). In this context, the concept of self-perception is divided into three factors: Self-perception related to performance, self-perception related to social status, and self-perception related to appearance (Heatherton and Polivy, 1991). In this paper, self-perception in relation to body image is considered. Body appearance has been shown to be the main source of self-perception, with body dissatisfaction being associated with low self-perception (Van Den Berg, 2010).

It could be assumed that fitspiration is healthier than thinspiration because it aims to motivate exercise and health. However, Boepple and Thompson (2016) find that online content from thinspiration and fitspiration do not differ in terms of guilt about weight or body, stigmatization of fat, presence of objectifying wording, and diet messages, with 88% of thinspiration and 80% of fitspiration content containing one or more of these messages. It is, therefore, not surprising that acute exposure to such content in women also increases body dissatisfaction, negative mood, and self-esteem related to appearance (Robinson et al., 2017; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015).

Nowadays, brands have justified this harmful content as follows with the arguments that thin and attractive models attract more attention from the audience because they are perceived as more credible and likable. Consumers want to get closer to the ideal of beauty, so they hope to get closer to the ideal of beauty by buying the product (Sohn & Youn, 2013). Baker and Churchill (1977) also support this. The physical attractiveness of models positively influences consumers' attitudes toward advertising, products, and purchase intentions. In advertising, extremely attractive, slender models are seen as more advantageous, effective, and trustworthy than models with average attractiveness and stature (Baker & Churchill, 1977).

Brands that have used commercials with unhealthy body sizes are heavily criticized for doing so (Cinelli & Yang, 2016). Based on this criticism and facts, the advertising industry should be responsible for choosing images that convey a realistic and healthy body image. This is because advertising exacerbates brand awareness and perception of a product on the one hand, and on the other hand, advertising influences consumers' values, beliefs, and attitudes. Advertising plays an important role in defining the physical features considered beautiful and attractive (Peck & Loken, 2004).

In summary, this section highlights that social media perpetuates the slim and toned body as the female beauty ideal. This can have negative effects on individuals and lead to body

Body image encompasses subjective perceptions, attitudes, and feelings about one's body (Salter, 1999). Unlike the objectively measurable body, which can be captured by parameters such as height or weight, people's subjective body image is an entity that can only be determined by recourse to the emotions, judgments, attitudes, and behaviors associated with the body. If there is no congruence between the objectively measurable body and the subjective body image, one speaks of a body image disorder, e.g. dissatisfaction with one's own body (Roth, 1998).

dissatisfaction and eating disorders. The concepts of social comparison and objectification theory explain how women internalize these ideals and view their bodies as objects. Brands justify the use of thin and attractive models in advertising based on their credibility and likability. However, the advertising industry is criticized for promoting unhealthy body sizes, and it is argued that it should be responsible for portraying realistic and healthy body images to positively shape consumers' values and attitudes.

2.2.2. The concepts and differentiation of body positivity, body positive content, and body positive image

In response to the prevalent beauty ideal messages in traditional and social media, there is a growing momentum to reject these narrowly defined and inaccessible body ideals in favor of a more inclusive and positive conceptualization of body image. In popular culture, this dynamic is called the body-positive movement or body positivity. The body-positive movement builds on the foundation of earlier critical feminist movements, such as the “fat-acceptance movement” in the 1960s, which emerged in response to anti-fat beliefs in the United States and Canada. The fat-acceptance movement fights against common notions of idealized body sizes and shapes, such as normalizing thin and toned bodies and discrimination against people with larger girths (Rodger et al., 2022). Similarly, the body-positive movement aims to challenge the messages of the ideal of thinness prevalent in the media and promote acceptance and appreciation of bodies of all shapes, sizes, and appearances. It is important to note that some definitions of body positivity include age, gender, gender identity, ability, and ethnicity to promote a holistic, inclusive, and intersectional view (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). This study focuses solely on body shapes, sizes, and characteristics such as cellulite and stretch marks. This focus was chosen because consideration of the above characteristics would include various historical, societal, and cultural aspects. A comprehensive understanding of these characteristics is beyond the scope of this thesis and would divert the focus from the specific study of body shapes, sizes, and flaws. Therefore, it was decided to focus exclusively on these aspects in this study to ensure proper analysis and interpretation of the results.

The goal of body positivity is to counteract the continuous stream of media images that promote unrealistic and unattainable ideals of beauty (Cohen et al., 2020). In addition, it

aims to inspire people rather than focusing on how their bodies might appear to others (Cohen et al., 2019).

For this reason, images, videos, texts, or other content are used on social media that depict a variety of body types. This is referred to as body-positive content, which supports the message of body positivity. The content is intended to help people develop a positive attitude toward their bodies and appearance by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of body shapes, sizes, and colors. It is intended to encourage people to accept different body sizes, view those body sizes as attractive, and appreciate the functionality of their bodies. Body-positive content may include, for example, images of people with different body types and sizes showing their bodies in clothes or without clothes. It may also include text or commentary encouraging people to accept and love their body image and emphasizing the importance of self-love and self-acceptance (Cohen et al., 2019). Body-positive Instagram accounts are analyzed in a content analysis by Cohen et al. (2019). The present study examines the content displayed on prominent Instagram accounts and how this content aligns with the core theoretical components of a positive body image. The results show that body-positive images generally depicted various body sizes and appearances. Although some posts focus on appearance, most posts conveys messages consistent with the theoretical definitions of a positive body image. This study clarifies body-positive content on Instagram and highlights overlaps and differences with academic principles of positive body image and other appearance-focused social media content. Body-positive content aims to expand the concept of beauty and reduce exclusion and discrimination against people based on their body weight or shape (Cohen et al., 2019).

Body positivity should be distinct from the term body-positive image. A positive body image refers to people who endorse, accept, appreciate, love, care for, and respect their bodies, regardless of their perception of the appearance and functionality of their bodies (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Nichole Wood-Barcalow defines a positive body image as "an overarching love and respect for the body" (Wood-Barcalow, 2015, p.121). A positive body image would allow individuals first to appreciate the unique beauty of their body and its function. Moreover, they accept and admire their body, including the parts that do not conform to the ideal body image. Finally, they feel beautiful and confident and attach

importance to their body values (Daniels et al., 2018). Accordingly, body positivity and body image are closely related, as body positivity can influence body image.

2.2.2.1. Body-positive content on Instagram

Meanwhile, 18,1 Million posts tagged with #bodypositive and 10,8 Million for #bodypositivity, and 1,3 Million for #bopo already exist on the social media platform (Instagram, 2022).

Clayton, Ridgeway, and Hendrickse (2017) conduct a study to analyze the effectiveness and psychological benefits of body-friendly campaigns. This study shows women images of normal-sized, plus-sized, and slender models. The result of the research is that participants who exhibited lower levels of body satisfaction are not attracted to the advertising message featuring unattainably thin models. In comparison, images featuring plus-size models increase awareness and body satisfaction. Thus, this study shows that body-positive commercials are more effective and have positive psychological effects (Clayton et al., 2017). This study can be supported by a study conducted by Cohen et al. (2019). This shows that women who viewed positive body images on social media had significantly better body evaluation and overall satisfaction than women who viewed images that conformed to the slimness ideal (Rodger et al., 2022). Advertising for an ideal body type was also found to negatively impact consumer self-esteem and behavior, while advertising with a body-positive campaign positively impacted consumer self-esteem and behavior (Bethell, 2020). Also, another study examined women's responses to the slimness ideal, the curve ideal, the athleticism ideal, and body acceptance. The curve ideal is defined as an hourglass figure. All idealized images were associated with body dissatisfaction. On the other hand, body acceptance messages led to increased body satisfaction (Betz et al., 2019). According to Kleemans et al. (2018), people who receive more positive body messages begin to see themselves as better by comparing themselves to these posts than when they see toned and "perfect" bodies (p. 93).

Especially in the fashion industry, the change in consumer perception directly impacts communication strategy (Luzon, 2019). For a long time, fashion mainly targeted people with "normal size" (Jess, 2021). As for the fashion industry standards, the sample size usually does not correspond to the average body size. The body-positive movement has raised

consumers' awareness of not accepting society's beauty standards (Pascual, 2020). Consequently, due to the freedom of expression on social media, consumers have become louder and more critical, which is why brands have started to act on their dissatisfied customer base (Luzon, 2019). The fashion industry plays an important role in developing ways to educate consumers about what it means to fit into society. Most people know how they dress reflects in many ways: It provides a first impression, reflects character, and gives an idea of likes and dislikes (Hutchison, 2014). With the rise of social networks and increasing pressure to act, young people are forcing leading retailers to be socially responsible and adapt to changing times (Luzon, 2019). Consumers want more real people and people who look like them (Blackhart, 2019.). Accordingly, the purpose of brands' shift to body positivity is to accurately represent society, which helps to increase young people's confidence and dignity. This can be seen in social media, positive reviews, and their own experience (Gupta, 2019).

In addition, studies and statistics showed how thinly idealized content negatively affected people's self-esteem. Accordingly, brands began reevaluating the current situation (Humann, 2021). Thus, the supply of plus-size clothing was improved, and a size-conscious market was chosen. In the face of increased competition, the brands that have a better chance of survival offer an emotional connection to the brand, promote social responsibility, and support individuality, inclusion, and body positivity (Kohan, 2020). Accordingly, many well-known brands now offer fashion in large sizes, contributing to women's desire to buy and, more importantly, creating a more positive self-image and confidence (Miller, 2020).

These findings support the existence and growth of body-positive content on Instagram but indicate that this movement also includes images that focus on appearance and show women in revealing clothing (Cohen et al., 2019). Some researchers question whether many pictures of women's bodies and the emphasis on "looking lovely" further reinforce society's preoccupation with appearance over other attributes rather than overriding them (Webb et al. 2017). Cohen et al. (2020) make the point that viewing body-positive content can be associated with negative consequences consistent with Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory, mentioned too previously, which describes several negative psychological consequences of self-objectification experienced by women. Examples include eating disorders, appearance anxiety, and body shame. In addition, Haye (2019)

argued that disseminating body-positive content could be detrimental to one's health and praise unhealthy norms. Mask and Blanchard (2011) also discussed that the literature also indicates that not all women respond similarly to the ideal of thinness portrayed in the media. Previous findings suggest that some women are negatively affected by the portrayal of the slimming ideal in the media, while others are not (Mask & Blanchard, 2011). For example, samples of women who already had concerns about their appearance resulted in larger effect sizes than those who did not have concerns (Want, 2009). In addition, studies indicated that media with slimming ideals lead to self-improvement responses in restrained eaters, characterized by an increase in self-esteem and self-image and perceptions of having a smaller body size (Joshi et al., 2004; Mills et al., 2002).

Others criticize that influential body-positive accounts, besides depicting individuals with heavier weights, typically feature conventionally attractive white women and often exclude other marginalized bodies, such as various ethnicities, individuals with physical disabilities, and gender-nonconforming bodies (Dalessandro, 2016). In addition, some critics argue that, just as with slimming ideal accounts, positive body image accounts become commoditized as their popularity increases, with influencers being paid to promote commercial products (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). Cwynar-Horta (2016) further argues that during this process of commodification, body-positive account advocates deviate from their original body-positive ideals, and their Instagram content begins to resemble the more dominant appearance-focused content on Instagram.

Despite the latter criticism, brands are increasingly expected to do their part on this issue and promote body positivity in their social media marketing (Blackhart, 2019). According to a new Salesforce⁷ study, 90% of consumers believe that companies have a great responsibility to look beyond profits and improve the state of society (Siegel, 2021, online). By shifting to body-positive content, the company aims to represent society correctly, which helps to strengthen young people's confidence and dignity (Gupta, 2019).

⁷ Salesforce: Salesforce is a cloud-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform that enables businesses to manage customer data, sales operations, and marketing campaigns (Salesforce, 2023).

2.3. Brand Attitude and consumer behavior of German female Generation Y

2.3.1. Brand attitude

According to Trommsdorff (2008), attitude can be described as the willingness to be negative or positive towards a particular object, such as a product. Thus, attitude expresses the extent to which a consumer likes or dislikes a product (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012).

Ramesh et al. (2018) define brand attitude as customers' reactions to and preference for a brand. It is helpful in predicting the target audience's responses to marketing activities. Brand attitude is determined by customers' familiarity and trust in a brand; the more significant the understanding and trust, the higher the purchase intention (Ramesh et al., 2018). Brand attitude is an advertising company's brand's personal recognition and emotional aspect (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Ramesh et al. (2018) define attitude toward a brand as an enduring evaluation that predictably stimulates consumer behavior. Vidyanata et al. (2014) say that it refers to consumers' likes and dislikes and overall brand evaluation. Thus, all definitions include that brand attitude can be positive or negative towards a brand and define a personal attitude toward something.

The relationship between attitude and behavior is subject to a whole range of influence effects, such as the influence of a salesperson in the choice decision, the attitude towards another brand being considered as an alternative, or the lower price of another brand compared to the initially preferred one (Kroeber-Riel & Gröppel-Klein, 2013).

Among the attitude-behavior models, the "Theory of Reasoned Action" by Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) serves as the object of investigation (Figure 2).

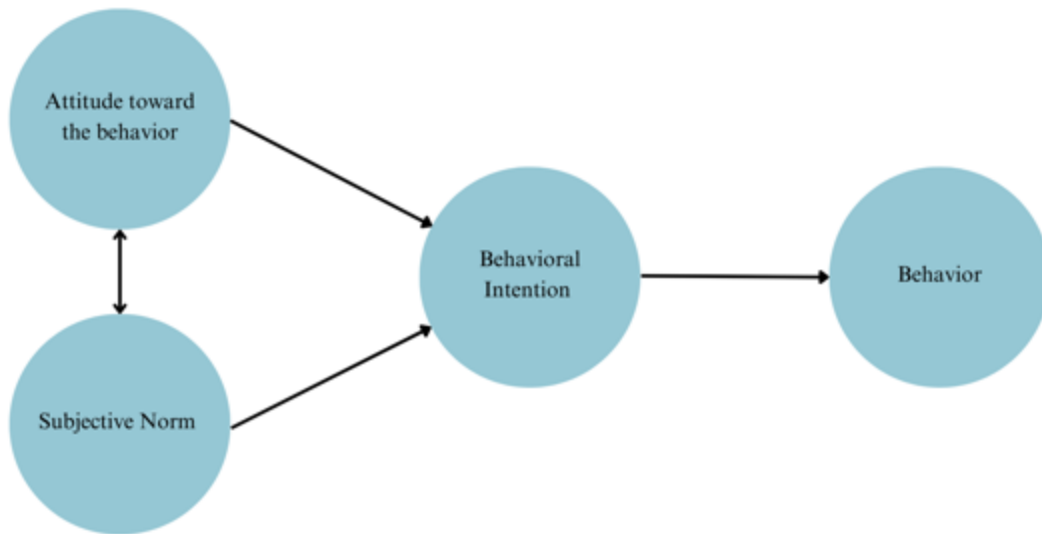


Figure 2 **Theory of Reasoned Action**. Source: Own representation adapted from Fishbein & Ajzen (1980)

The model assumes a close correlation between behavioral intention and behavior. Thus, the focus here is on the prediction of behavioral intention. The model is a third-variable model because it essentially combines additively, in addition to attitude (specified as attitude toward the behavior), the subjective norm (that is, the person's perception of how the social interaction partners important to him think about performing the behavior in question in one way or another). The attitude and norm variables are then given weights that are multiplicatively linked to them. As an example, for the prediction of a behavioral intention, according to Fishbein & Ajzen (1980), consider voting for a particular political party. To estimate the behavioral intention of a person or group of persons about voting, both attitudes toward the party (e.g., using rating scales or questionnaires that provide information on how favorably or positively one views the party in question) and subjective norms (e.g., using judgment scales that ask about the political views prevailing in the respondent's family or social environment) must be surveyed. The attitude and norm variables could then be multiplied by the values of further judgment scales, which indicate, for example, the degree of the experienced topicality of the attitude or norm (Mummendey, 1988).

Considering the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Till and Busler (2000) found that attitude toward performing the behavior is one of the most important predictors of consumer

behavior (Till & Busler, 2000). Thus, attitudes are central in research as they directly influence a consumer's consumer behavior (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012).

2.3.2. Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is based on different fields, such as psychology, sociology, and economics. The continuous process is divided into three phases: before consumption, during consumption, and after consumption (Solomon, 2016). According to Solomon (2016), consumer behavior can be defined as "[...] the study of the processes that occur when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and wants" (p.507). In other words, this means that consumer behavior examines the actions and feelings of individuals when making purchases. A variety of factors can influence these. For example, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and intrinsic and extrinsic factors all play a role (Solomon, 2016). Schwarz & Hutter (2012) define consumer behavior, in a narrow sense, as the purchase and consumption of economic goods (e.g., brands and products). In a broader sense, however, according to Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003), it also includes motives and behaviors in the use of intangible goods (e.g., services) in consumer behavior. In this context, for example, museum visitors, voters, or - about the healthcare sector - patients, people at risk, or those paying health insurance contributions, can also be understood as consumers. Consequently, consumer behavior can be explained by different product categories and groups of interested parties. This work will refer exclusively to Solomons definition. In addition, this work uses consumer behavior as a synonym for consumer behavior.

Various theories can be applied to explain purchasing behavior (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012). In current consumer behavior research, partial models dominate, which are dedicated to individual influencing variables of consumer behavior from a behavioral science perspective, such as attention and attitude. First, these models can be roughly divided into stimulus-response models (also called stimulus-response models; S-R model) and stimulus-organism-response models (also called stimulus-organism-response models; S-O-R model). The S-R model originates from behaviorist psychology, which analyzes directly observable variables. It postulates that a stimulus (e.g., a product or a campaign) directly influences a person's behavior. The individual itself is considered a black box⁸. Processes occurring

⁸ Black Box: The black box includes the unobservable effects on something (Bruhn et al., 2011)

inside the black box that controls behavior are disregarded. Neo-behavioristic S-O-R models develop the assumptions of the S-R model further by explicitly considering variables running

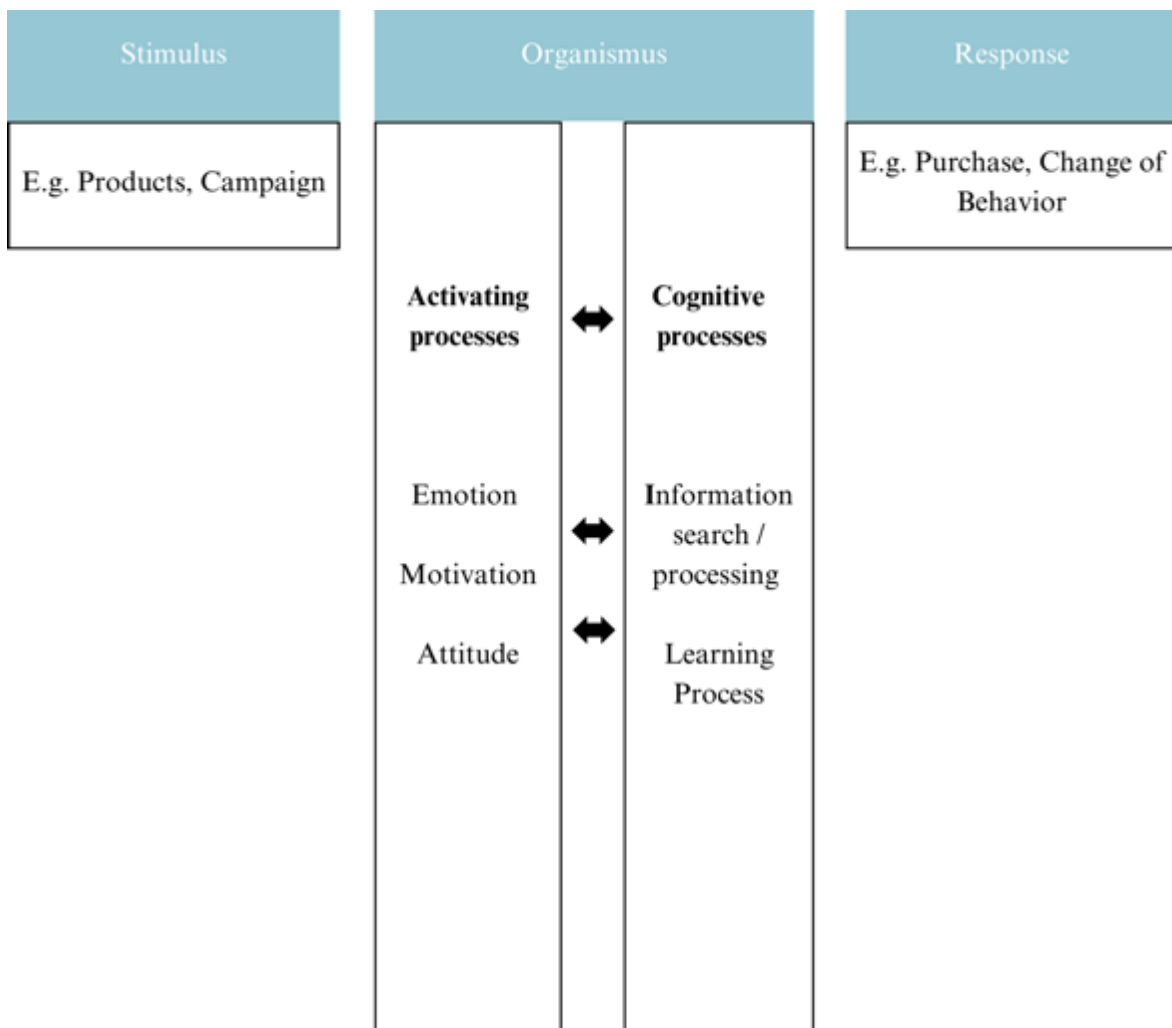


Figure 3 **SOR Model**. Source: Own representation adapted from Schwarz & Hutter (2012)

cognitive processes (Figure 3). Activating and cognitive processes do not run parallel to each other but are mutually dependent (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012).

Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003) describe activating processes as the central driving forces of human behavior associated with internal tensions. These include consumers' emotions, motivation, and attitudes.

An advertising stimulus, such as an advertisement or a product, usually initially triggers emotional processes in an observer. According to Schwarz & Hutter (2012), emotions are

"emotional states that are accompanied by physical arousal, are temporary, and unconsciously rather than consciously control a consumer's behavior" (p.49). Emotions are triggered by an external stimulus (e.g., an advertisement) and can be positive (e.g., joy) or negative (e.g., fear) in nature. Regardless of their direction, emotions are of great relevance when explaining activation processes and attentional effects in an individual. Emotional experiences can be specifically generated by communicative measures, for example, by an advertisement addressing topics such as eroticism, social recognition, personal freedom, nature, enjoyment, and health. If the tension associated with emotion is accompanied by a goal and action orientation, this is referred to as motivation. Motivation theories (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy of needs) address the question of why people are driven by certain needs at a certain point in time.

As already explained in the chapter about Brand Attitude, attitudes are spoken of when a cognitive object evaluation is added to the motivation to perform a certain behavior (e.g., to buy a product). Thus, if an individual is motivated to exhibit a certain behavior, he or she will evaluate product alternatives that come into question for the purchase more precisely. Compared to emotions and motivation, attitudes are relatively stable over time and difficult to change (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012).

While the activating processes described above are responsible for individual actions, the cognitive processes of information search/processing and learning services mentally control buyer behavior. Consumers search for product-relevant information that corresponds to their needs, and how intensively they deal with product information depends on the perceived purchase risk. When buying a so-called low-involvement product, such as everyday goods, the uncertainties are low. The purchase decision is habitual, without the consumer obtaining detailed information about the product in advance. In contrast, the purchase of high-involvement products, such as ski equipment, or the use of a service, such as choosing a doctor, are associated with social, functional, or financial risks. In order not to make a wrong decision, consumers select information relevant to the purchase decision in a targeted manner and deal with it intensively (Wöhe, 2016).

Learning processes help to ensure that the information gathered is stored in memory and made accessible for subsequent purchasing decisions. When designing appeals in health communication, the operant conditioning approach⁹ from B.F. Skinner and model or imitation learning¹⁰ are used. Model and imitation learning assumes that people learn by imitating the behavior of another person. Advertising makes use of this principle by showing so-called testimonials, that is, typical representatives of the target group using the product. To specifically address the needs of consumers, trigger learning and memory processes, shape consumer-relevant attitudes, and awaken purchase intentions, both strategic marketing planning, such as the definition of goals and target groups, and operational action planning based on this are required. Specific measures can be derived from the instruments of the marketing mix. The classic marketing mix goes back to Borden (1964), who distinguishes between four instruments, the so-called "4P": product policy (Product), price policy (Price), distribution policy (Place), and communication policy (Promotion) (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012).

Since in the following study, the target group was restricted to Generation Y; this will be defined and classified in the next chapter.

2.3.3. Generation Y

When defining the term generation conceptually, it must first be considered that different understandings of the term exist. A distinction is made between a genealogical-family-related, a historical-social, and a pedagogical interpretation. In the context of this thesis, however, the term generation is interpreted in terms of a historical-social concept. This includes the classification of social groups in terms of historical, cultural, or social parallels (Höpflinger, 2011). Changes at the societal level, such as economic and technological developments or a rising level of education, are seen as the basis for the further development of individuals' values and abilities. The resulting imprint on individuals in turn, leads to change at the societal level, whereby behavioral and attitudinal changes can be identified

⁹ Operant Conditioning Approach: Operant conditioning follows the principle of learning through reward and punishment. Typical operant rewards are price discounts or the collection of bonus points in the context of nutrition and prevention programs (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012, p.50).

¹⁰ Model and imitation learning: Model and imitation assumes that people learn by imitating the behavior of another person. Advertising makes use of this principle by showing so-called testimonials, that is, typical representatives of the target group, using the product (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012, p.50).

that enable classification into groups (Inglehart, 1977). The concept of generation merely provides an approach to orienting the different behaviors and values within a social group that has emerged over some time. It should be noted that this is only a general approach and not the only explanatory model. In the literature, a distinction is made between six generations: the Silent Generation (1925-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1978), Generation Y (1981-1999), and Generation Z (2000-2010) (Spiegel, 2013). However, the naming and assignment of birth years differ from author to author (Klaffke, 2014). Generation Y is the successor generation to Generation X. Members of this generation are also referred to as Millennials (Scholz, 2014). It is defined by the birth years 1981-1999 (Spiegel, 2013), which serves as the basis for the further execution of the work.

According to Klaffke and Parment (2011), the members of this young generation move in a variety of areas of tension. In the case of Generation Y, conflicting interests that bring about such areas of tension or decision-making conflicts are, for example, the compatibility of family and career; the pursuit of maximum performance in working life alongside the desire to enjoy life; the goal of individual fulfillment alongside an orientation toward collectivist goals and, last but not least, existential security and stability alongside the desire for novelty and the desire to be able to react flexibly to opportunities that arise (Klaffke & Parment, 2011). Navigating these fields of tension can be seen as one reason why Generation Y behaves differently than their predecessor generations. However, living in areas of tension and the need to make decisions are not the only reasons this generation is different. Holste (2012) describes Generation Y with the attributes of optimism, self-confidence, result orientation, and functionalism. These characteristics can be attributed in part to the fact that Generation Y has grown up in years of relative economic stability and takes many of the resulting prosperity-related advantages for granted. In addition, many things have shifted in favor of the younger generation: They are offered many opportunities (Klaffke & Parment, 2011).

One of the strongest characteristics of this generation is that they have grown up in a networked, information-intensive, transparent world that has become closer together as a result of globalization (Parment, 2009). Transparency through information, made possible not least by the medium of the Internet, facilitates decision-making processes. Generation Y is the first generation to have grown up entirely in the age of computers and the Internet and

is, therefore, familiar with these technologies and the advantages of using them (Kleiminger, 2011). In particular, the rapid development of social media are supported and encouraged by Generation Y (Klaffke & Parment, 2011). Generation Y is on the Internet every day. According to Statista¹¹, 83% of Millennials use their social media several times a week (Statista, 2020). In doing so, they use networks such as Facebook and Instagram to connect with their friends, acquaintances, or members of a community of interest, nationally and internationally (Kleiminger, 2011), or to obtain comprehensive information (Tulgan, 2009). It offers them the opportunity to take different perspectives and thus find alternatives (Tulgan, 2009). Regular to frequent use of social media represents, among other things, the need to participate and connect (Klaffke & Parment, 2011). The need to receive feedback can also be fulfilled through social media (Thoma, 2011). Thus, pictures are posted to express feelings, celebrations, goals, and other life events and to interact with followers (Ehlers, 2017). Generation Y prefers their content to be a form of communication and inspiration. Digital media influence not only Generation Z's communication behavior but also their consumption behavior.

This study, therefore, focuses on Generation Y because first, a study of Global Health & Pharma (2021) shows, that this generation is the least self-confident due to the heavy use of social media during their development and often become victims of body comparisons, which leads to negative self-perceptions. Younger people feel pressure to look attractive and conform to current aesthetic trends.

Second, there is an increasing number of body-positive campaigns that allow for an analysis of how body-positive content affects Generation Y's attitudes towards brands and consumers' behavior. As Generation Y now has significant buying power and spends a lot of time on social media, it is important for brands to understand and appeal to this target group. And finally, Generation Y is the core target group of the fashion company ARMEDANGELS (Appendix C), which is used as a case study in this study.

¹¹ Statista: Statista is a German online platform for statistics that makes data from market and opinion research institutions as well as from business and official statistics available in German, English, Spanish and French (Statista, 2023, b).

2.3.4. Brand attitude and consumer behavior of German female Generation Y

The German fashion brand ARMEDANGELS was selected as the object of the case study to be analyzed in this research. The brand's headquarters are in Cologne (Germany) and its core target group is Generation Y. Marketing to Millennials is an important task, as they make up 19,6% of the population in Germany (Statista, d).

According to Statista, 15,88 million of a total of 81 million people belong to Generation Y in Germany (Statista, 2021, d). Thus, Generation Y is the second most populous age group in Germany, after Generation Z. 49,3% are attributed to the male gender and 50,7% to the female gender (Statista, 2021, e). This means that the female gender of Millennials is an ideal target group that has the potential to gain more market share for companies. In addition, Millennials are also considered well-educated, as about 20,8 percent of Millennials aged 26 to 31 had a college degree in 2021. In the general population, the percentage of individuals with a college degree was about 12,8 percent (Statista, 2021, f). A good education can lead to better jobs, which in turn leads to an increased ability to buy products and services (Patal, 2017). According to one study, about 15,2% of Generation Y respondents in 2021 have ordered something online in the past 12 months, at least once a week (Statista, 2021, g). As consumers, Generation Y differs greatly from its predecessors in that they are characterized by multi-optionality. Since the 1980s, consumer choice and influence have increased significantly. The expansion of international trade because of deregulation and a reduction in logistics costs, as well as the emergence of international low-cost providers, such as Ryanair or Hennes & Mauritz, led to a variety of price, service, and quality alternatives. In parallel, the spread of the Internet increased market transparency and consumer market power, for example, in the form of rating portals that allow customers to share their experiences online with a large group of users. Increasing transparency opens a whole new range of choices for this generation. They can compare prices and always choose the best offer. More options require choice decisions, which makes consumers more reflective, flexible, as well as demanding. It also allows them to have a variety of different experiences, and Generation Y is, therefore, not averse to trying out new products (Klaffke, 2014). Around 60,1% of respondents in a study confirmed this statement (Statista, 2021, h).

Generation Y has largely grown up in stable financial circumstances and is therefore used to a high standard of consumption (Parment, 2009).

Millennials invest primarily in consumer goods and services that benefit them. Before buying, Millennials inform themselves about the product of their choice and compare prices with the help of the Internet. The buying behavior of Generation Y is mainly influenced by acquaintances, family, friends, and influential members of the public. The public figures are mostly celebrities who are held in high esteem by Generation Y. Millennials are influenced by the Internet and is inspired by the clothing styles of their role models and try to imitate them. Other incentives for buying the products are mainly the image of the brand, the quality of the product, and the social reputation (Parment, 2013). For example, a study of Statista documents that 56,7% of Generation Y respondents pay attention to whether the company acts in a socially and ecologically responsible manner when buying a product (Statista, 2021, i).

Millennials like to consume extensively and are prepared to pay a reasonable price for the product of their choice. They attach great importance to emotions and emotional factors, including aesthetics, pride of ownership, recognition, and the feeling of looking beautiful. These factors increase the affective impact of an offer and appeal to Generation Y as customers. Emotional brand worlds are, thus, created to get customers excited about products and companies. The Y generation has been taught through the experience-oriented staging of brands that the use of the respective brand products expresses their lifestyle (Klaffke, 2014). For example, they buy a car because it looks fancy, and this corresponds to their personal image. Brands have meaning for them and are seen as a kind of status symbol. With the help of new media such as Facebook or Instagram, they look for the latest trends and hip brands. Especially in the fashion industry plays, Generation Y an important role. A study by Parment (2013) shows that Generation Y has a higher interest in fashion compared to the Baby Boomers (Parment, 2013).

Social media can have an impact on how Millennials make decisions: "34% of Millennials say social media help them make a purchasing decision" (Patal, 2017). In this social world, it is important to design social media campaigns that get Millennials excited about a

company's products and services. A study by Fromm et al. (2015) points out, that Millennials are more attracted to authentic and honest brands.

It is also beneficial to positively influence Millennials with positive reviews and posts on social media platforms, as they help with Millennials' decision-making. If consumer Y is satisfied with a brand and its products, he behaves loyally towards it (Karl, 2015). This is confirmed by a study conducted by Statista (2021). According to this study, 79.2% of the Millennials surveyed remain loyal to a brand if they are satisfied with the brand (Statista, 2021, j).

Even when it comes to buying fashion items, Generation Y people care about quality and sustainability. Nevertheless, they have a strong need to reinvent themselves and change their style on a regular basis. In doing so, they resort to simple, quick, and inexpensive ways to complement their existing clothing to achieve a new look. The supplementary items are not purchased from alternative brands; here, contrary to their other preferences, the millennial falls back on brands from the fast fashion sector (Heinrich, 2020). In general, Generation Y plays a significant role, especially in the clothing market. A study by Parment (2013) indicates that Generation Y has a higher interest in clothing than Baby Boomers (Parment, 2013).

2.4. Conclusions about the current status of the research conceptual basis

The body-positive movement has been able to gain more and more attention in recent years. Especially in the fashion industry, a change can be seen (Luzon, 2019). More and more companies are trying to adapt their brand communication.

A large part of the studies conducted a deal with thin-idealized content and to what extent it affects consumers' self-esteem and body image. Social media play a large role in this. Recently, people have increasingly turned to social media as a source of information about social norms and appearance (Bair et al., 2012). Over 4,62 billion people use social media worldwide, with 89% of young adults using their social media accounts at least once a day and women even more frequently (Anderson et al., 2018). Although studies confirm the negative influence of thin-idealized advertising and the positive influence of body-positive

campaigns, social platforms still mainly advertise with thin-idealized content, as it is supposed to be more effective and promote sales.

Due to the body-positive movement, more and more studies are addressing body-positive content on Instagram. However, in doing so, there are not yet many studies available because the body positivity movement is just emerging. The studies that have been conducted on body-positive content are mainly related to the psychological aspect of self-esteem and predominantly illustrate that body-positive campaigns have a positive impact on it (Cohen et al., 2019) and brands are only slowly starting to accept body positivity movement and integrate it into their marketing strategies (Kohan, 2020). In addition, a few experimental studies have examined positive consumer responses to realistic and average-sized or normal-attractive models (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Caballero et al., 1989; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Tsai & Chang, 2007). Tsai and Chang (2007) found that normally attractive models in underwear advertisements were associated with more positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions than highly attractive models. Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) found that exposure to thin models in deodorant advertisements resulted in greater body anxiety and was not more effective than exposure to average-sized models in terms of attitude toward the advertisement, brand, and purchase intention.

Generation Y is an interesting group to focus on. According to a study of Global Health & Pharma (2021) they feel the least confident due to growing up with the heavy use of social media and have been victims of body comparison and feeling negative about themselves. Younger people certainly feel the pressures of looking attractive and fitting the aesthetic trends at the time the most (Global Health & Pharma, 2021). This fact and the increasing number of body-positive campaigns allow for an analysis of how body-positive content affects brand attitudes and consumer behavior of Generation Y. In general, the investigation of Generation Y's buying behavior is relevant to this study. Generation Y has now grown into a driving buying force that spends most of its time on social media (Parment, 2013). As a result, this target group is becoming increasingly relevant for brands. Although there are already several studies on the purchasing and media behavior of this generation, none has yet specifically looked at the influence of body-positive campaigns on consumer behavior.

To sum up, the body-positive movement has attracted attention in the fashion industry and led to changes in brand communication. Although studies have examined the impact of idealized-thin content and body-positive campaigns, there is a lack of research that specifically examines the impact of body-positive content on brand attitudes and consumer behavior of Generation Y on the social media platform Instagram. Existing studies primarily examine the impact of idealized-thin content and body-positive campaigns in television advertising, neglecting the unique dynamics of social media as a source of social norms and appearance. Moreover, despite the importance of Generation Y as a consumer group with high social media engagement, who also suffer from body comparisons and negative self-perceptions, there are few studies that have examined the impact of body-positive campaigns on their consumer behavior. Understanding the impact of body-positive campaigns on Generation Y is important for brands that want to appeal to this target group. This research will therefore address these gaps.

3. The case of ARMEDANGELS

ARMEDANGELS is one of Germany's best-known, largest, and more sustainable brands, which already addresses many critical issues. In addition, the company's content reflects some diverse characteristics. For this reason, it is interesting to analyze to what extent the company deals with the topic of body positivity, namely on Instagram, and to what extent its target group reacts to this topic.

3.1. Foundation and philosophy

„We are not here to make fashion; we are here to make change” (AREMDANGELS, 2022).

The company Social Fashion Company GmbH (ARMEDANGELS, 2022) sells "more sustainably" produced fashion under the ARMEDANGELS brand. The Cologne-based brand was founded in 2007 by the then-students Anton Jurina and Martin Höfeler (Scherff, 2017). The latter is the current chief executive officer (managing director). The company describes itself as a "fair fashion label"; it aims to combine sustainable products and modern design with high quality. The materials used come only from environmentally and socially responsible cultivation or production and are processed exclusively by certified manufacturers. In addition, the company has set itself the task of sensitizing its consumers

to buy more consciously. It wants to achieve this through education, honesty, and transparency. Among other things, the social fashion company informs its consumers about sustainability-related topics with the help of the press, its own blog, and social media. Topics covered include ARMEDANGELS' work and mission, the materials it uses, and its collaboration with suppliers. It also uses the platforms to be able to communicate openly about the failures of the company. The concept of sustainability is deeply embedded in the identity of the ARMEDANGELS brand. The company uses different organizations to influence social and environmental factors of production. This is ensured through active membership in a non-profit organization (Fair-Wear Foundation) and targeted cooperation with certified producers and thus serves as an orientation for customers by means of quality seals in the products (Scherff, 2017; ARMEDANGELS, 2022).

3.2. Business model

The business model of Social Fashion Company GmbH is based on its vision and mission statement. These are as follows:

Vision Statement

The vision of the company is: *"All products are sustainable and in a circular way. Us humans have reinvented our way of living to support all life. Creating a planet we're proud to pass on to future generations."* (ARMEDANGELS, 2021, p.7).

Mission Statement

For the mission statement, the company relies on two different pillars. The first relates to what the company does directly by running their business. The second pillar is based on what ARMEDANGELS does beyond selling clothing. From this, two mission statements were formulated:

"Our mission is to engineer the most radically sustainable product on planet earth. Eco. Ethical. Carbon negative. And to inform, inspire and enable everyone to make a difference." (ARMEDANGELS, 2021, p.9).

Likewise, the company has established four Core Values to achieve its vision and mission. Under the motto "grow to matter," ARMEDANGELS aims to grow to have a greater impact on the market, establishing an environmentally and socially responsible standard in the apparel industry. "Together," the company aims to make the world a better place by having everyone play on the same team, thus helping, respecting, appreciating the similarities, and celebrating the differences. The core value "go green with substance" aims to ensure that conscious steps are taken that have a positive long-term impact on the environment, for example, by not wasting resources but recycling, being informed, and caring. "Positivity" appeals to trying to have fun and think positively in everything, as this helps to grow from mistakes and drives motivation (ARMEDANGELS, 2022).

ARMEDANGELS believes in making a difference by offering visually appealing products without compromising the environment and the workers involved. It wants to use its business to find and develop sustainable solutions in collaboration with their producers (ARMEDANGELS, 2021). The company's benefit should consist of giving consumers the opportunity to buy a product they like with a clear conscience (Scherff, 2017).

3.3. Communication strategy

ARMEDANGELS pursues a clear communication strategy focused on communicating its values and products and building a close relationship with its customers. ARMEDANGELS' customers and core target group are the age group that can be assigned to Generation Y (1981-1999) (Appendix C). In doing so, the company relies on an integrated communication strategy that uses various channels to spread its message. In its 2021 action report, the company writes that primarily its own website, its social media channels, and its email newsletter are used to inform its customers about current news and activities. (ARMEDANGELS, 2021).

An important part of ARMEDANGELS' communication strategy is the use of social media channels. The brand is active on various platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Whereby Instagram is classified as the most important social media tool (Appendix C). ARMEDANGELS now boasts 292,000 followers on Instagram (Instagram, 2023). The brand shares almost one post per day on the platform, and communication exclusively takes place in English. The company showcases its products through the use of appealing images and videos, primarily utilizing content from e-commerce shoots. To

showcase more personality, the company also leverages influencer and user-generated content. Current and social topics are brought to attention through images with accompanying text. The goal of the Instagram account is to promote both products and educate and inform the community on certain issues, with a particular focus on creating brand awareness. The account also aims to generate attention for the brand through influencers and establish a strong relationship with customers. ARMEDANGELS also uses social media channels to gather customer feedback and respond to customer questions and concerns (Appendix C).

Influencer marketing also plays an essential role in the company's communication strategy. Specifically selected influencers enter into collaborations to market new collections and tap into new target groups. Communication about diversity also focuses on influencers who find this topic relevant or embody it themselves. When selecting influencers, it is particularly important that they match the ARMEDANGELS brand philosophy and are authentic (Appendix C).

In addition to social media, ARMEDANGELS also relies on public relations to spread its message. The company has successfully worked with various media partners in the past and has been featured in numerous media outlets, including online and print media (ARMEDANGELS, 2022).

ARMEDANGELS also has its own online store, which enables the company to establish direct contact with its customers. The online store is attractively designed and provides detailed information about the products, including materials, manufacturing, and care instructions. The online store also offers customer service and an easy return and exchange policy to increase customer satisfaction. In 2020, ARMEDANGELS received an award from the German consumer magazine Öko-Test in the "Fairness in Retail" category. The company's online store received a top rating in the process (ARMEDANGELS, 2022).

The ARMEDANGELS newsletter is sent out on different days and at different times. The only regularity is that at least one newsletter is sent to customers every Sunday. Two newsletters are sent out in a week. Customers are addressed by their first name, and in German, they are not addressed directly by name. The newsletters receive information about new collections, garments, or milestones/successes the brand has achieved (ARMEDANGELS, 2022).

Overall, ARMEDANGELS has a clear communication strategy focused on communicating its values and products and building a strong relationship with its customers. The use of social media channels, influencer marketing, public relations, online stores, and newsletters are all important elements of this strategy.

3.4. Future challenges

ARMEDANGELS is a German sustainable fashion brand that has built a strong presence on the market in recent years. The brand has managed to successfully market its philosophy of fair production and eco-friendly materials, establishing itself as a pioneer in this field. Despite its success, however, ARMEDANGELS faces several challenges that it must overcome.

One of the biggest challenges ARMEDANGELS faces is competition in the sustainable fashion industry. In recent years, more and more brands have entered the market that follows similar values and standards and focus on sustainability. This leads to higher competition and makes it more difficult for ARMEDANGELS to stand out from the crowd and reach their target audience. To remain competitive, ARMEDANGELS must continue to innovate and find new ways to get its message across. In addition, the trend toward sustainability has also reached large global fashion corporations such as H&M, Nike, Zara, and Inditex, respectively. The high profile and the correspondingly extensive financial resources, which also contribute to an increased marketing budget, for example, make it easier for large fashion groups to capture previous niche markets, such as socially and environmentally responsible fashion (Scherff, 2017). Furthermore, small and medium-sized companies have less budget for development and innovation expenditures, which play a crucial role in the sustainability sector and, thus also, in brand communication (Constantinos et al., 2010; Rizos et al., 2015). In addition, large corporations benefit from volume discounts, which they receive due to the high quantities they purchase from the producing manufacturers. Although the profit margin is lower than in conventional clothing production, the corporations can pass on the additional costs, e.g., through marketing on the high sales volume of the garments (Jakob, 2019). The change is already recognizable in the ranking of the top buyers H&M, C&A among others, for organic cotton worldwide (Handelsblatt.com, 2019; Reimann, 2019). Although the core business at these corporations is not based on sustainability and

instead, they often only produce collection branches with materials made from organically grown cotton (Helmke et al., 2016), they have long since overtaken companies such as ARMEDANGELS with the purchase volumes of organic cotton (Jakob, 2019; Heinrich 2018).

Another challenge is sourcing sustainable materials. While ARMEDANGELS is already committed to using environmentally friendly materials, it can be difficult to source such materials in sufficient quantities. This can lead to bottlenecks in production and increase delivery times. ARMEDANGELS must ensure that they have an adequate supply of sustainable materials to support their growth. This is where working closely with suppliers and producers can help to improve the availability of sustainable materials (Scherff, 2017).

Another issue ARMEDANGELS faces is the issue of transparency in the supply chain. ARMEDANGELS' customers place a high value on ethical production and transparency in the supply chain. While ARMEDANGELS has already taken steps to increase transparency by disclosing production locations and working conditions, there is still room for improvement. The brand needs to ensure that it continues to operate at the highest level and improve its processes to ensure full transparency (Scherff, 2017).

In conclusion, despite ARMEDANGELS' success and commitment to sustainability, it still faces some challenges. Competition in the sustainable fashion industry, sourcing sustainable materials, and supply chain transparency are just a few of the issues the brand faces. Nevertheless, ARMEDANGELS is an example of a brand that is committed to positive change and deserves to be noticed in the sustainable fashion industry.

4. Empirical Research

In the first part of this thesis, the theoretical framework of brand communication on Instagram, with a particular focus on body-diverse content in the fashion industry, as well as the buying behavior and brand attitudes of Generation Y, were presented.

This chapter serves to outline the approach and design of the empirical work conducted in this study. It presents the research methodology that was used for this dissertation and explains how the data was collected as well as analyzed. First, the basic guidelines of the

different approaches to qualitative and quantitative data collection are explained. In the following sections, the actual data collection for this study is described. This consisted of the quantitative content analysis of the ARMEDANGELS Instagram, a qualitative interview, and a quantitative online survey. In addition, it should be noted that this research is intended to provide further insight and understanding of the topic and strive to make suggestions but does not seek to make any definitive statements or generalizable conclusions.

As mentioned earlier, this study is guided by interpretivism to allow for understanding based on individual views. Interpretivism focuses on the subjective experience of the individual and involves the researcher. It is important to consider some potential limitations of this approach, particularly in relation to the potential bias of the researcher. This approach usually involves observations and/or interviews, but this also allows for the possibility of collecting honest and in-depth data.

4.1. Research question and hypothesis

This study examines the influence of body-positive Instagram content on consumer behavior and brand attitude. The study draws on the ARMEDANGELS brand case study to transform the results into actionable recommendations. As previously mentioned, most studies relate body-positive content to self-image and self-perception. Most studies previously referred state that body-positive content positively impacts women's overall body evaluation and overall satisfaction (Rodger et al., 2022). Only a few studies, however, address the impact of body-positive content on women's brand attitudes and consumer behavior. Tsai and Chang (2007) found that normally attractive models in underwear advertisements are associated with more positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intention than highly attractive models. However, this study only refers to the underwear industry. It does not refer to the German market and female Generation Y.

Till and Busler (2000), considering the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), found that attitude toward performing the behavior is one of the most important predictors of consumer behavior. Thus, attitudes take a central role in research on buyer behavior, as they directly influence a consumer's consumer behavior (Schwarz et al., 2012). This statement will be tested regarding body-positive content to understand to what extent brand attitudes and consumer behavior influence each other.

Accordingly, the research question and supporting hypotheses are as follows:

“How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content affect female German Generation Y’s brand attitude and consumer behavior in the specific case of ARMEDANGELS?”

- H1: Body-positive Instagram content is positively related to the brand attitude of German female Generation Y.
- H2: Body-positive Instagram is positively related to the consumer behavior of German female Generation Y.
- H3: Brand attitude and consumer behavior are positively related in the context of body-positive content.

The hypotheses formulated help to support the coherent line of reasoning towards a grounded answer to the research question. The specially designed research model visualizes the presented variables as well as the hypotheses of the empirical investigation as follows:

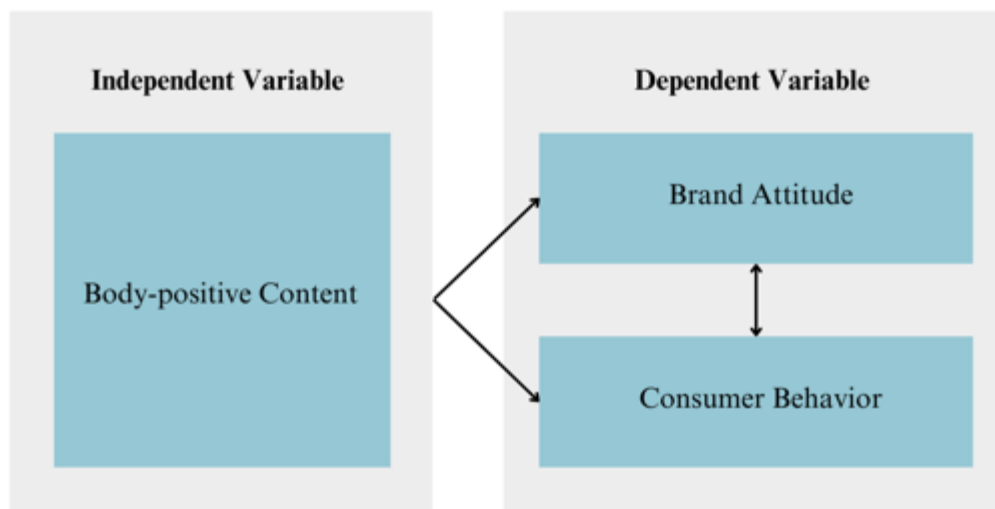


Figure 4 **Investigation Model**. Own representation.

The hypotheses help to support the coherent line of reasoning within the defined model. To answer the research question and the hypotheses, the research design is explained in the following sub-chapter.

4.2. Research design

To conduct a more comprehensive and complete investigation of the research problem in this dissertation, a mixed method approach to the research was chosen. The approach was first developed by Campbell and Fisk in 1959 when they used multiple methods to investigate the validity of psychological traits. This methodology quickly caught on and is used by other researchers because it offers numerous advantages to empirical research and allows for a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2009).

According to Creswell (2009), the results of qualitative and quantitative data "can be used side by side to reinforce each other" (p.14). Integrating qualitative and quantitative data provides a more holistic view of the research problem and allows for better answers to the research questions. However, it should be noted that combining qualitative and quantitative data can be time-consuming. This may result in a reduced sample size or a limited number of interviews due to a lack of time (Sandelowski, 2000).

The use of different methods can be done in different ways. In the case of this research, the aim is to collect qualitative data and then use quantitative data to obtain further information to explain, confirm, or refute the qualitative results. Since the emergence of the concept of mixed methods, numerous researchers have developed three general strategies: the sequential mixed method, the concurrent mixed method, and the transformative mixed method. The first strategy aims to extend the results of the first method by applying the second method. The second strategy, called concurrent embedded design, combines qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Finally, the third transformative mixed strategy provides an overlapping framework integrating quantitative and qualitative data into the design (Creswell, 2009).

In the present study, the second strategy - concurrent embedded design – was chosen as it provides a deeper understanding of the research problem, considering different perspectives. Qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, with a first method guiding the project and a second method supporting the investigation. The qualitative portion is embedded within the predominant quantitative method, creating a multi-level perspective on the research topic (Figure 5).

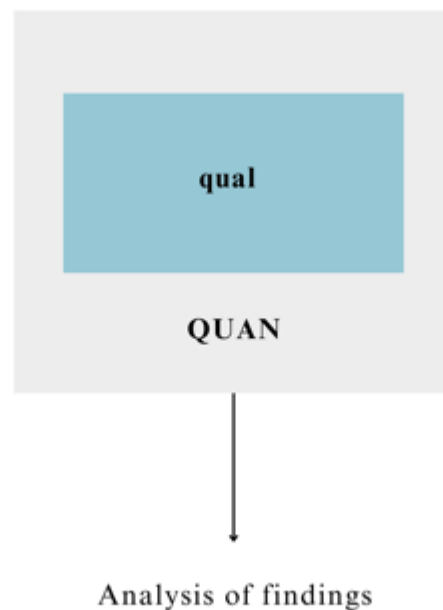


Figure 5 **Concurrent Embedded Design Creswell.** *Source: Own representation adapted from Creswell (2009)*

The second method may address a question different from the primary method or provide information at a different level. For example, employees may be studied quantitatively, while managers may be interviewed qualitatively (Creswell, 2009). Related to the present study, a company's target audience can be studied quantitatively while the company's employees can be surveyed qualitatively.

Different sets of data can be generated from this procedure, which is obtained in a single survey phase and analyzed separately, and then compared. However, it should be noted that there may be an uneven distribution of data sets, as the focus is usually on one method, and the second method contributes only for supporting information (Creswell, 2009). However,

the greatest advantage of this approach is that the researcher can "gain perspective from different types of data or from different levels within the study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 215).

An additional research approach in the form of a case study was used to contextualize the obtained results in a real-world context. A case study is a well-established social science approach that helps develop a deeper and multifaceted understanding of complex issues in their natural context. There are various definitions of case studies, but according to Creswell et al., the core principle is to examine the necessity of an event or phenomenon in its natural context. According to Stakes (1995), three main types of case studies can be distinguished: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study examines a unique phenomenon different from all others, and an instrumental case study examines a specific case to understand an issue or phenomenon better. In contrast, a collective case study involves multiple cases simultaneously or sequentially to gain an even more comprehensive understanding or assessment of an issue (Cresswell et al., 2011). This study is instrumental because the researcher focuses exclusively on one case, the ARMEDANGELS company.

To determine causal relationships between variables and to investigate the cause-effect relationship, an experiment is often conducted (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). However, an experiment also has gaps because it ignores external validity. The environment in which women are during the experiment does not correspond to the everyday situation in which they use Instagram and are exposed to body-ideal or body-positive images (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). In addition, the researcher's physical distance is an obstacle, as the researcher is located in Lisbon rather than in Germany. Accordingly, it was decided not to conduct an experiment for the present work. Purely descriptive research is also ruled out, as previous research on body-positive advertising has large gaps (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014). Focus groups were also excluded because, to answer the research question, the survey was deemed sufficient.

In this study, different views are provided through an investigation of the Instagram account of the ARMEDANGELS brand, the perspective of an employee of the company, and the perspective of the brand's target through qualitative and quantitative research. The objectives of both parts of the research are as follows:

Since the first part of the research is based on the content of the ARMEDANGELS Instagram account, it follows a deductive approach and is based on qualitative research in the form of content analysis, according to Mayring (2000). The analysis of the Instagram account creates a general impression of how the brand presents itself on Instagram and to what extent ARMEDANGELS conveys the theme of body positivity on its account.

The second part of the research relates to the perspective of ARMEDANGELS as a company. Using a qualitative, inductive in-depth interview with an employee of the company, it investigates which communication and content strategies the company pursues with their social media account, to what extent the topic of body-positive content plays a role in this, and to what extent the company believes that this type of content has an impact on the brand attitude and consumer behavior of their target group of customers.

The third part of the research will be conducted by quantitative means, conducting a survey, with a focus on the female German Generation Y. This part of the research aims to obtain results to find out how the target group of the ARMEDANGELS company feels about the topic of body-positive content and to what extent this content has an impact on their brand attitude and consumer behavior.

These results can then be compared with the company's perspective, and recommendations for action can be made accordingly.

4.2.1. Qualitative research design

To gain insights into the research question outlined earlier, the first part of the study will be conducted using qualitative measures, both descriptive and exploratory. Descriptive research aims to describe a population, situation, or phenomenon in a detailed and systematic way. Descriptive research can be used to answer what, where, when, and how questions. It is not suitable for answering why questions. For a descriptive research design, a variety of research methods can be used to examine one or more variables. In this study, Mayring's (2000) content analysis was chosen. Qualitative exploratory research focuses on individual cases that are examined in detail and evaluated interpretively. Methods include interviews, case

studies, and narrative research (Creswell, 2009). To answer the hypotheses that support the research question, an interview is chosen as the exploratory approach.

4.2.1.1. Content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is an empirical, methodologically controlled analysis method of texts and other communication forms, based on content-analytical rules and step-by-step models, but without rash quantification (Mayring, 2000). Unlike quantitative content analysis, which is one of the most widely used methods in communication studies, qualitative analysis focuses on an exploratory and open approach that considers aspects in their respective contexts (Averbeck-Lietz & Meyen, 2016). This method is particularly suitable for the analysis of visual content as well as word-picture combinations, where embedding in the context plays an essential role. Mayring (2000) describes six characteristics to consider when conducting content analysis. It should be possible to apply the analysis to any communication, it should be systematic and rule-based and understandable, comprehensible, and verifiable for others. In addition, the analysis must be theory-based to draw conclusions and inferences about certain aspects of the communication.

Under these conditions, Mayring (2000) lists four points that illustrate the previously mentioned characteristics of content analysis: (1) Placement in a communication model: The material must be placed in a communication model that contains information about the producer, the situation in which the material was created, and the sociocultural background of the interviewees as well as the effect of the material. (2) Rule-guardedness: The procedure must be determined in advance to proceed systematically and rule-guided. The material analysis must be done step by step and divided into content-analytical units. (3) Categories at the center of the analysis: the material is summarized and classified into categories, which are justified and reviewed during the analysis. The formation of categories is crucial for the comprehensibility of the analysis and the comparability of the results. (4) Quality criteria: The quality criteria of qualitative content analysis include comprehensibility, triangulation, and reliability. Applying the general process model of qualitative content analysis makes the procedure comprehensible since the steps taken to interpret the text have been determined in advance. Triangulation and reliability ensure the reliability of the analysis and make it

possible to verify the results. Overall, qualitative content analysis aims to retain the strengths of quantitative content analysis and to develop systematic, qualitatively oriented text analysis procedures on this background (Mayring, 2000).

There are three basic forms or techniques of content analysis, namely inductive summarization, explication, and deductive structuring. Each of these techniques has different characteristics and objectives. In summary, a reduction of the materials is used to filter out the most important content. In explication, supplementary material is drawn upon to explain or elucidate a particular passage of text. In structuring, certain aspects are extracted from the material and evaluated with respect to predefined criteria. The choice of the appropriate technique depends on the material and the question of the analysis (Mayring, 2000). In this dissertation, structuring content analysis with deductive category building is applied because the category building is based on an existing codebook of existing literature. The deductive application of categories is based on previously formulated theoretical aspects that are subsequently related to the text or visual material. Qualitative analysis involves a methodologically controlled assignment of the category to a section of text or image. Within the qualitative content analysis, a step model is used. The idea is to provide explicit definitions, examples, and coding rules for each deductive category to determine exactly when a section of text or an image can be assigned to a particular category. These definitions are brought together in a coding agenda. An illustration of the category system is presented and described in more detail in the Content Analysis Guide in the next chapter. The goal of structuring is to show the relationships between different aspects of the material (Mayring, 2000).

To ensure a rule-guided, systematic procedure, Mayring (2000) has developed a process model for deductive category formation (Figure 6), which can serve as a template for every content analysis.

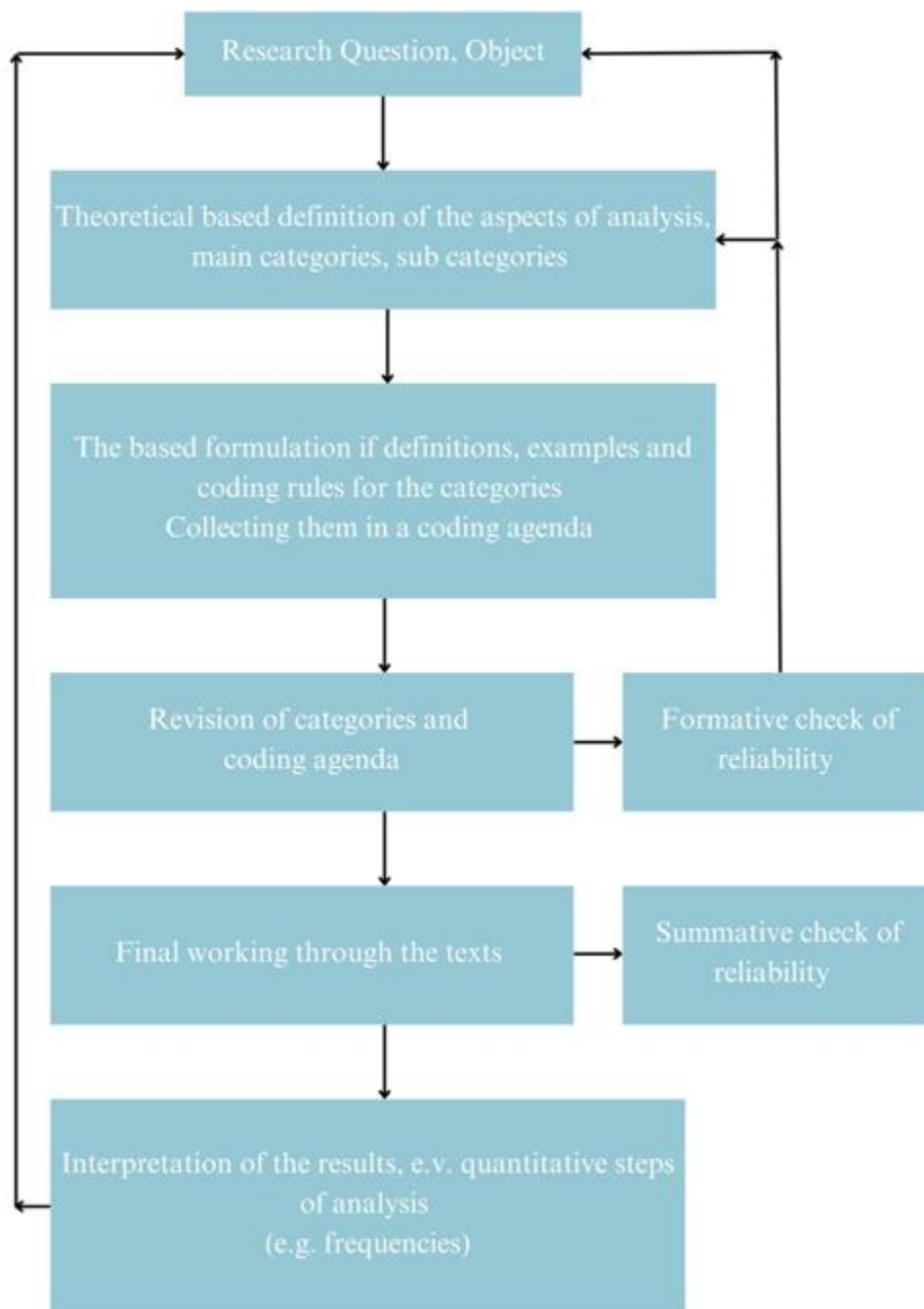


Figure 6 Step model of deductive category application. Source: Own representation adapted from Mayring (2000)

The deductive process model is a research process model that consists of three phases: theory building, category development, and conducting the analysis. The first phase, theory building, involves formulating hypotheses or research questions based on which an

investigation is conducted. This involves establishing a suitable theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis. Categories are then developed deductively, which means that categories are formulated based on theories or research questions rather than inductively obtained from the data. The categories must be clearly and unambiguously defined to ensure consistent application of the categories. Rules should also be established to minimize possible misinterpretation and subjective evaluations. The classes can be organized hierarchically to allow for differentiated analysis.

In the third phase, conducting the analysis, the collected data are analyzed using the previously developed categories. In this process, the data are systematically reviewed for their content relevant to the research question or hypothesis and assigned to the categories accordingly. The results are then interpreted and discussed (Mayring, 2000).

4.2.1.2. Interview with an expert

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2018), the qualitative interview is the most widely used method in qualitative research (p. 434). An interview is defined as a "purposeful conversation between two or more people" that revolves around questions and answers about a specific topic (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2018), with an emphasis on interpreting the answers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In public relations and marketing communications, interviews are often used to explore participants' experiences, views, and knowledge (Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). Qualitative interviews can be conducted in both individual and group formats, known as focus groups. However, focus groups are not considered appropriate for this dissertation due to discussing sensitive topics. Instead, a one-on-one interview will be conducted with an ARMEDANGELS employee. There are three common procedures for conducting one-on-one interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Qu & Dumay, 2001).

In this study, a semi-structured interview is conducted. "Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational format that allows participants to explore topics they deem important" (Longhurst, 2010).

An interview guide can be used to prepare for the interview. This covers the topics and helps "direct the conversation to the topics and questions the interviewers want to learn about" (Qu & Dumay, 2001, p. 246). The freedom afforded by the individual interview has the

advantage of allowing respondents to raise new questions and better justify their answers. In addition, "details of respondents' experiences can be uncovered that would not be revealed in a questionnaire, for example" (Allmark et al., 2009).

However, this type of interview also requires "a high degree of care and planning before, during, and after interviews in terms of how questions are asked and interpreted" (Qu & Dumay, 2001, p. 247). The qualitative approach requires open-ended questions to allow room for sensitive topics to be addressed and to encourage insightful responses (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, the interview is used to explore the ARMEDANGELS company's view on the topic of body positivity in social media marketing, their assessment of how their target audience feels about this topic, and to what extent it can influence Generation Y's brand attitudes and consumer behavior.

Interviews can be conducted in persona, but also as so-called e-interviews. E-interviews are interviews that are conducted online. Due to geographic barriers, the interview was conducted remotely and thus online via Google Meets. According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2015), video calls are a convenient alternative to face-to-face interviews that offer several advantages. For one, they allow flexible meeting times and overcome geographic barriers. Second, they are cost-effective and timesaving because travel is not required. In addition, by using videoconferencing software such as Google Meets, respondents can be interviewed from the comfort of their own homes, which can increase their willingness to participate in an interview. A study by Saunders, Throne, and Thornhill (2018) also found that audio-visual recording of the interview is possible during e-interviews, which allows the researcher to focus on the interview without being distracted by notes. A comparison between face-to-face interviews and e-interviews found no significant differences in interview quality (Bell et al., 2015).

4.2.2. Quantitative research design

According to Creswell (2009), quantitative research methods aim to obtain a large amount of data and analyze the results statistically. This can be achieved through various methods, such as surveys or experiments.

In this dissertation, a study was conducted to understand Generation Y's attitudes toward brands that post body-positive content and to analyze how this content affects consumer behavior. An online survey was chosen as the data collection method to achieve these objectives.

4.2.2.1. Online survey

A survey is designed to provide a numerical description of trends or opinions in each population and can help test predefined concepts contributing to a theory (Creswell, 2009). In this study, it was decided to conduct the survey online. Unlike other standardized survey modes, online surveys are placed on a server of a research institute or provider and completed online by the survey participants. This means that the Internet is used as the medium for this type of survey.

The use of online questionnaires offers several advantages, including independence of location and time, which means that respondents can be contacted simultaneously across large distances and borders. In this context, the sample, which covers women across Germany, could be achieved using online surveys. In addition, online surveys are convenient and time-efficient and do not require special tools or instruments if a stable internet connection and a laptop or phone are available. Online surveys also have the advantage of being more financially cost-effective compared to other data collection methods and ensure anonymity, which can lead to more openness in responses.

However, there are also disadvantages to using online surveys over other survey modes. The reach of online surveys depends on the target population's computer and Internet equipment, and the response rate may be lower than the number of people receiving the survey. Another disadvantage is the self-explanatory nature of online questionnaires, which may result in some participants needing to understand the questions. Therefore, it is essential to pay special attention to the introduction and explanation of the survey. In addition, the self-administration factor of surveys can lead to incomplete survey completion (Wagner et al., 2014).

4.3. Empirical Corpus

Having previously explained the definition and operation of each method, this chapter describes how the data were collected, including the process and sample selection for each method. In addition, the ethical aspects are also considered.

4.3.1. Qualitative data collection

4.3.1.1. *Content analysis*

Sampling

To embed the answers to the research question in a contextual framework, a systematic analysis of the Instagram presence of the ARMEDANGELS brand and its handling of the topic of body positivity is required. For this purpose, a structured content analysis with deductive category formation offers a scientifically sound methodology to capture the posted content and characterize the brand meaningfully.

The research covered all Instagram posts published on the official account of the ARMEDANGELS brand in the period from January 1, 2021 to January 1, 2022. An entire year was analyzed because, according to Rosemann (2023) at the end of the year, ARMEDANGELS prepares a marketing plan for the coming year. Thus, an entire marketing plan for the brand was considered, and no campaigns or special promotions were excluded. The year 2022 was chosen because it is the most recent year where information is available. The analysis itself took place on January 27, 2023.

518 posts were analyzed as regular posts, carousels, and reels. Since Carousels are image series (Instagram Business, n.d., b), the images in the image series were considered individually. Stories were excluded from the analysis because they are only online for 24 hours (Instagram Business, n.d., c), and thus, previously posted stories could not be tracked.

The methodology of structured content analysis with deductive category formation was chosen, as the images were extracted and assessed using a predefined codebook taken from existing literature. In this process, the individual categories were related to the images to be

analyzed. The categories were deductively derived from existing literature on body positivity and then inductively developed to ensure the broadest possible coverage of relevant aspects.

During the initial review of the content, it was determined that the captions and hashtags of the posts related exclusively to product features and the company. Thus, these were defined as not relevant to the topic for analysis. The posts were then coded on two levels: First, the portrayal of bodies in the images was assessed, and second, possible body positivity aspects in the images were analyzed.

This methodological approach allows the Instagram presence of ARMEDANGELS to be examined soundly and systematically, thus providing insights into the brand's approach to body positivity.

Analysis Guide

As previously mentioned in the literature, the study titled "#bodypositivity: A content analysis of body-positive accounts on Instagram" by Cohen et al.'s (2019) aims to investigate the relationship between the content posted on Instagram by popular body-positive accounts and the core theoretical components of a positive body image. Here, a total of 640 Instagram posts from popular body-positive accounts were coded as to whether they correspond to the attributes and core themes associated with body image. The underlying coding was based on theoretical concepts, previous social media content analysis, and a body-positive content review. The study by Lohmann et al. (2021) also conducted a content analysis, and the Instagram account of ARMEDANGELS, of the year 2020 was examined. However, the codebook of the study was not recognized as suitable by the researcher, as it does not refer to physical characteristics in as much detail as Cohen et al.'s (2019) study.

Specific categories were developed to promote positive body image based on the essential elements of positive body image from Tylka (2012, 2018) and Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015). Coding categories focused on appearance were derived from previous research on physical appearance content in social media (Boepple et al., 2016; Webb et al., 2017).

Because the present content analysis aims to examine ARMEDANGELS' Instagram content for its body-positive nature, the coding scheme of Cohen et al.'s study was considered an

appropriate template for the present work. The coding scheme focuses exclusively on thematic content based on images and aims to analyze the content based on bodily characteristics defined as body positive in the literature. However, the researcher adapted the coding scheme before and during the analysis by, for example, eliminating categories that promote body image and referring only to those that relate to appearance. Additionally, other relevant variables were highlighted and considered in the coding.

Instagram posts were coded at two levels: (1) images (without captions) and (2) human subjects (if present in the images).

- Imagery

The visual component of posts was coded as follows: (a) visual image only (human figure(s)); (b) text only (motivational quote, educational text, humorous text, opinion, other); (c) visual image and text combined (e.g., quote overlaid on an image); (d) video; (e) visual image with product focus (still life, detail from the product, images of products from store); or (f) other (store images, call to action).

- Human Subjects

Images featuring human subjects were coded to capture information about their demographic characteristics, physical attributes, and clothing styles. If an image had multiple dominant figures, coding was done for everyone concerning these features. This process was applied to still images and videos, with the coding of videos occurring at an overall view level consistent with the results of previous content analyses of video material (compare, e.g., Aubrey & Frisby, 2011).

- Demographic data

Consistent with Webb et al.'s (2017a; 2017b) scoring schemes, subjects were coded by perceived gender (female, male, other), among other factors. Since the research question refers to the female gender, only these were considered in further analysis. Accordingly, images that depicted a female were additionally coded by age (<15 years old, 15-20 years old, 20 s, 30 s, 40 s, 50 s, 60 s or older).

The ethnicity of the models was not considered in the analysis, as this dissertation explicitly focuses on the topic of diversity with a focus on body shape.

- Body-related attributes.

Consistent with previous research on multiethnic samples (Thompson-Brenner et al., 2011; Webb et al., 2017), subjects' body sizes were assessed using Pulvers et al.'s (2004) Figure Rating Scale. The scale includes nine figures representing gradually increasing body sizes (correlated with BMI), from underweight (Figure 1,2), normal (Figure 3,4), overweight (Figure 5) to obese (Figure 6-9) (Figure 7; Pulvers et al., 2013). The overweight and obese categories were combined into one category in the following analysis.

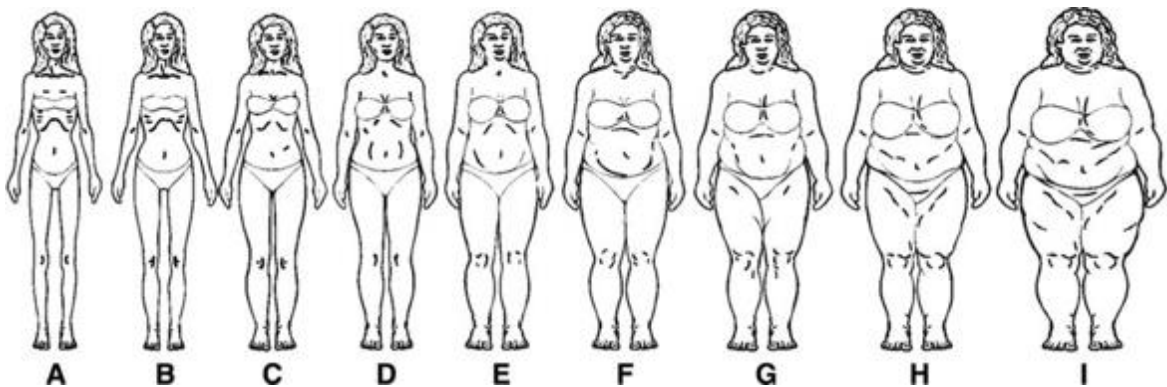


Figure 7 **Figure Rating Scale.** *Source: Pulvers et al. (2013)*

The assessment consisted of selecting the image that most closely resembled the height of the human figure depicted.

Following Boepple et al. (2016), culturally influenced beauty ideals were also rated by coders, including clear, flawless skin, well-groomed, shiny hair, symmetrical facial features, and straight, white teeth. These characteristics were combined to provide an overall rating of 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent. This overall rating only applied to underweight, normal-weight, and overweight individuals. A distinction was made between the three body types in the analysis to establish a relationship between body shape and culturally influenced beauty ideals.

Additionally, subjects were assessed for the presence or absence of "flaws" in the image that did not conform to common beauty ideals, such as cellulite, stretch marks, acne, body hair, and fat bulges on the abdomen. This was based on a survey of the positive body content. Again, the analysis differentiated the three body types (underweight, normal, overweight) to establish a relationship between body shape and "flaws" in the study.

- Clothing and activity

According to previous studies (Conlin et al., 2017; Wasylikiw et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2017), subjects' level of clothing/exposure was coded. Clothing/exposure was categorized into five categories: 1 = fully covered (e.g., long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, long dress), 2 = partially revealing (e.g., shorts and top, shorts, and skirt, sleeveless dress), 3 = moderately revealing (e.g., tight workout clothes, belly top, short shorts, miniskirt), 4 = very revealing (e.g., swimsuit, lingerie), 5 = extremely revealing (e.g., nude). A distinction was made between the three body types to understand the relationship between body shape and clothing choices.

Previous content analyses (Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018; Wasylikiw et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2017) were considered to classify the subject's activity into the following categories: Activity (sport or exercise) or Inactivity (glamour posing, posturing, or passive posturing). Activities coded as "athletic" included practices such as running, gym workouts, and active yoga poses, while "exercise" included any general body movement (e.g., "jumping for joy," shaking the body, or frolicking on the beach).

4.3.1.2. *Interview with an expert*

Interview Guide

As Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2015) recommended, it can be helpful to use an interview guide in semi-structured interviews that includes a list of topics, questions, and prompts to encourage discussion. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2018), this is defined as a "plan for conducting a semi-structured interview that includes introductory remarks, a list of topics, questions, and prompts to encourage discussion and concluding remarks" (p.806). It is essential to give respondents as much flexibility as possible to understand their perspective on the world and to improve the quality of data collection, which may be critical

later in analyzing the data collected. The interview guide should be structured according to the research question. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2015) recommend establishing topic areas to create a flowing sequence of questions that can be changed at any time. Each question and topic area must contribute to the research question. Comprehensible language should be used to avoid misunderstandings, and the respondent's personal information (i.e., name, age, occupation, number of years employed, etc.) should be recorded to contextualize the responses (Bell et al., 2015).

The interview guide of this study begins with a brief introduction of the researcher and the master's thesis, followed by a thank you to the interviewee for their assistance with the research. An "icebreaker" helps to get to know the interviewee better by asking for background information about their position, the organization, and the person. The topic of social media as a communication tool is then addressed, asking to what extent the company uses this tool, what the strategy behind it is, which topics are highly relevant and how these are reflected by the selection of content, and which target group it is intended to address. Next, the respondent was asked to provide definitions to gain a better understanding of their knowledge on the topic of body positivity. After that, the respondent is asked to state the company's position on this topic to understand the processes behind it better. This is followed by questions about the results from the content analysis to understand the impact of the company's stance. Finally, the company's assessments and activities regarding brand attitude and purchasing behavior are asked. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Sampling

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2015), the research question usually informs which entities should be included in the sample to obtain answers for the study. Since the research question of this thesis already specifies who should be interviewed, random sampling is not used here. Instead, purposive sampling is used, where respondents are selected strategically to answer the research question. This selection is not based on the random principle, and researchers are not allowed to generalize their findings to a population (Bell et al., 2015).

The difference between a population and a sample is that a sample is a subset of the population from which the results are drawn (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Unlike a fixed purposive sample, the sequential approach is more flexible because the researcher can start with an initial sample and expand it during the research process. Sampling units are selected based on defined criteria that determine their relevance to the research (Bell et al., 2018). By selecting specific "criteria (...) informed by the research questions," the authors subdivide purposive sampling into generic purposive sampling (p. 395).

Specific criteria were established for this study to narrow the sample. The participant must be employed by the ARMEDANGELS company. In addition, they must work in the communications department. Since only a limited number of employees work in the communications department, the sample population is limited accordingly.

All interviewees were contacted via email or personal message on LinkedIn if the position in the company was known to ARMEDANGELS. According to Easterby-Smith, Thrope, and Jackson (2015), finding interviewees to volunteer for a student's research is significantly more difficult as students and institutions increasingly compete to access a limited number of companies and employees. One interviewee was found who agreed to be interviewed. Under the circumstances, gathering a larger number of interviewees was impossible. However, the researcher is certain that the limited number of interviews will still contribute to the research, as at this time, the literature on the research topic could be more extensive, thus creating insight into the company's views on body positivity.

Ethical Consideration

When conducting research, researchers must consider ethical and moral issues from the outset and take appropriate steps to ensure that the rights of participants are protected. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2018) emphasize that researchers should be sensitive when formulating research questions and objectives and ensure that their work does not cause harm. It is also important to follow ethical guidelines, especially when conducting interviews and surveys, to protect the rights of participants (Saunders et al., 2018).

In the case of the present study, the participant was asked via email for his consent to participate in the interview. She was also asked to give his consent to the recording of the video call, which indicates that the researcher tried to follow ethical guidelines to ensure that the rights of the participants were respected. It is also worth noting that the participant had the option to remain anonymous if they did not feel comfortable revealing their identity. In addition, the participant participated in the online interviews voluntarily and at a time agreed upon by the participant. Due to the physical distance from Lisbon to Cologne, the interview was conducted via Zoom, allowing the participant to participate from home. Authors Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2015) state that the option of face-to-face interaction via webcam, which was used in all interviews, was of high quality and largely positively associated (p. 452). This shows that conducting online interviews can be an acceptable alternative due to the constraints of physical distance if ethical guidelines are followed. Although it was not possible to read all the participant's body language, the researcher argues that this did not result in a lower-quality of analysis. However, it is important to note that interpreting nonverbal signals is an important aspect of interview and survey research. Therefore, researchers must be careful when conducting online interviews to ensure they are using all available information to interpret their research findings (Saunders et al., 2018). In conclusion, the researchers made every effort to ensure that the participant's rights were respected. They followed ethical guidelines and informed the participant how their data would be used. In addition, they discussed and reported all relevant facts known to the researcher to avoid plagiarism and maintain the ethical standards of the research.

4.3.2. Quantitative data collection

4.3.2.1. *Online survey*

The Conception of the Survey

The free software "Google Forms" was used for the online survey to collect comprehensive data. The survey was conducted between March 14, 2022, and May 10, 2022, corresponding to almost two months. The online survey was disseminated through targeted postings on social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Instagram proved relevant, as the survey was limited to individuals with an Instagram account. In addition, the survey was shared in WhatsApp groups. In addition, the survey was shared in survey groups

to reach individuals outside of the research setting. A voucher worth 30€ from AREMDANGELS was raffled to encourage participation in the survey. To participate in the raffle, participants had the option to provide their email address at the end of the questionnaire. The voucher was the only cost incurred in the creation of the questionnaire.

The population was first considered to define a suitable sample number for this study. Based on the research question, all German women of Generation Y were defined as the population. According to Statista, about 6.4 million women from Germany belonged to Generation Y in 2021 (Statista, 2021, k). To obtain a representative sample for the present study, this was calculated as shown in Figure 8.

$$n = \frac{\hat{p} (1 - \hat{p}) z^2}{m^2}$$

Figure 8 **Formular Sample Size.** *Source: Own representation adapted from Solis (2020)*

In this study, the sample size is represented by "n" and the population distribution is denoted by \hat{p} . Since this value is unknown, a value of 0.5 is used. The margin of error is represented by "m" and the z value is calculated based on the confidence level. A confidence level of 95%, which corresponds to a z-value of 1.96, is chosen for the calculation. The margin of error is set at 5% and since the distribution of the population is unknown, a value of 0.5 for \hat{p} is used (Solis, 2020). The calculation results in a sample size of 385 participants.

The survey questions were taken from English-language literature, and therefore the entire survey was conducted in English. Although the participants are from Germany and most likely speak German as their native language, translation was not used to avoid possible distortion of the meaning of the items and, thus, bias in the measurements. The researcher decided to keep the original items in English because it is common in Germany to learn English at a young age, and the questions were phrased in easy-to-understand language.

The survey was called "Body Positivity on Social Media" and is divided into different sections. First, there is a brief introduction of the researcher and the topic under investigation.

Since the survey is aimed exclusively at German women of Generation Y, this is made clear in the introductory text to show to whom the questions refer. The first questions refer to the participants' demographic information, such as age, gender, and country of origin. Nominal scales are used to evaluate these first questions. Next, participants are asked whether they own and use an Instagram account and whether they have heard of the topic of body positivity. These questions are also evaluated using a nominal scale. For everyone to have a general understanding of the topic of body positivity, it is then defined in a shortened version. In the next step, the participants were asked to explain their idea of body positivity to match whether their view corresponds with the described attributes from the literature. These were measured using ordinal scales and the use of 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Subsequently, the dependent variables "Brand Attitude" and "Consumer behavior" were also measured using the 5-point Likert-type scales. Finally, the participants are asked how familiar they are with the ARMEDANGELS brand, whether they are already customers or followers of the brand, and how they feel about the brand regarding various things.

The present study uses item formulations for operationalizing dependent variables that are also applied in the relevant research literature. An empirical examination and, if necessary, an adaptation of these formulations is carried out. The measurement model for brand attitude is constructed according to the studies of Hallahan (1999). For the consumer behavior construct, the item formulation is based on the research of Putrevu et al. (1994) and Lu et al. (2014).

All constructs are measured using a multi-item measure, which according to Churchill (1979), ensures high reliability as well as low measurement error. A complete list of all

constructs and item formulations used, including the corresponding literature sources, can be found in Table 1.

Construct	Items	Sources	Measurement Scale
Body-Positive Content	(Q1) Overweight humans in commercials	Derived from Thompson et al. (2011)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q2) Humans showing cellulite or / and stretch marks in commercials	Derived from Boepple et al. (2016)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q3) Humans showing acne in commercials	Derived from Boepple et al. (2016)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q4) Humans with bodily hair in commercials	Derived from Boepple et al. (2016)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q5) Skinny humans in commercials	Derived from Thompson et al. (2011)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q6) People with revealing clothes or active poses	Derived from Conlin & Bissell, 2014; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017; Wasylkiw et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2017)	5-point Likert Scale

Brand Attitude	(Q7) Do you like a fashion brand better when it shows body-positive content than when it doesn't?	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q8) I frequently engage with body-positive content on Instagram (e.g., like, comment, share)	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q9) Brands that show body positive content on their Instagram channel make a positive impression on me	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q10) I find fashion brands that promote inclusion and use body diverse models in their ad campaigns, as opposed to those that tend to present the thin beauty ideal, very appealing.	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q11) How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: "Brands that promote body positivity are more appealing to me than those that don't."	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q12) A brand that only posts skinny, idealized models on its Instagram account is very appealing to me	Derived from Hallahan (1999)	5-point Likert Scale

Consumer Behavior	(Q13) For each of the following three statements, please evaluate if these aspects affect your online purchasing behavior for clothes, on Instagram in a positive way: The body diversity of models reflected in the content of the brand	Derived from Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q14) I would be more likely to purchase the product online if the brand show body positive content	Derived from Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q15) I often consider a brand's messaging around body positivity before making a purchase	Derived from Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q16) Have you ever made a purchase from a fashion brand just because of their body-positive messaging?	Derived from Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014	5-point Likert Scale
	(Q17) Are you more attracted to a product and have a higher purchase intention if it's shown with a perfect, thin idealised body type, or do you prefer it when the model has a body-positive body type?	Derived from Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014	Nominal Scale

Table 1 Survey Items. Independent & Dependent Variables. Own representation

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations must be considered when using tools such as Google Forms, even though they may be considered more acceptable than attaching a questionnaire to an email. Several measures were taken to ensure that the online survey met ethical standards. For example, participants were informed in the introduction that their participation was voluntary and for scientific purposes only. It was also ensured that the online survey would be conducted anonymously. In addition, it was mentioned that participants could contact the researcher via email if they had further questions or if something needed to be clarified. To protect the participants' privacy, the demographic question regarding gender was given the option not to provide any information or to describe themselves. These measures ensured that the online survey was conducted ethically.

5. Data Analysis

The following data analysis includes a systematic evaluation of the collected data in order to be able to answer the hypotheses and the research question. The data are cleaned, statistical methods and the results are presented in the process.

5.1. Qualitative data

5.1.1. Content analysis

The content analysis conducted by the researcher resulted in the following findings. Here, it is important to mention that the scientific theoretical position of interpretivism was used. In this, reality is considered as "socially constructed through the meanings that social actors ascribe to their experiences" (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 185).

- Imagery

Overall, 51.54% of posts are visual images only, 18.15% are text only, 8.49% are a combination of images and text, 11.20% are videos, 7.53% are visual images with a product focus, and 3.09% can be categorized as "other."

- Human Subjects

- Demographics

In the images that contain at least one human figure, 22.69% are male, 77.31% are female, and 0.00% are non-binary. Most of the females shown can be classified as being in their 20s (58.39%) and 30s (40%). Only 0.65% can be classified as the 60s and 0.97% as older.

- Body-related attributes.

The present study is based on Instagram posts showing female bodies of different body sizes and weights. Body size varies from underweight to obese (Fig. Pulvers et al., 2013). More than half of the images showing a female are perceived as underweight (56.45% in Figure 1-2), while 29.35% are assessed as normal weight (Figure 3-4), 6.45% as overweight (Figure 5), and 7.74% as obese (Figure 6-9).

The study also examines the extent to which culturally determined beauty ideals play a role in the perception of women's bodies. Women who are perceived as underweight exhibit "somewhat" culturally conditioned beauty ideals in 18.29% and "strongly" in 81.71%. Among women of normal weight, 1.10% exhibit "not at all," 4.40% exhibit "very little," 28.57% exhibit "somewhat," and 65.93% exhibit "strongly" culturally conditioned beauty ideals. Overweight and obese women also exhibit strong beauty ideals, with 29.55% saying "somewhat" and 70.45% "strongly". Overall, 75.48% of all images with a female on them have strong, culturally determined beauty ideals.

Interestingly, the results also show that in women with normal weight, blemishes such as cellulite or wrinkles are often perceived. Overweight and obese women, on the other hand, often show abdominal rolls or soft bellies. However, only 8.70% of images with a female on them have blemishes such as stretch marks, acne/skin blemishes, or body hair.

- Clothing and Activity

More than half, 52%, of underweight women have no revealing clothing on at all. 24.57% wear slightly revealing clothing, 17.14% wear moderately revealing clothing, 6.29% wear very revealing clothing, and 0.00% wear extremely revealing clothing. Among normal-weight women, 63.74% wear no revealing clothing at all, 21.98% wear slightly revealing clothing, 10.99% wear moderately revealing clothing, 3.30% wear revealing clothing, and 0.00% wear extremely revealing clothing. 29.55% of overweight and obese women show up in no revealing clothing at all, 31.82% in slightly revealing clothing, 36.36% in moderately

revealing clothing, 2.27% in very revealing clothing, and 0.00% in extremely revealing clothing.

Of the images that contain people of underweight person, 88.57% are in a non-action pose, and 11.43% are in an action pose (i.e., exercise or movement). Among the normal-weight people, 10.99% have an active pose, and 89.01% have an inactive posture. Among overweight women, one-third (25%) pose in an active pose, and 75% pose in a non-active pose.

5.1.2. Expert’s interview analysis

The analysis of the expert interview is based on the model for data analysis by Bogner et al. (2009). The first step consists of labeling and arranging the paragraphs of the interview. Keywords, themes, problems, as well as preformulated hypotheses, should be labeled and identified. The next step consists of arranging the paragraphs, sorting and grouping them separately by themes and subthemes. The final stage consists of analysis, both at the thematic level and integration with literature and theory.

Based on the recommendations presented earlier, the researcher reduced the interview transcript (Appendix C) to the relevant statements and then grouped them into different categories and subcategories. These are described in the following table (Table 2):

Categories	Subcategories	Hypothesis to evaluate
(1) Importance of Body Positive Content	Generation Y	Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2
	Social Media Content Strategy	Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2
(2) The impact of Body Positive Content	Brand Attitude	Hypothesis 1
	Consumer Behavior	Hypothesis 2
	Brand Attitude & Consumer Behavior	Hypothesis 3

Table 2 Categories to evaluate the research propositions. *Own representation.*

Category: Importance of Body Positivity

The importance of body positivity is a relevant component of the present study, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.2.2.1. To find out how ARMEDANGELS assesses its target group on this topic and to what extent the company is convinced that body-positive content plays an important role for Generation Y, a subcategory called "Generation Y" was formed. Furthermore, another subcategory is formed to summarize all statements the interview participant makes about the social media strategy in connection with body-positive content. The aim is to understand whether ARMEDANGELS correctly perceive their target group's needs and also consider these in their content strategy.

Subcategory: Generation Y

- *I mean I think it's super important. We have a huge share a huge share of our customers or communities. We always say like more in that segment of moms, I mean, it also comes maybe natural at a certain age and I specially or taking that as an example, I think it's completely normal, if you go through a pregnancy that you can end up having stretch marks for instance, and I mean, that's the most natural thing in the world. And I think we should embrace that. So, I really, I definitely feel that for our community, it's something super important and something that they can relate to. So definitely*
- *I think. I think it's...performs better sounds...almost wrong. But, I mean I think in general, as I said before the fashion industry is still very used to idealized models and for, used to showing products on rather skinny models, but I think that is out like often of a pure historical reason that this is where fashion comes from but as I said, I think every brand is moving towards a different or should move towards a different presentation of products and a more realistic picture that you can give to the community. And to be honest we have a lot of discourse in our community about the topic and we also get a lot of critique actually out of the community. That's why I also 100% sure that the community wants to see more.*
We believe it's super important and I mean since I think we are also a brand that educates a lot, I mean, not specifically, of course a body positivity, and but in other areas, we want to, of course, enhance the topic. And, as I said before, we work also

with a lot of influences that position themselves into that field of educational, let's say. So, for us, it's a super super important topic. We are aware. We also work continuously on our size extensions, and as I said, because we try to be as inclusive as possible. So, we find it very, very important and really like to support people that educate in that area.

- I think the generation is in general already educated. But they are also open to learn or very fond to learn new things and but they also are used to old patterns. Let's say, maybe especially when you talk about visuals, when you talk about visuals or models in the fashion industry. I think our, my generation is used to a certain imagery, certain visuals but I think we also like when brands challenge that and kind of like disrupted that. So, I think it's very difficult what content you show them and what is politically correct, what is socially accepted. So we try to be bold and we try to show new things but also not to be too bold, because I think the generation lies between the old generation and lies the very new generation that the disrupts a lot. And I think we also somewhere in between since this is our main target group. So, we try to be bold but in a, let's say, slower way.*
- So, I think they like the content but I think probably half of the community would like us to be more edgy and the other half is quite content with our content and so yes in general I would say they like the content.*

Subcategory: Social Media Content Strategy

- But on Instagram, we also try to show as many or try to start to show as many different body types and shapes also to get a better understanding of how the clothing look and on different people. And I think it's a good platform to do so.*
- And I would also say we still are in the process of learning a lot from our community and getting insights from our community also when it comes to body positivity etc. and I think it's not the main purpose of the platform, but it's a good platform to do so, to show that our clothing can fit on everyone best case.*
- We believe it's super important and I mean since I think we are also a brand that educates a lot, I mean, not specifically, of course a body positivity, and but in other areas, we want to, of course, enhance the topic. And, as I said before, we work also with a lot of influences that position themselves into that field of educational, let's*

say. So, for us, it's a super super important topic. We are aware. We also work continuously on our size extensions, and as I said, because we try to be as inclusive as possible. So, we find it very, very important and really like to support people that educate in that area.

- *I think right now, it's still very much like we use a lot of E-com material, like E-com, shooting material. So basically imagery from E-com shootings that we would also show on the website. In my opinion, there is room for improvement because, it's sometimes not that, how do you say, maybe like natural? Because people are not, I mean, we try to show also, as I said before user generated content, or also influencer generated content, which I think display a better like you and me like the normal people. But right now, I think the majority of the imagery it's still from the E-Com shooting. So basically, models in our clothing.*
- *Yes. As I said before, I think we have still some work to do and some way to go and I think right now we still show a lot of let's say classical content from E-com shoots, which it changed already in the past, but I think we still have a lot of normal models, that probably one would categorize as underweight slash normal weight. And so, I think it's probably still 60 to 70 percent of more like traditional models and the rest, I think it's...What is overweight? I think that's also a very subjective judgment and probably for agencies, they would call it overweight models. Maybe it's like 20%, 20 to 30%.*
- *But on Instagram, we also try to show as many or try to start to show as many different body types and shapes also to get a better understanding of how the clothing look and on different people.*
- *I mean, I think it's, I mean, we want to make fashion for everyone, so we try to be as inclusive as possible. And I think also for the community or for the customers, it's important to see the products on different body shapes on different people in general. So, I think that's a way to kind of make the product, look more, realistic, maybe, or get a better understanding of how the product could look on the customer*
- *I think, as we said before, I think in general slowly getting there to show the products on more like more body types and in a more realistic world, let's say, or more realistic body types that one can relate with, because I think that's a very important part from personally, also that I can relate somehow, with the models also there I*

see and I think it is nice to go or to move a bit away from this, like, pure E-com material, but rather show models, or even better use like community customers in a more natural setting. So more like in the daily life, let's say.

Category: The Impact of body positivity

The impact of body positivity forms the core of the present study. In chapter 2.2.2.1. the concept was discussed in more detail, and the current state of research was summarized. Body positivity can have an impact on various things. Since the present study is intended to find out to what extent this influences brand attitudes as well as on the purchasing behavior of Generation Y, and thus on the target group of the ARMEDANGELS company, these two dependent variables form the subcategories of the concept.

Subcategory: Brand Attitude

- *So by our content strategy, as I said before, I mean it has different elements but I think by the visuals these days since we are changing also we're shifting a bit towards a more bold strategy, I think we want to show our customers that we can be a brand that does like also more edgy content, more bolder styles and we're moving towards that and by our like, verbal part of the communication, we try to open conversations, basically. So actually I think body positive content affects the Generations Y's brand attitude very much. I think this is actually something that we can see in internal surveys that we also conducted that especially partners but also our community they proactively ask for body positive content and also we can see that we get a lot of criticism for our super let's say fashion skinny models and that they are wishing for more body diversity on our social media profile but also when it comes to our influencer that we are working with. And as I said before obviously for us it is always a bit challenging to meet like both let's say brands desired image so on the one hand we are a fashion brand that wants to be fashionable and desirable and on the other hand obviously we want be super inclusive and that's definitely something we can see that's more like a, I can't really quantify it which is super hard because we don't have something official to share like with external stakeholders but from internally conducted surveys that we did in the past we can see for sure that people proactively ask for body positive content and also we get positive Feedback on social media postings when we are rather showing more normal body types. And also we can see*

better advertising performance when we push advertising that show several models with different body types which is also one KPI that might help to verify that the brand attitude or let's say rather the customers attitude towards the brand meaning how they click or the clicking behavior is actually better when showing more diverse body types. This is a thing that we can definitely confirm.

- *So as I mentioned before we see it once in the surveys we internally conduct where usually around 60%-70% answer that they would like to see more body diverse models in our social media feed but also that they would like to see more body diverse influencers that we are working with. so potentially partners that's lets the brand faces that should be more diverse in terms of the body type.*

Subcategory Consumer behavior:

- *Let's say so I wouldn't necessarily say that it performs better, I think it's like a pure historical reason that fashion was used to display rather idealized models, but I think actually that these days, it will perform better if you show more realistic models for sure.*
- *I mean what we cannot confirm yet that the conversion rate is necessarily better when showing diverse body types but at least the traffic is better let's say. So people actually click more they engage a bit more. But if they are in the end buying it's something super hard for us to verifying because even from social media we don't necessarily see the correct numbers if someone after seeing a post definitely goes to the shop and buys that specific product. That nothing that we can confirm but when talking about the social ads that have the main purpose of upselling like really a performance approach then we can see that the clicking behavior from customers is actually better.*
- *Also we know that our social ads perform better when we show at least several models with different body types within one advertisement.*

Subcategory Brand attitude & Consumer behavior

- *Yes, I think so. I think that people who have a positive attitude towards something, in this case a brand, are more likely to buy a product from that brand. So yes, I think*

they are correlated in a positive way. I think a positive attitude towards the brand definitely has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

5.2. Quantitative data

5.2.1. Online survey analysis

The following section provides a detailed overview of the dataset characteristics, focusing on the sample's composition. The data is analyzed using Python and Excel.

Prior to dataset cleaning, the sample included a total of 165 participants who completed the questionnaire. To comply with the research question, which exclusively concerns Generation Y women in Germany. All probands who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis. Five participants were male and were therefore not included in the analysis. Within the remaining 160 participants, 89 were born between 1994 and 2000, 58 belonged to the cohorts between 1988 and 1993, and 11 were assigned to the age cohort between 1981 and 1987. According to Spiegel (2013), all three age cohorts can be assigned to Generation Y and were therefore considered in the analysis. Two probands were excluded because they did not belong to any of the age cohorts. Furthermore, five women took part in the survey who are not from Germany, because of which their responses were not considered. Additionally, participants who do not use Instagram were excluded, as the research question relates to the effect of body-positive content on Instagram's social media platform. Four probands indicated that they did not use social media platforms and were therefore excluded from the analysis (Table 3).

Item	Type	Percent (%)
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,03 • 96,97
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1981 - 1987 • 1988 - 1993 • 1994 - 2000 • Non of the above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,88 • 36,25 • 55,62 • 1,25
Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Germany • Not from Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96,83 • 3,16
Instagram Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an Instagram account • Don't have an Instagram account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97,39 • 2,61

Table 3 **Sample Characteristics.** *Own representation.*

Finally, participants who did not complete the survey in full or dropped out were not included in the analysis. These amounted to only two subjects. After adjustment, the sample comprised 147 participants.

In addition, the participants were asked whether they had ever heard of the concept of body positivity. Of the total 147 participants, 142 answered positively, and 5 answered negatively. Subsequently, the subjects were asked to indicate which attributes were relevant to them in the context of body positivity on a 5-Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The mean was used as a statistical measure to analyze this data.

Question Q2 “Humans showing cellulite or / and stretch marks in commercials” scored the highest mean ($M_{Q2} = 4,578$, $N=147$), followed by Q3 „Humans showing acne in commercials“ ($M_{Q3} = 4,238$, $N=147$). The other places were taken by questions Q1 "Overweight humans in commercials" and Q4 "People with bodily hair in commercials" ($M_{Q1} = 4,211$, $M_{Q4} = 4,075$, $N=147$). Questions Q5 "Skinny humans in commercials" and Q6 "People with revealing clothing" scored the lowest mean ($M_{Q5} = 2.361$, $M_{Q6} = 2,939$, $N=147$), with Q5 reverse scored to ensure consistent scaling or alignment (Figure 9).

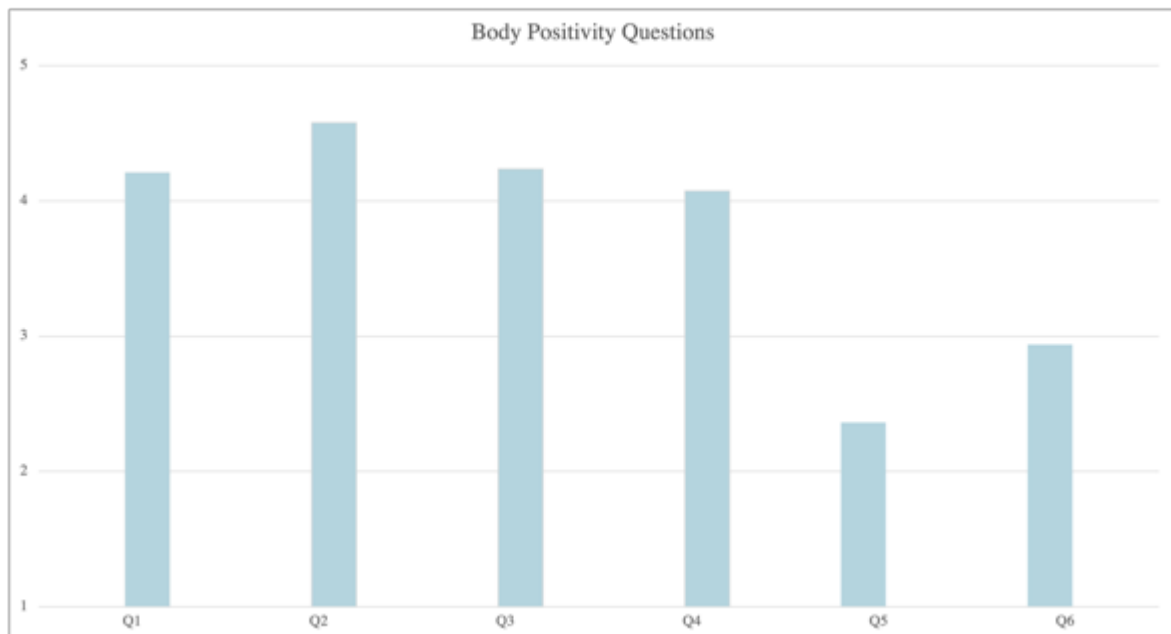


Figure 9 Evaluation of Brand Attitude Questions (Q1-Q6). Own representation.

In the next step, the profitability of the previously operationalized measurement models for brand attitude and consumer behavior was examined using Cronbach's alpha. A generally accepted requirement for the interpretation of Cronbach's alpha is a value of $C! > 0.7$ (Hubert, 2014). Brand attitude had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0,833, while consumer behavior reached a value of 0,757. Thus, all dependent variables in the present survey met the defined aspiration level of $C! > 0.7$ (Appendix G).

To obtain a more comprehensive overview of the data obtained, the brand attitude and consumer behavior questions are analyzed separately. The mean values of each individual question are examined below.

When comparing the mean values of the questions relating to the construct of brand attitude, it is noticeable that all questions range between "disagree" and "agree". Question Q9 *„Brands that show body-positive content on their Instagram channel make a positive impression on me“* reaches the highest mean value ($M_{Q9} = 4,415$, $N=147$), followed by the questions Q10 *“I find fashion brands that promote body diverse models in their ad campaigns, as opposed to those that tend to present, thin beauty ideal, very appealing“* ($M_{Q10} = 4,374$, $N=147$) and Q12 *“A brand that only posts skinny, idealized models on its Instagram account is very appealing to me”* ($M_{Q12} = 4,122$, $N=147$). Since question Q12 was phrased negatively, it was also inverted to allow for a comparable interpretation with the other questions. Question Q11 also achieved a mean score above four ($M_{Q11} = 4,075$, $N=147$). Questions Q7 *„Do you like a fashion brand better when it shows body-positive content than when it doesn't?“* and Q8 *„I frequently engage with body-positive content on Instagram (e.g., like, comment, share)“* have a mean lower than four ($M_{Q7} = 3,701$, $M_{Q8} = 2.98$, $N=147$) (Figure 10).

For a comprehensive analysis of the overall brand attitude indicators, the mean value of all items was also calculated, which is 4,111 ($N=147$).

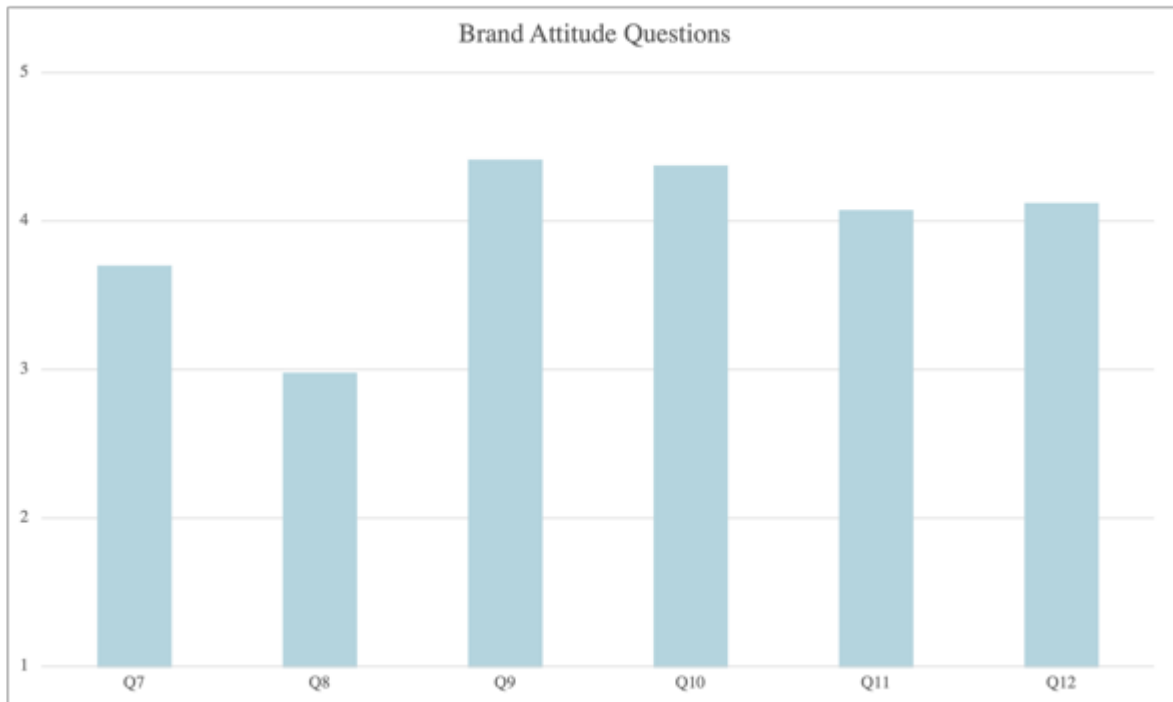


Figure 10 Evaluation of Brand Attitude Questions (Q7-Q12). Own representation.

The mean values of the questions relating to consumer behavior show lower results, but still range from "disagree" to "agree". Question Q14 „*I would be more likely to purchase the product online if the brand show body positive content*“ achieves the highest mean value ($M_{Q14} = 4,231$, $N=147$). Question Q13 “*For each of the three following statements, please evaluate if these aspects affect your online purchasing behaviour for clothes, on Instagram in a positive way: The body diversity of models reflected in the content of the brand*” ($M_{Q13} = 3,531$, $N=147$) achieved the second highest mean value. Questions Q15 “*I often consider a brand's messaging around body positivity before making a purchase*“ and Q16 “*Have you ever made a purchase from a fashion brand just because of their body-positive messaging?*“ have a mean score below three ($M_{Q15} = 2,878$, $M_{Q16} = 2,925$, $N=147$). Another question was formulated to inquire about participants' consumer behavior (Figure 11).

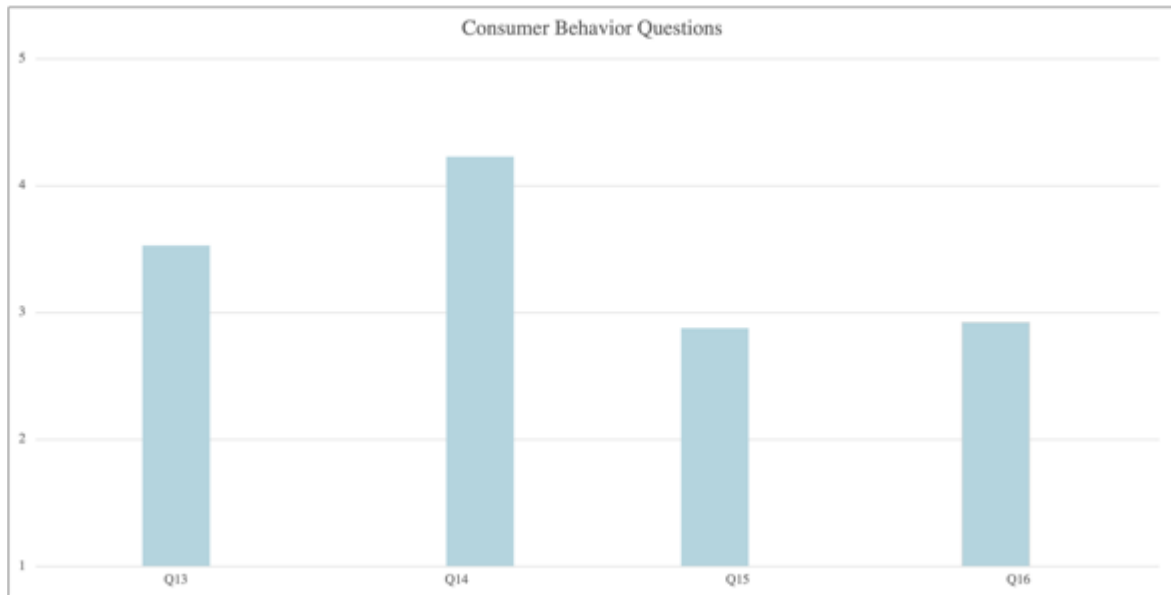


Figure 11 Evaluation of Consumer behavior (Q13-Q16). Own representation.

However, question Q17 „Are you more attracted to a product and have a higher purchase intention if it's shown with a perfect, thin idealised body type or do you prefer it when the model has a body-positive body type?“ was measured using a nominal scale, which is why the mean value is not comparable to the other mean values. Nevertheless, 87,6% of participants would be more likely to purchase a product if the model is body-positive, while 12,4% would prefer the product if a thin-ideal model is shown.

To analyze the overall consumer behavior indicators, the mean of all items was also calculated. This is 3,391 (N=147)

As the second step of the quantitative data analysis, after individually analyzing the variables, the data of all conducted answers due to brand attitude and consumer behavior have been merged in order to gain knowledge about potential variable correlations between the two dependent variables in the case of body-positive content.

To investigate the relationship between these variables, considering that they are ordinal measures, a one-tailed Spearman Correlation Test has been applied (Appendix H, I). Since several questions from brand attitude and consumer behavior were correlated with each other, the average of the correlation was taken. The combined Spearman's correlation coefficient is $(r) = 0,438$.

Finally, an exploratory data analysis is conducted that focuses on the responses in relation to the ARMEDANGELS model label. Although it does not serve to answer the hypotheses, it is nevertheless relevant to derive recommendations for action for the company in the following chapter.

Question Q18 *"I am familiar with ARMEDANGELS as a fashion brand"* yields a mean score of $M_{Q18} = 3,707$ ($N=147$). Here, 40.1% of participants say they follow ARMEDANGELS on Instagram, while 59.9% are not followers of the brand's Instagram account. The mean score for question Q20 *"I'm paying attention to what they post"* is $M_{Q20} = 3,049$ ($N=59$), for question Q21 *"I often engage with ARMEDANGELS on social media"* it is $M_{Q21} = 2,543$ ($N=59$) and for question Q22 *"I really like ARMEDANGELS?"* it is $M_{Q22} = 3,864$ ($N= 59$). In addition, the topic of body positivity is addressed in relation to ARMEDANGELS. Question Q25 *"Do you feel that ARMEDANGELS represents a positive body image through their marketing?"* reaches a mean of $M_{Q25} = 3,642$ ($N=59$), and question Q26 *"Would you make a purchase from ARMEDANGELS just because of their body-positive content?"* reaches a mean of $M_{Q26} = 3,111$ ($N=59$). However, the data for the last three questions refer only to the target group already following ARMEDANGELS and not to the entire sample, as it was considered unlikely that people not following ARMEDANGELS would interact with or follow it.

Furthermore, it was asked how many of the participants are already customers of the ARMEDANGELS brand. In this context, 65,1% stated that they were not customers, while 34,9% had already purchased a product.

The following chapter, "Findings and Discussions" interprets the results, and the researcher attempts to put them into context.

6. Findings and Discussions

The main aim of this dissertation is to provide an answer to the previously outlined research question:

How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content affect female German Generation Y's brand attitude and consumer behavior in the specific case of ARMEDANGELS?

Therefore, as mentioned above, the following hypothesis have been formulated to support the consistent line of reasoning for the research:

- H1: Body-positive Instagram content is positively related to the brand attitude of German female Generation Y.
- H2: Body-positive Instagram is positively related to the consumer behavior of German female Generation Y.
- H3: Brand attitude and consumer behavior are positively related in the context of body-positive content.

Based on the in-depth data analysis of the previous chapter, this chapter will use the collected data from both qualitative and quantitative measures to support or discard the established hypothesis with the final aim of answering the research question.

A subordinated objective of this dissertation is making recommendations for action for the ARMEDANGELS content strategy. Therefore, the content analysis, interview and survey are considered to reach recommendations that are both consistent with the literature and supported by the empirical research.

To gain an understanding of whether the definition of body-positive content in the literature matches the understanding of the interview participant and from the survey participants, the results are briefly presented and interpreted. Body-positive content, as defined in the literature by Cohen et al. (2019), is the content that includes people of different body types, sizes, and visible flaws and shows them in a clothed or unclothed state. These characteristics were also considered in the content analysis. Rosemann defines body-positive content as follows: "It means having a positive attitude toward anybody, regardless of shape, size, color, skin, stretch marks. Everything" (Appendix C), thus agreeing with Cohen et al.'s (2019) definition.

The 147 survey participants were also asked about their opinions on various characteristics related to body positivity. Questions Q1 through Q6 refer to various characteristics such as obesity, body hair, cellulite, stretch marks, acne, slimness, and revealing clothing.

Question Q2, which refers to people with cellulite and/or stretch marks, scored the highest mean score ($M_{Q2} = 4,578$). This indicates that this characteristic plays an important role in the perception of body positivity. The same is true for question Q3, which refers to people with acne, with a mean score of $M_{Q3} = 4,238$. Thus, the mean indicates an agreement that this characteristic is considered body positive. Questions Q1 and Q4, which refer to overweight people and people with body hair in commercials, respectively, ranked next with mean scores of $M_{Q1} = 4,211$ and $M_{Q4} = 4,075$, respectively. On average, these characteristics are also considered part of the perception of body positivity. Questions Q5 and Q6 scored the lowest mean scores ($M_{Q5} = 2,361$ and $M_{Q6} = 2,939$). Q5 refers to slim people in commercials and Q6 refers to people with revealing clothing. The lower mean scores suggest that participants may not associate these characteristics with body-positive content.

These results provide insight into participants' perceptions of the portrayal of body positivity in commercials. For the most part, participants' perceptions align with Cohen et al.'s (2019) definition of body-positive content as showing people with varying body sizes and flaws. However, Cohen et al. also include revealing clothing in their definition. However, participants showed a neutral attitude toward this feature.

In summary, the definition in the literature predominantly agrees with the view of Rosemann and the participants in the survey, and thus, there is an equal understanding of the topic of body-positive content.

6.1. Hypothesis 1: *Body-positive Instagram content is positively related to the brand attitude of German female Generation Y.*

Opinions vary widely in the literature regarding body-positive content. Some studies say that thin-idealized models influence consumers' brand attitudes, as it is assumed that consumers prefer beauty ideals in advertising (Baker & Churchill, 1977). Other studies say just the opposite, finding that body-friendly models promote positive brand attitudes (Tsai & Chang, 2007; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004).

The interview with ARMEDANGELS' Head of Influencer Marketing was able to provide insights into what the company believes or has already determined based on analytics, to what extent body-positive content on Instagram influences the purchase intent of German female Generation Y women. The statements of the interview only serve to support the hypothesis. However, the statements *per se* cannot confirm either of the hypothesis.

According to Rosemann, body-positive content is an important factor for the brand attitude of German female Generation Y. ARMEDANGELS has already conducted internal surveys that have shown that their target group is actively asking for more body-positive content on social media and more body-positive influencers. The survey results showed that 60% - 70% of their customers want to see more body-positive content on social media. The fact that ARMEDANGELS has received a lot of criticism from their community regarding models being too thin on their social media accounts also shows that the target audience prefers body-positive content. Negative criticism can have a negative impact on consumers' brand attitudes. Liking or disliking something has a great impact on brand attitude (Kroeber-Riel & Gröppel-Klein, 2013).

Thus, it can be interpreted that body-positive content has a positive impact on brand attitude, as Rosemann also confirms. When ARMEDANGELS features models with different body sizes on their Instagram posts, the company receives more positive feedback. This supports experimental studies that have examined positive consumer responses to realistic and average-sized or normal-attraction models. Click-through rates and performance on ads served also increase when body-friendly and normal body types are featured in images, Rosemann said (Appendix C). These statements support the study by Tsai and Chang (2007), who found that normal-attractive models in underwear have a positive impact on consumers' brand attitudes.

Overall, Rosemann's responses support the first hypothesis that body-friendly content is positively related to Generation Y's brand attitudes.

However, considering that these findings are based on a qualitative interview and convey statements based on the interviewer's subjective view, this data alone cannot be evaluated as completely bias-free. Therefore, the results of the quantitative data, gained through a survey of the target group of ARMEDANGELS will also be taken into consideration in order to support or refute the hypothesis.

The participants of the study have an overall positive attitude towards brands that present body-positive content on their Instagram channel. This is evident in the high mean scores of questions Q9 *"Brands that show body-positive content on their Instagram channel make a positive impression on me"* ($M_{Q9} = 4,415$) and Q10 *"I find fashion brands that promote diverse models in their ad campaigns, as opposed to those that tend to present the thin beauty ideal, very appealing"* ($M_{Q10} = 4.374$), which indicate that participants respond positively to brands that show diversity in terms of body shapes and do not only use slim, idealized models. Question Q11 *"How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: 'Brands that promote body positivity are more appealing to me than those that don't'"* ($M_{Q11} = 4.075$) and Q12 *"A brand that only posts skinny, idealized models on its Instagram account is very appealing to me"*, Q12 was recoded as mentioned before, also receives a high mean score, indicating that participants find brands that use diverse models in their advertising campaigns appealing. Question Q7 *"Do you like a fashion brand better when it shows body-positive content than when it doesn't?"* ($M_{Q7} = 3.701$) achieved a lower mean value than the previously presented questions, but this question also tends towards the statement "agree". This confirms that promoting body diversity and rejecting a thin beauty ideal leaves a positive impression on participants. Thus, it supports the findings of a previously conducted study that also outlines a positive relationship between body-positive content and positive brand attitudes (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Caballero, Lumpkin, & Madden, 1989; Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004).

Question Q8 *"I frequently engage with body-positive content on Instagram (e.g., like, comment, share)"* ($M_{Q8} = 2,98$), has a lower mean score. This suggests that although participants have positive attitudes toward brands with body-positive content, they do not necessarily actively interact with such content on Instagram. This may indicate that they may notice and like the content but not necessarily actively interact with it.

Calculating the overall mean of all items related to brand attitude ($M_Q = 4,111$) confirms that participants have an overall positive attitude toward brands that present body-positive content. However, due to the low number of survey responses, the quantitative data can only be seen as an indicator but does not deliver sufficient evidence to draw valid conclusions.

Nevertheless, taking into consideration the results of both qualitative and quantitative measures, it can be concluded that not only the studies of ARMEDANGELS show that body-

positive content has a positive relation on brand attitude as well as the survey which was conducted. Hence, the hypothesis "Body-positive content is positively related to brand attitude" **is confirmed**.

6.2. Hypothesis 2: *Body-positive Instagram content is positively related to the brand attitude of German female Generation Y.*

Researchers have also disagreed on consumer behavior in the context of body-positive content. In addition, the literature to date on this topic is incomplete, as not many researchers have yet investigated this connection.

Rosemann believes that body-positive content performs better. She points out that customers are more likely to buy products that are presented on realistic bodies, as this gives them a better idea of how the clothes would look on their own bodies. This statement is supported by Blackhart's (2019) findings that consumers want to see more real people and people who look like themselves. Accordingly, ARMEDANGELS is focusing on collaborating with influencers to do this. According to Rosemann, the brand's goal is to achieve a more natural representation of body types by using user-generated content and models with different body features. The engagement of body-positive influencers suggests that ARMEDANGELS believes such content has an impact on consumer behavior. This notion is supported by Parment's (2013) research, which shows that Generation Y is inspired by and adopts clothing styles from role models, often celebrities or influencers.

However, Rosemann also states that she cannot clearly say whether body-positive content improves conversion rates¹². However, based on experience, it does increase the website traffic. In addition, she says that ads that aim to sell get better clicks when body-diverse content is shown. Although it is not clear whether people buy the product solely because of the body-positive content or for other reasons, Rosemann's statements clearly indicate that body-positive content can increase website traffic. These statements also confirm Tsai and Chang's (2007) statement that body-positive content positively influences not only brand attitudes but also consumer behavior. Based on the information given by Rosemann, it can

¹² Conversion Rate: "The average number of conversions per ad interaction, shown as a percentage. Conversion rates are calculated by simply taking the number of conversions and dividing that by the number of total ad interactions that can be tracked to a conversion during the same time period" (Google, 2023).

be assumed that body-positive content positively influences the purchase decision of the female German Generation Y, but this cannot be confirmed because no concrete results are available.

Again, the results of the survey are used to get a more comprehensive result. Participants show positive consumer behavior towards brands that display body-positive content, but the results are more mixed than for brand attitudes.

Question Q14 reaches the highest mean score ($M_{Q14} = 4,231$), suggesting that participants are more likely to purchase a product online if the brand shows body-positive content. This suggests that presenting body positivity in conjunction with a product may positively influence participants' consumer behavior.

Question Q13 also reaches a moderate mean ($M_{Q13} = 3,531$), suggesting that participants indicated that the presentation of body diversity in a brand's content positively influences their online clothing consumer behavior on Instagram. Again, a positive relationship between body-positive content and consumer behavior can be seen.

However, questions Q15 *“I often consider a brand's messaging around body positivity before making a purchase”* ($M_{Q15} = 2,878$) and Q16 *“Have you ever made a purchase from a fashion brand just because of their body-positive messaging?”* ($M_{Q16} = 2,925$) show lower mean scores, suggesting that participants are less likely to consider how a brand frames its body positivity messages before making a purchase. This suggests that other factors have a stronger influence on purchase intent than a brand's body-positive content.

Question Q17 *“Are you more attracted to a product and have a higher purchase intention if it's shown with a perfect, thin idealised body type or do you prefer it when the model has a body-positive body type?”* was measured using a nominal scale and does not have a comparable mean to the other questions. Nevertheless, the distribution of responses shows that an overwhelming majority of 87,6% of participants would be more likely to purchase a product if the model has a body-positive body shape. Only 12,4% of the participants prefer a product with a thin-idealized model. Thus, a strong tendency of the participants is evident. The calculated overall mean of all consumer behavior items is 3,391, indicating that participants have moderate consumer behavior overall, but the impact of body-positive content on consumer behavior may vary. However, it should be noted here that question Q17

was not included in the calculation, but it would have positively affected the value due to the positive responses.

In summary, the results regarding consumer behavior can be presented as mixed, with certain questions showing a higher average value than others. The question regarding the role of models in advertisements on purchase intention illustrates that the majority of participants would be more inclined to purchase a product if it was advertised by a model with a positive body image. The average score of all consumer behavior questions indicates that overall, participants have neutral to positive consumer behavior toward brands that endorse body positivity. Overall, the results suggest that body positivity and diversity in advertising campaigns are important factors in attitudes toward brands and consumer behavior, although other factors may also play a role. These results are consistent with Rosemann's statement that it is not clear whether people purchase a product solely because of its body-positive content or for other reasons. A possible explanation for this can be found in the S-O-R model, which aims to understand the mechanisms behind consumers' consumer behavior and still operates in a complex gray area or black box that includes psychological and individual processes that motivate a person to act in a certain way (Schwarz & Hutter, 2012). Based on the results of the present study, it can be assumed that the body-positive content influences the decision-making processes. The stimulus is triggered by measures in the marketing mix, while the body as a psychological process is dependent on personal characteristics and other influences, such as the presentation of different body shapes.

Both the qualitative and quantitative results tend towards a positive relation of body-positive content and a positive consumer behavior however, this cannot be clearly confirmed. The hypothesis "Body-positive content is positively related to consumer behavior" is therefore **partially confirmed**.

6.3. Hypothesis 3: *Brand attitude and consumer behavior are positively related in the context of body-positive content.*

The existing literature frequently confirms that brand attitude and consumer behavior are interrelated. Rosemann is also convinced of this: *„that people who have a positive attitude towards something, in this case a brand, are more likely to buy a product from that brand.*

So yes, I think they are correlated in a positive way. I think a positive attitude towards the brand definitely has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention” (APPENDIX C).

To test whether this correlation is also consistent with respect to the issue of body positivity, the two dependent variables were correlated. The combined Spearman's correlation coefficient is $(r) = 0,438$. Thus, there is a positive but moderate relationship between the two variables.

A moderate relationship means that there is a measurable association between the two variables, but not particularly strong or intense (Benning, 2022). In this case, a moderate relationship between brand attitude and consumer behavior on the topic of body positivity indicates that they are related, but the influence of one variable on the other is not extremely pronounced. It may mean that other factors also play a role or that the relationship between the two variables is not linear or clear.

The quantitative results tend towards a positive relationship between brand attitude and positive consumer behavior in the context of body-positive content. However, the relation is moderate and not strong.

The results of the correlation matrix can be additionally supported by the use of two related questions. Participants were asked whether they would find a brand that exclusively presented thin-idealized models appealing. Of the respondents, 38,1% indicated that they strongly disagreed with this statement. Participants were then asked to indicate whether they would purchase a product from the brand despite this disagreement. 49,2% of respondents stated that they would not buy the product if only thin-idealized models were shown, as they did not find the brand appealing because of this. However, over half (50,8%) stated that they would still buy a product from the brand. These results indicate that the correlation between the two dependent variables is not strong, but rather moderate.

The hypothesis "Brand attitude and consumer behavior are positively related in the context of body-positive content." is therefore **partially confirmed**.

6.4. Critical appraisal of ARMEDANGELS social media content strategy

A subordinate goal of this study is to formulate recommendations for action for the content strategy of the ARMEDANGELS brand. To make this possible, relevant data from the content analysis, the interview, and the survey will be discussed, interpreted, and critically evaluated below.

The content analysis conducted shows that most of the women depicted can be assigned to the age groups of 20s (58,39%) and 30s (40,00%). The percentage of males in the images is comparatively low at 22,69%, while the percentage of females is significantly higher at 77,31%. Non-binary individuals were not depicted in the images. This suggests that ARMEDANGELS deliberately selects models for their content that are in line with their target audience, especially the female Generation Y (Appendix C).

Furthermore, the results of the content analysis show that more than half (56.45%) of the women portrayed have an underweight body condition, while 43.55% of the women are represented as normal or overweight, with 29,35% classified as normal weight. The content analysis of ARMEDANGELS' Instagram account, conducted by Lohmann et al. (2021), revealed that in 2020, almost exclusively people with small clothing size were depicted on ARMEDANGELS' Instagram posts. Of the total 172 people pictured, 136 (79.06%) were classified in the "small" subcategory. There was a total of 11 individuals (6.40%) in the "medium" category, none in the "large" category, and in 25 cases no conclusion could be made about body shape. The percentages were calculated by the researcher of this study. This suggests that ARMEDANGELS showed a greater variety of body types on their Instagram channel in 2021. It should be noted that a different researcher conducted the present study than the study by Lohmann et al. (2021), so the previously mentioned interpretivist perspective should be considered. Nevertheless, it can be stated that thinly idealized models were overrepresented on the Instagram account of ARMEDANGELS in both 2020 and 2021.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown that the media tends to portray slim bodies as ideal (Grabe et al., 2008; Greenberg et al., 2005), as well as the fact that thin and attractive models are still the focus of the fashion industry (Sohn & Youn, 2013; Jess, 2021). This point is also made in the interview with Rosemann. On the one hand, she emphasizes the importance of portraying body diversity but also points out that the fashion industry still adheres to idealized and slender bodies. This statement can be interpreted as a justification for the predominant representation of thin-idealized models on the Instagram account. However, the current portrayal of thin and slender-looking women on the fashion brand's Instagram account corresponds to unrealistic body types and can lead to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and other mental health problems (Grabe et al., 2008; Groesz et al., 2002; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008).

Although Rosemann emphasizes that the community of ARMEDANGELS, especially mothers, recognizes and can identify with the importance of body positivity, as well as accepting the fact that women get stretch marks during pregnancy and that these should be celebrated as something positive, the content analysis shows that 75% of the depicted women on the Instagram account of ARMEDANGELS conform to the strongly culturally influenced beauty ideals and do not show any "flaws". What is striking here is that women of normal weight or overweight tend to be portrayed as "flawed" compared to women with slender physiques. Women classified as underweight are almost exclusively portrayed as beautiful and flawless, with no visible blemishes such as stretch marks, acne, or body hair. Women of normal weight show slightly more blemishes, particularly cellulite, and wrinkles, but still significantly less than women who are overweight or obese, who often show belly rolls and a soft belly. This suggests that ARMEDANGELS believes that a slim body is highly valued in our society, while other aspects of appearance, such as cellulite or wrinkles, are considered undesirable. These observations can also be related to Rosemann's argument that the fashion industry continues to present slim models. The presentation may cause women of normal weight who do not meet ideal beauty standards to feel pressured to meet those standards. This would support Chrisler's (2011) statement that cellulite and fat rolls are considered unaesthetic in society, and social problems are encouraged by the stigmatization of these "taboos."

Despite this, only 8.70% of images featuring female subjects show stretch marks, acne/skin blemishes, or body hair. Even when normal, overweight, or obese women are occasionally depicted, it is noticeable that few other body-positive features are shown. Therefore, it can be argued that the fashion label ARMEDANGELS reproduces certain stereotypes and upholds certain ideals of beauty regarding the portrayal of women in its advertising campaigns.

In terms of clothing, the present study shows that women tend to wear less revealing clothing regardless of their body type. However, there is a clear correlation between body weight and wearing revealing clothing. Only 6,29% of underweight women wear moderately revealing clothing, while among overweight and obese women, 36.36% wear moderately revealing clothing. Interestingly, despite being frequently perceived as unattractive or unhealthy, women with higher body weights are nevertheless more likely to wear more revealing clothing. However, this depiction can also be interpreted to mean that more revealing

clothing was intentionally chosen when depicting overweight women to explicitly draw focus to the body depicted rather than the clothing is worn. Rosemann states that ARMEDANGELS does not consciously practice this, explaining, *" we show clothing, so I mean we have also underwear as a category but that's not a huge product group in our portfolio. So, in general, we show clothing and I think most of the models are shown the same. When it comes to different project categories, but if that was a statement, then I would need to think about it because there's no specific reason why we would do that"* (Appendix C).

The company is aware of the above facts, as Rosemann herself assesses the distribution of models as follows: *„As I said before, I think we have still some work to do and some way to go and I think right now we still show a lot of let's say classical content from E-com shoots, which it changed already in the past, but I think we still have a lot of normal models, that probably one would categorize as underweight slash normal weight. And so, I think it's probably still 60 to 70 percent of more like traditional models and the rest, I think it's... What is overweight? I think that's also a very subjective judgment and probably for agencies, they would call it overweight models. Maybe it's like 20%, 20 to 30%"* (Appendix C).

However, ARMEDANGELS spokesperson Rosemann also admits that there is room for improvement, especially in terms of how models are portrayed. ARMEDANGELS recognizes the potential for improvement in this area and Rosemann repeatedly emphasizes that the issue is extremely important to the company and that they are continuously working on improvements, *„For us, it's a super super important topic. We are aware. We also work continuously on our size extensions, and as I said, because we try to be as inclusive as possible. So, we find it very, very important and really like to support people that educate in that area“* (Appendix C). These statements may indicate the company's efforts to promote a more positive attitude among its female Generation Y customers by addressing their needs and desires in terms of body diversity and inclusivity.

According to Parment (2011), Generation Y has grown up in a variety of areas of tension and, therefore often pursues conflicting interests. This perception is also held by Rosemann regarding ARMEDANGELS' target group. She believes that Generation Y is generally well-educated, open to new things, but also clings to old patterns. *„...especially when you talk about visuals, when you talk about visuals or models in the fashion industry. I think our, my generation is used to a certain imagery, certain visuals but I think we also like when brands*

challenge that and kind of like disrupted that” (Appendix C). Therefore, she believes that the community appreciates some of ARMEDANGELS' current content but would also like a lot if the brand published more avant-garde content. Rosemann also mentions that the brand often receives criticism from the community regarding its social media strategy (Appendix C).

The fact that the content does not necessarily appeal to all of ARMEDANGELS' followers can also be interpreted from the survey results. Almost half of the participants (40.1%) follow the ARMEDANGELS brand on Instagram. The results of question Q20 show that the mean M_{Q20} for followers' attention to the content ARMEDANGELS posts on social media is 2,483 (N=59). This suggests that the followers who participated in the survey have, on average, a moderate level of interest in the brand's Instagram content. This is confirmed by question Q21, which refers to followers' engagement with ARMEDANGELS on social media. The average answered "disagree" to whether the survey participants interact with the brand's social media account. The results indicate that while nearly half of respondents follow ARMEDANGELS on Instagram, the content does not prompt them to follow and interact with it actively.

Regarding the issue of body positivity in ARMEDANGELS' marketing strategy, question Q25 shows that the mean M_{Q25} for the brand's perception of positive body image is 3,333 (N=59). This indicates that followers tend to perceive the brand as neutral in terms of body image. Question Q26 examines whether participants would make a purchase based on the body-positive content of ARMEDANGELS. The mean M_{Q26} is 2,993 (N=59), indicating that, on average, participants are more neutral about making a purchase based on the body-positive content.

The present data offer room for interpretation and the extent to which ARMEDANGELS' portrayal of women with different body sizes and clothing styles should be interpreted as a sustainable and fair company should be questioned. Discussions of sustainability in the fashion industry often emphasize that the industry should respect human rights (Wettstein, 2012). Although the company defines sustainability as its mission and highly emphasizes body diversity and inclusivity for its target audience and its social media strategy, ARMEDANGELS has so far mostly featured idealized models on its Instagram account. The portrayal of women in ARMEDANGELS' images could be seen as an example of reinforcing unrealistic beauty ideals and a potential challenge to the company's sustainability goals. The

inclusion of body-positive content in ARMEDANGELS' content strategy and how the company can best implement this are discussed in more detail in the "Recommendations for action" chapter.

7. Conclusion and Implications

The final chapter presents an interpretive conclusion based on the key findings of the empirical research. It considers the theoretical framework and the current state of the literature to answer the general research question on which this dissertation focuses. This is followed by a critical reflection on the research conducted, and its limitations are identified. Finally, possible future research is outlined, and recommendations for action for the ARMEDANGELS brand are formulated.

7.1. Summary of the findings

The results outlined above, based on testing the hypotheses posed, allow the researcher to provide an answer to the research question posed at the beginning of the dissertation: *How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content affect female German Generation Y's brand attitude and consumer behavior? The case of ARMEDANGELS.*

To answer the research question "How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content influence the brand attitude of the female German Generation Y?", both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Although there are few studies in the existing literature that have examined the influence of body-positive content on consumers' brand attitudes, some findings were obtained. One such study found that normally attractive models in underwear advertisements were associated with more positive brand attitudes than very attractive models (Tsai & Chang, 2007). In addition, a study in the cosmetics industry by Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) showed that exposure to thin models in deodorant advertisements led to increased body anxiety and had effects on attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand.

The present study focused specifically on the fashion industry and was able to obtain similar results to previous literature. The ARMEDANGELS brand was already conducting internal surveys that showed their customers were actively asking for more body-positive content on social media. Criticism from the ARMEDANGELS community regarding models being too

thin on their social media accounts also shows that their followers prefer body-positive content. However, these statements only refer to ARMEDANGELS' customers and only support the answer to the research question. Therefore, the results of the survey are also used. These show that the female Generation Y in Germany has a positive attitude towards brands that show different body types and body features in their content. However, it should be noted that the target group likes to see this content but does not actively interact with it. Nevertheless, the overall mean results show that the average has an overall positive attitude towards brands that present body-positive content. Thus, the first part of the research question can be answered to the effect that body-positive content on Instagram has a positive connection to the brand attitude of the female Generation Y.

To answer the second part of the research question, "How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content influence the consumer behavior of the female German Generation Y?", qualitative and quantitative data were also collected. As was the case with brand attitudes, there are only a few studies that shed light on the influence in detail regarding purchasing behavior in relation to body-positive content. Tsai & Chang (2007) found not only that brand attitudes were more positive for underwear advertisements with normal attractive models than with thin models but also that customer purchase intention increased. Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) found that the use of thin-idealized models did not have a more effective and positive influence on consumer purchase intention than the portrayal of average-sized models.

The results of the present study also show that body-positive content does not have a negative influence on consumer behavior, but it also cannot be clearly stated that the content has a positive influence on consumer behavior. The statements from the interviews indicate that Rosemann believes that body-positive content has a positive influence on consumer purchase intent. She states that ARMEDANGELS traffic has increased because of this content. However, she also notes that the direct impact on conversion rate cannot be understood. Other factors could also play a role in the purchase and not exclusively the body-positive content shown.

The findings of the survey are also varied. Some questions have higher mean scores than others. The question of whether the model shown in an advertisement influences purchase intention shows that most participants would be more likely to buy a product if a body-positive model advertises it. The average response to all consumer behavior questions

suggests that, in general, participants hold neutral to positive attitudes regarding consumer behavior when it comes to brands that promote body positivity. Overall, the results suggest that body positivity and diversity in advertising campaigns may be important to brand attitudes and purchase intent, although they are not strongly related, and other factors may also play a role. The results do not show a clear direction but indicate a tendency that body-positive content can positively influence consumer behavior. Thus, the second part of the research question can also be answered.

Moreover, only a moderate correlation between the dependent variables "brand attitude" and "consumer behavior" could be found, indicating that a positive brand attitude is not necessarily related to a positive purchase decision.

As a result, the research question "How does strategic communication based on body-positive Instagram content influence the brand attitude and consumer behavior of female German Generation Y?" can be answered. The case of ARMEDANGELS" can be answered as follows: Body-positive Instagram content positively influences the brand attitude of female Generation Y and tends to influence consumer behavior positively.

7.2. Research limitations

To make a more comprehensive assessment of the results of this dissertation, it is necessary to consider the weaknesses of the study and the empirical limitations.

The most significant limitation of this dissertation is the small number of respondents in terms of the validity of the quantitative data. The sample group represents a population of approximately 6.4 million people, and the sample was determined to be 385 participants based on a sample calculation. Although the researcher conducted the survey much longer than planned and disseminated it through various channels, the required sample size was not achieved. Only 165 subjects participated, which did not allow for a representative sample. Nevertheless, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, which proved to be representative. Therefore, the researcher decided to keep the presentation of the quantitative data, treating them as indicators rather than as reliable and representative data. It should also be noted that this research is exclusively focused on the German female Generation Y target group, thus covering only a specific part of society.

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the analysis of the qualitative data and the in-depth coding process was free of bias due to the interpretive approach used. There was also no

agreement on intercoder reliability. It should also be noted that the ARMEDANGELS employee interviewed does not reflect all opinions of the company. In addition, Rosemann is responsible for influencer marketing, not the company's social media management. It would have been important to have additional conversations with the social media manager and other employees of the company to compare opinions and views on the topic and, furthermore, to be able to analyze more representative answers.

In the analysis of the Instagram account, only the organic posts of ARMEDANGELS were considered, and stories were not included due to their short duration of 24 hours. Only stories in Highlights could have been analyzed, but even these do not reflect all stories posted in the period being analyzed. By omitting the analysis of ARMEDANGELS' stories, the analysis of the account's organic posts has gaps.

Finally, it should be noted that due to the limited literature on the topic of body positivity about brand attitude and purchase intent in the fashion industry, the researcher had to rely repeatedly on online articles.

7.3. Conclusion and future research

This dissertation examined the effects of body-positive content on the social media platform Instagram on the brand attitudes and consumer behavior of female Generation Y. The aim was to derive recommendations for action for ARMEDANGELS. To achieve these goals, extensive information was collected on ARMEDANGELS' content strategy on Instagram, the company's perspective on the topic of body positivity, and the views of the target group and existing customers of the company. Data was collected using a mixed-methods approach that included a content analysis of ARMEDANGELS' Instagram account, an in-depth interview with one of the company's employees, and a quantitative online survey of female German Generation Y respondents.

As more companies publish body-positive content and join the body-positivity movement, limited studies are yet available on how this content impacts not only consumers' body image but also their brand attitudes and purchase intent. The conclusions of this study provide valuable insight and understanding into this topic by identifying the impact of body-positive content on consumer attitudes and purchase intent. The findings can help businesses understand how to integrate body-positive content into their social media strategy for Instagram and what goals they can achieve using this content.

Future studies could repeat the research with a larger sample size to obtain more comparable data and results. Furthermore, this research was limited to Generation Y. It would be interesting to study other generations, especially Generation Z, in relation to Instagram to get more data about different target groups. Future research could also cover countries other than Germany and include other marketing channels besides Instagram. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar study with male participants to determine the extent to which they are influenced by body-positive content.

The researcher made a conscious decision not to include skin color in the analysis because the focus was solely on body shapes and visible imperfections. Skin color is also counted as body-positive in the literature, an expanded study could be conducted in the future to include this characteristic as well. In addition, this study was limited to one company in the fashion industry, and future research could analyze different industries other than the fashion industry.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze brand attitudes and consumer behavior in relation to body image and self-perception to gain insights into how these variables relate to each other in terms of body-positive content. In this way, the black box of the S-O-R model could be examined in more detail, and insights could be gained into which other factors influence consumer behavior.

In conclusion, although this study has already contributed to current research, there are still many unanswered questions due to the lack of existing studies on body positivity in marketing.

7.4. Implications for the practice of ARMEDANGELS Instagram content strategy

In the final chapter of this dissertation, recommendations for the fashion company ARMEDANGELS regarding their social media content strategy for Instagram are formulated based on the findings obtained. The quantitative and qualitative research results indicate that integrating body-positive content into the fashion brand's strategy is recommendable. The negative community feedback, survey results, and ARMEDANGELS' previous experience show that the target audience wants body-positive content that positively influences their brand attitude and consumer behavior.

ARMEDANGELS emphasizes the importance of body diversity and the goal of using their Instagram content strategy to reach new audiences and create brand engagement through

more diverse content. However, this statement contradicts the content shown on their Instagram account, though ARMEDANGELS primarily shows models whose appearance matches the age profile of the target group. It should be noted that compared to the previous year 2020, in 2021 they have achieved a certain improvement in terms of presenting physically diverse models. Nevertheless, predominantly slim, idealized models are presented, with so-called "physical flaws" such as cellulite, stretch marks and fat rolls barely perceptible. The target group does not perceive the brand's Instagram content as explicitly body-positive, but neither does it perceive it as not body-positive. The engagement of followers is low, they do not follow the content of the ARMEDANGELS Instagram account closely and rarely interact with it.

Therefore, all indications are that ARMEDANGELS should adjust their content strategy in line with the body-positive movement. The company should listen to community criticism regarding its social media strategy and try to understand and address followers' concerns and desires. This could mean that the brand reviews its social media content to ensure that it is engaging for followers and encourages the desired interaction.

In addition, the company should take a balanced approach to appeal to the diverse interests of Generation Y. This implies providing visually appealing content as well as occasionally experimenting with more daring content to meet the expectations of the target audience while surprising them. ARMEDANGELS should continue to reinforce the body positivity message and promote a more positive portrayal of the body in its advertising campaigns as well as on social media platforms. This may include the deliberate portrayal of "features" such as stretch marks, acne/skin blemishes, or body hair to illustrate that beauty is multifaceted and does not have to conform to traditional beauty ideals. Although the company has not yet produced all plus-size clothing, more content should be presented that shows body-positive models wearing these garments. In addition, it is important to note that even people with thin or normal bodies can have physical features such as cellulite, and these should not be hidden but shown.

It is also worth noting that body-positive content does not necessarily lead to higher interaction from the target audience. The results of the study showed that the target audience does not interact more actively with body-positive content than with thin-idealized images. ARMEDANGELS should therefore look at how it can emphasize its commitment to positive body image more strongly and improve the perception of the brand in relation to this issue.

This could include more clearly messages and contents related to body positivity. It is important for the company to find a good balance between different models or people in their images to appeal to a wider audience and reach and appeal to more people from their target audience.

In addition, this body-positive content has a positive influence on the attitude towards the brand and the consumer behavior of the target audience, with a greater influence on the attitude towards the brand than on the consumer behavior. To enhance the impact of body-positive content on participants' consumer behavior, ARMEDANGELS could implement strategies that emphasize the value and advantages of their products in relation to body positivity. This could be accomplished by showcasing diverse body types in their marketing communications.

It is of general importance to address the needs and desires of customers, especially the Generation Y target group. ARMEDANGELS should actively respond to customers' voices and feedback and consider their feelings about body diversity and body positivity. This can be done by engaging with the community, collecting feedback, and implementing changes in company practices.

Given the time it takes to adopt a new content strategy, the company should communicate transparently about its efforts and progress in promoting body diversity and body positivity. Customers should be informed that ARMEDANGELS is actively working on changing and taking their concerns seriously. This can be done through social media posts or special campaigns to get the message across effectively. An alternative course of action entails engaging in a media interview wherein ARMEDANGELS discusses their strategic approach aimed at enhancing the impact of body-positive content. Segments from this interview could be disseminated through Instagram and their website, while additionally featuring in one of their newsletters.

In summary, ARMEDANGELS should work to promote a more diverse and realistic representation of bodies in its Instagram content. This can encompass including women with different body types, sizes, and shapes to better reflect the diversity of its customers. Showcasing different beauty standards can minimize negative effects on body image and mental health issues. A company like ARMEDANGELS, which bases its corporate philosophy on a CSR strategy, should be particularly aware of this responsibility.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Content Analysis

Date of Analysis: 27.01.2023

Content is coded on two levels:

1. Imagery
2. Human subjects

1. Imagery	Period 01.07.2022- 31.12.2022	Period 01.01.2022- 30.06.2022	Total	Percentage
(a) visual image only (human figure/s, cartoon figure/s of humans, or non-human image of nature)	149	118	267	51,54%
(b) text only (motivational quote, educational text, humorous text, opinion, other)	16	78	94	18,15%
(c) visual image and text combined (e.g., quote overlaid on an image)	14	30	44	8,49%
(d) video	32	26	58	11,20%
(e) visual image with product focus (Still life of product, detail)	23	16	39	7,53%
(g) Others (Store, Help)	16		16	3,09%
TOTAL	250	268	518	100%
2. Human subjects				
2.1 Demographics				
(a) Gender				
Male	66	25	91	22,69%
Female	165	145	310	77,31%
Other	0	0	0	0,00%
TOTAL	231	170	401	100%
(b) Age				
<15			0	0,00%
15-20			0	0,00%
20s			181	58,39%
30s			124	40,00%
40s			0	0,00%
50s			0	0,00%
60s			2	0,65%
Older			3	0,97%
TOTAL			310	100%
2.2 Body related attributes				
(a) Body size (Pulvers et al. (2004) Figure Rating				
A (Underweight)	20	9	29	
B (Underweight)	79	67	146	56,45%
C (normal weight)	41	29	70	
D (normal weight)	14	7	21	29,35%
E (overweight)	5	15	20	6,45%

F (obese)	2	10	12	
G (obese)	4	8	12	
H (obese)			0	
I (obese)			0	7,74%
TOTAL	165	145	310	100%
(b1) Culturally based beauty ideals (clear, blemish free skin; neat, shiny hair; symmetrical features; and straight, white teeth) -				
1 - not at all			0	
2 - very little			0	
3 - somewhat	12	20	32	18,29%
4 - to a great extend	87	56	143	81,71%
TOTAL			175	100%
(b2) Culturally based beauty ideals (clear, blemish free skin; neat, shiny hair; symmetrical features; and straight, white teeth) - Normal				
1 - not at all		1	1	1,10%
2 - very little		4	4	4,40%
3 - somewhat	15	11	26	28,57%
4 - to a great extend	40	20	60	65,93%
TOTAL			91	100%
(b3) Culturally based beauty ideals (clear, blemish free skin; neat, shiny hair; symmetrical features; and straight, white teeth) -				
1 - not at all			0	
2 - very little			0	
3 - somewhat	4	9	13	29,55%
4 - to a great extend	7	24	31	70,45%
TOTAL			44	100%
(c) Visible Flaws - underweight				
Cellulite			0	0%
Stomach Rolls, Soft Belly			0	0%
Stretch marks			0	0%
Acne/skin blemishes			0	0%
Fold			0	0%
Bodily Hair			0	0%
TOTAL			0	0%
(c) Visible Flaws - normal				
Cellulite		1	1	16,67%
Stomach Rolls, Soft Belly			0	0%
Stretch marks			0	0%
Acne/skin blemishes			0	0%
Fold	5		5	83,33%
Bodily Hair			0	0%
TOTAL			6	100%
(c) Visible Flaws - overweight				

Cellulite		3	3	14,29%
Stomach Rolls, Soft Belly	4	14	18	85,71%
Stretch marks			0	0%
Acne/skin blemishes			0	0%
Fold			0	0%
Bodily Hair			0	0%
TOTAL			21	100%
2.3 Clothing / Aactivity				
(a) Clothing - Underweight				
1- not at all revealing	69	22	91	52,00%
2- slightly revealing	12	31	43	24,57%
3 - moderately revealing	11	19	30	17,14%
4 - very revealing	7	4	11	6,29%
5 - extremely revealing			0	0,00%
TOTAL			175	100%
(b)Clothing - Normal				
1- not at all revealing	41	17	58	63,74%
2- slightly revealing	9	11	20	21,98%
3 - moderately revealing	4	6	10	10,99%
4 - very revealing	1	2	3	3,30%
5- extremely revealing			0	0,00%
TOTAL			91	100%
(c)Clothing - Overweight I Obese				
1- not at all revealing	6	7	13	29,55%
2- slightly revealing	1	13	14	31,82%
3 - moderately revealing	4	12	16	36,36%
4 - very revealing		1	1	2,27%
5- extremely revealing			0	0,00%
TOTAL			44	100%
(a) Activity - Underweight				
Active			20	11,43%
None Active			155	88,57%
TOTAL			175	100%
(a) Activity - Normal				
Active			10	10,99%
None Active			81	89,01%
TOTAL			91	100%
(a) Activity - Overweight				
Active			11	25,00%
None Active			33	75,00%
TOTAL			44	100%

Appendix B: Interview Guideline

Introduction

Do you agree that I am recording the interview and take some notes so that I can focus on the conversation? The data material will only be used for my analysis, of course, I will keep the outcomes confidential (and anonymously if wished). The interview will take about 45 minutes. Do you have further questions?

(A) Contextualization

- Please introduce yourself:
 - o How old are you?
 - o What is your current position at the company?
 - o How long have you worked at the company?
 - o What is your total work experience in your current position (in years)?

 - o What industry would you classify your company in?
- About ARMEDANGELS:
 - o In your own words: What does ARMEDANGELS do?
 - o How do you define ARMEDANGELS purpose & values?
 - o In general, how would you define ARMEDANGELS's communication strategy?

(B) Social Media

- How important is social media, especially Instagram, as a communication channel for ARMEDANGELS?
- Which topics are mainly communicated via this channel and why? What content is published / what is the visual language / what is the content strategy?
- If people are shown in the images, how are they portrayed?
- Are people with different body shapes / ethnic backgrounds etc., deliberately shown, if so, why?
- Is the focus of the Instagram content on showing clothing or on deliberately showing people with different body types?
- How does the brand determine which people to show on the Instagram content?
- Does the brand think they are reaching the Generation Y target audience with its account? Can you provide some data on this?
- What do you think is important to consider when choosing content for this target group?
- Do you think that the ARMEDANGELS account is appealing effectively to the target group?

(C) Body Positivity

- Have you noticed the trend "Body Positivity" on Instagram? If so, what do you understand by it?
- Especially in the area of fashion, the topic is being taken up more and more.
- What is ARMEDANGELS' position on the topic of body positivity in the area of social media marketing?
- How do you see the distribution (in %) between underweight/normal weight/overweight models on ARMEDANGELS' Instagram account and how are they chosen?
- Most overweight women are portrayed as more revealing than women with normal or underweight bodies. Can you comment on this?
- Also, the portrayal of flaws, such as cellulite, body rolls, bad skin, and odd teeth, is counted as body positive, what is your take on this?
- Do you think the body-positive movement is relevant to or influences your target audience/followers? If so, in what way?

(D) Brand Attitude

- What do you understand by the term brand attitude?
- To what extent does ARMEDANGELS try to influence the brand attitude of followers through your content strategy?
- To what extent do you think body-positive content affects female German Generation Y's brand attitude? And have you already gathered experience at ARMEDANGELS that supports your answer, for example, KPIs that confirm you this?

(E) Consumer behavior

- What content/features should an image show to lead to a purchase of the product, in your opinion?
- To what extent do you think body-positive content affects female German Generation Y's consumer behavior then? Do you have already gathered experience at ARMEDANGELS that supports your answer, for example, KPIs that confirm you this?

Appendix C: Transcript of Google Meets Interview with Ina Isemann, Head of Influencer Marketing

2023-02-23, 10:38 GMT

Duration: 40:51 Minutes

Attendees: Ina Rosemann, Victoria Braunsfeld

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, so first of all, do you agree that I'm recording this interview and take notes? So I can focus on the conversation.

Ina Rosemann: Of course.

Victoria Braunsfeld: And the data material will only be used for my analysis. And of course I will the out I will keep the outcomes confidentially and anonymously if you wish so. And it will only take about 45 minutes. Do you have any further questions?

Ina Rosemann: No, go ahead.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Please introduce yourself. Like, how old are you? What is your current position at the company? How long have you worked at the company? And in general, what is your total work experience and your current position? Perhaps you can just say like the numbers of the years. How many years you're working already?

Ina Rosemann: Yes of course. Yes, hi my name is Ina. I'm 32 years old and currently I'm working in the Fashion industry basically. In the position of an influencer and marketing manager or team lead in my specific role and I've been with ARMEDANGELS for three years now. Actually, three years and this is also since I didn't really change the position throughout the three years, I would say that's also my total work experience in that field.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, so you would classify your company to the fashion industry?

Ina Rosemann: Exactly.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay. And now I'm gonna ask you a bit more detailed questions about the company ARMEDANGLES. In your own words, what does ARMEDANGLES do?

Ina Rosemann: So ARMEDANGELS is a fair fashion label. Basically, we produce clothing for female and male that is produced with the highest standards to nature and human, meaning that the entire supply chain is fair and sustainable or more sustainable than other fashion brands. And basically, we also have like a huge part of our company is devoted to social activism. So, we're not only produce fashion but we also try to change the entire industry and that sense or in that frame. Let's say where we can have an impact, meaning just producing clothes more sustainably and fair.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay. So actually, that is also the purpose and values of the company then?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, I would say so. I mean the mission is to combine like really fair working conditions and sustainable but also high-quality products or materials. That also come with a good design, because I think everyone knows that fair fashion comes from a spot where it was more like a very equal and rather like, let's say maybe "Mumish". But ARMEDANGELS really tries since 15 years to always evolve also in their design to make it more mainstream let's say and I would say in terms of purpose and values it's, I mean fashion is one of the dirtiest industries in the world and ARMEDANGELS tries to kind of change that in a way that good design and good clothing doesn't necessarily need to come with bad conditions., bad working conditions or chemicals and basically that.

Victoria Braunsfeld: In general, how would you define AREMDANGELS communication strategy?

Ina Rosemann: That's a tricky question because I think that every company has a dynamic where strategies change throughout the period that they're active but I think in our case it's really a mix of like verbal and visual communication and also we have elements of education because since I think the entire industry is still very, let's say not the industry, the industry as well as very uneducated but obviously also the customers are very uneducated on the topic of fashion. So, I think that's also a huge part of our communication surgery to kind of like educate people make them aware of the industry and of what's happening actually in production. And I said verbal and visual, verbally I think when it comes to important topics so like social engagement everything that's really hard to put in visuals. So, we try to really go into a dialogue with our community, with our customers and kind of educate try to have a conversation about the topic have a conversation about social topics that are important at the moment. And visually when it comes to product and people. So, I would say we try to kind of show or give a lot of statements, but then in the end who we are, an E-com, a fashion brand. So obviously, we also need to show visuals and so also we try to always show products and people and especially like people behind the brand. I would say maybe somewhere between we, try to be polite, educating in a way, but also bold, when it comes to our social engagement.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, thank you. And how important is social media, especially Instagram, as a communication channel for ARMEDANGELS?

Ina Rosemann: Very important. I think that goes for every E-com brand. I think you can't really do what you do without social media. And I mean, not only Instagram, but also like Pinterest Facebook, YouTube, basically all the platforms but obviously, Instagram is the biggest one, the biggest platform. Also, the let's say where we are the most active and so for us, it's super, super important. Not only to reach new customers and to tap into new target groups, but also to connect with the community and as I said before, to really like have an exchange in the conversation with our community.

Victoria Braunsfeld: And which topics are mainly communicated via this channel and why? And what kind of content is published? You said it already before like the visual language and what is kind of the content strategy behind the Instagram account?

Ina Rosemann: Yes. And so, I think this is also always changing a bit or let's say always in a progress but I think to keep it straight or short I think we communicate mainly products so really like new nesses, innovations, but also we try to show user generated content but also content we create with our influencers and but also obviously we kind of want to also celebrate and communicate our success stories. So, if we have something that we are proud of, I don't know, like a donation or whatever, then of course we use it also as a channel for us to communicate that. Right now, the strategy moves a bit towards rather brand desire. So, we really try to tap into a new segment for us because we've been on the market for 15 years and we have a very let's say a very, how do you say, a very strong community that trusts us a lot. And we have a lot of existing customers that come get like that return or returning customers. And but now we want to kind of like tap into a new segment be a bit bolder be a

bit more edgy and I think right now the strategy moves a bit towards building brand desirability. I would say desire.

Victoria Braunsfeld: And like, if people are models are shown on the images, how are they portrayed?

Ina Rosemann: I think right now, it's still very much like we use a lot of E-com material, like E-com, shooting material. So basically imagery from E-com shootings that we would also show on the website. In my opinion, there is room for improvement because, it's sometimes not that, how do you say, maybe like natural? Because people are not, I mean, we try to show also, as I said before user generated content, or also influencer generated content, which I think display a better like you and me like the normal people. But right now, I think the majority of the imagery it's still from the E-Com shooting. So basically, models in our clothing.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Are people with different body shapes / ethnic backgrounds etc. deliberately shown, if so why?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, yes, they do and so that answers the first one, I think yes. And they have different body shapes. They have different ethnic backgrounds. And why do we do that? I mean, I think it's, I mean, we want to make fashion for everyone, so we try to be as inclusive as possible. And I think also for the community or for the customers, it's important to see the products on different body shapes on different people in general. So, I think that's a way to kind of make the product, look more, realistic, maybe, or get a better understanding of how the product could look on the customer. And so, to sum it up, I think to just be more inclusive.

Victoria Braunsfeld: So you choose because of this reason, this kind of models because you want to show that everyone can wear your clothes and that everyone is included in your fashion and your brand?

Ina Rosemann: Yes. I mean I think that's not the main purpose in general of that platform or of like let's say our Instagram account to do so. And as I said, we have different or diverse topics that we want to share there but of course not only on the website. But on Instagram, we also try to show as many or try to start to show as many different body types and shapes also to get a better understanding of how the clothing look and on different people. And I think it's a good platform to do so. I am aware that I think we can do even more and that regard. But I think in the fashion industry still like a way to go and also I mean, we have a very engaged community I must say, and very involved community. And I would also say we still are in the process of learning a lot from our community and getting insights from our community also when it comes to body positivity etc. and I think it's not the main purpose of the platform, but it's a good platform to do so, to show that our clothing can fit on everyone best case.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Does the brand think they are reaching the Generation Y target audience with their account? Can you provide some data on this?

Ina Rosemann: I mean, I cannot open up the the exact data but yes, Generation Y is our main target group. I mean we see that in Google Analytics but also on Instagram. So yes, that's basically our main target group.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, and what do you think is important to consider when choosing content for this target group?

Ina Rosemann: I think the generation is in general already educated. But they are also open to learn or very fond to learn new things and but they also are used to old patterns. Let's say, maybe especially when you talk about visuals, when you talk about visuals or models in the fashion industry. I think our, my generation is used to a certain imagery, certain visuals but I think we also like when brands challenge that and kind of like disrupted that. So, I think it's very difficult what content you show them and what is politically correct, what is socially accepted. So we try to be bold and we try to show new things but also not to be too bold, because I think the generation lies between the old generation and lies the very new generation that the disrupts a lot. And I think we also somewhere in between since this is our main target group. So, we try to be bold but in a, let's say, slower way.

Victoria Braunsfeld: So, do you think that ARMEDANGELS account, is appealing effectively to the target group right now?

Ina Rosemann: I think so. Yes, but I also think as I mentioned before that, we could maybe be bolder and disrupt a bit more. I mean, if you have a very big community and a very engaged community you are also always faced with a lot of discourse and a lot of conversations. And I think we kind of like try to handle that but also not to, I don't know started too complicated discussion. So, I think they like the content but I think probably half of the community would like us to be more edgy and the other half is quite content with our content and so yes in general I would say they like the content. Yes.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Now we going to continue with some questions about body positivity. So, my first question is, have you noticed that the trend body positive is on Instagram right now and if so, what do you understand by it?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, I think it has been around for quite some time now and so, yes, I've been well, I am aware of body positivity. Actually, we also work with a lot of Influencers that I would say, categorize themselves into that bubble of body positivity or they talk a lot about body positivity. So, what do I understand, what do I understand by body positivity? I think the work the words basically explain it. It's having a positive attitude towards each body, no matter the shape, the size, the color, skin, stretch marks. Everything.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Especially in the area of fashion. The topic is being taken up more and more. What is ARMEDANGELS position on the topic of body positivity in the area of social media marketing?

Ina Rosemann: We believe it's super important and I mean since I think we are also a brand that educates a lot, I mean, not specifically, of course a body positivity, and but in other areas, we want to, of course, enhance the topic. And, as I said before, we work also with a lot of influences that position themselves into that field of educational, let's say. So, for us,

it's a super super important topic. We are aware. We also work continuously on our size extensions, and as I said, because we try to be as inclusive as possible. So, we find it very, very important and really like to support people that educate in that area.

Victoria Braunsfeld: And how do you see the distribution? Perhaps, you can say it in percentage, between underweight, normalweight and overweight models on ARMEDANGELS, Instagram account, and how are they chosen?

Ina Rosemann: Yes. As I said before, I think we have still some work to do and some way to go and I think right now we still show a lot of let's say classical content from E-com shoots, which it changed already in the past, but I think we still have a lot of normal models, that probably one would categorize as underweight slash normal weight. And so, I think it's probably still 60 to 70 percent of more like traditional models and the rest, I think it's... What is overweight? I think that's also a very subjective judgment and probably for agencies, they would call it overweight models. Maybe it's like 20%, 20 to 30%.

Victoria Braunsfeld: And most overweight women, because you had campaigns also with like overweight women, but they are portrayed more revealing than women with normal or underweight bodies. Can you comment on this?

Ina Rosemann: Is this a statement? Is this some something that you found out? Or if this is like a general, is it for like, AREMDANGLES or in general.

Victoria Braunsfeld: For ARMEDANGELS.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, okay. Also, the portrayal of flaws, such as cellulite, body rolls, bad skin, and odd teeth is counted as body positive, what is your take on this? You already said kind of it before, like that stretch marks and so on is also counting for you as body positive, correct?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, yes, definitely. I mean I think we would do so, but as I mentioned before, I think for us it's a bit more complicated because I mean except for underwear, usually you have like outfits where I think most of the body parts are covered like with jeans or we have a lot of long dresses shirts, knitwear, I think most of the parts are anyway covered somehow. So, we would show it but I think since we are not like in the swimwear industry or also not really underwear, that's not a big focus. I think there's not too many, not so much room to show, let's say suddenly body rolls or bad skin. But for me, yes, I count them as body positivity or to that area of body positive.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay. And do you think that body positive movement is relevant or influences your target audience? And if so, in what way would you say?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, definitely. I mean I think it's super important. We have a huge share a huge share of our customers or communities. We always say like more in that segment of moms, I mean, it also comes maybe natural at a certain age and I specially or taking that as an example, I think it's completely normal, if you go through a pregnancy that you can end up having stretch marks for instance, and I mean, that's the most natural thing in the world.

And I think we should embrace that. So, I really, I definitely feel that for our community, it's something super important and something that they can relate to. So definitely

Victoria Braunsfeld: And another question because you said that you're like often using content of E-commerce shootings for your Instagram account but that means like on E-commerce you using most of the time like more thin idealized girls because you think it's performs better because there's also reason why they're not choosing so many body diverse girls?

Ina Rosemann: I think. I think it's...performs better sounds...almost wrong. But, I mean I think in general, as I said before the fashion industry is still very used to idealized models and for, used to showing products on rather skinny models, but I think that is out like often of a pure historical reason that this is where fashion comes from but as I said, I think every brand is moving towards a different or should move towards a different presentation of products and a more realistic picture that you can give to the community. And to be honest we have a lot of discourse in our community about the topic and we also get a lot of critique actually out of the community. That's why I also 100% sure that the community wants to see more. And but I mean these are also always like comments from some people out of the community, and I think, you need to we want to get there but I think it's still in the process and we try to go there slowly. Let's say so I wouldn't necessarily say that it performs better, I think it's like a pure historical reason that fashion was used to display rather idealized models, but I think actually that these days, it will perform better if you show more realistic models for sure.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, thank you. Now we going to talk about brand attitude and consumer behavior. What do you understand by the term of brand attitude?

Ina Rosemann: I think how the brand positions themselves but behaves or presents itself or how it want to be perceived. I think like, I would say a brand attitude can be something like. I can objective, you can be either arrogant or kind respectful distant. I think. That I would understand by brand attitude.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, from the company side and from the customer side? For example, from your side like sometimes we also have a brand attitude towards the brand.

Ina Rosemann: Okay. I can. I think I can either relate with a brand or not so much. But also, I mean, the same goes for for my side, I would say so I can perceive a brand as modern or not so modern as maybe more distant or more chic. So, I would also say like. And my attitude towards the brand. I can be I think either I can with a brand or not. I think that's and I can find the brand attractive or not. I think there's not so much more that I can feel about brands.

Victoria Braunsfeld: To what extent does ARMEDANGELS, try to influence the brand attitude of followers through their content strategy?

Ina Rosemann: I think we try to be as transparent as possible with our customers. Also, when it comes to flaws or when we make mistakes and I think we try to be as transparent as possible and I think we want customers to feel that we are a brand that they are close, nahbar, don't know the English word actually, and that I don't know like we want to be a brand that

it's a reachable in a way. We want to also embrace conversation and I think for this you need to be as open and transparent as possible for customers to be, to feel comfortable, talking asking questions starting discussions. So by our content strategy, as I said before, I mean it has different elements but I think by the visuals these days since we are changing also we're shifting a bit towards a more bold strategy, I think we want to show our customers that we can be a brand that does like also more edgy content, more bolder styles and we're moving towards that and by our like, verbal part of the communication, we try to open conversations, basically. So, we share our success stories, but we also share our fails, we I would say she openly if we still need to learn on topics if we... So, I hope that answered your question.

Victoria Braunsfeld: To what extent do you think body positive content affects female German Generation Y's brand attitude? And have you already gathered experience at ARMEDANGELS that supports your answer, for example KPIs that confirm you this?

Ina Rosemann: So actually I think body positive content affects the Generations Y's brand attitude very much. I think this is actually something that we can see in internal surveys that we also conducted that especially partners but also our community they proactively ask for body positive content and also we can see that we get a lot of criticism for our super let's say fashion skinny models and that they are wishing for more body diversity on our social media profile but also when it comes to our influencer that we are working with. And as I said before obviously for us it is always a bit challenging to meet like both let's say brands desired image so on the one hand we are a fashion brand that wants to be fashionable and desirable and on the other hand obviously we want be super inclusive and that's definitely something we can see that's more like a, I can't really quantify it which is super hard because we don't have something official to share like with external stakeholders but from internally conducted surveys that we did in the past we can see for sure that people proactively ask for body positive content and also we get positive Feedback on social media postings when we are rather showing more normal body types. And also we can see better advertising performance when we push advertising that show several models with different body types which is also one KPI that might help to verify that the brand attitude or let's say rather the customers attitude towards the brand meaning how they click or the clicking behavior is actually better when showing more diverse body types. This is a thing that we can definitely confirm.

Victoria Braunsfeld: You said that you already made some surveys due to this topic. Do you have KPIs out of that?

Ina Rosemann: So as I mentioned before we see it once in the surveys we internally conduct where usually around 60%-70% answer that they would like to see more body diverse models in our social media feed but also that they would like to see more body diverse influencers that we are working with. so potentially partners that's lets the brand faces that should be more diverse in terms of the body type also we know that our social ads perform better when we show at least several models with different body types within one advertising.

Victoria Braunsfeld: The next, the last question is like, what content should an image shown to lead to a purchase of the product in your opinion? So, you think the new strategy gonna have the impact of the consumer behavior of your customer? Or what do you think, is important to show, especially on social media images to lead a purchase?

Ina Rosemann: I think, as we said before, I think in general slowly getting there to show the products on more like more body types and in a more realistic world, let's say, or more realistic body types that one can relate with, because I think that's a very important part from personally, also that I can relate somehow, with the models also there I see and I think it is nice to go or to move a bit away from this, like, pure E-com material, but rather show models, or even better use like community customers in a more natural setting. So more like in the daily life, let's say.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay, so to what extend do you think body positive content affects female German Generation Y's consumer behavior then? And again do you have already gathered experience at ARMEDANGELS that supports your answer, for example KPIs that confirm you this?

Ina Rosemann: I mean what we can not confirm yet that the conversion rate is necessarily better when showing diverse body types but at least the traffic is better let's say. So people actually click more they engage a bit more. But if they are in the end buying it's something super hard for us to verify because even from social media we don't necessarily see the correct numbers if someone after seeing a post definitely goes to the shop and buys that specific product. That nothing that we can confirm but when talking about the social ads that have the main purpose of upselling like really a performance approach then we can see that the clicking behavior from customers is actually better.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Last question. Do you think brand attitude is correlated with consumer behavior? If yes, in which way?

Ina Rosemann: Yes, I think so. I think that people who have a positive attitude towards something, in this case a brand, are more likely to buy a product from that brand. So yes, I think they are correlated in a positive way. I think a positive attitude towards the brand definitely has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Okay. These were all questions. Thank you so much. Do you have any questions?

Ina Rosemann: Everything is clear. Thank you.

Victoria Braunsfeld: Thank you.

Appendix D: Survey

Master thesis: Body Positivity on Instagram

Dear Participant,

As part of my master's thesis, I am conducting an online survey about Body Positivity on Instagram in the fashion industry with a focus on Generation Y (1981-1999).

Please note that all your answers are anonymous and strictly confidential, your contribution is voluntary and has purely academic purposes. Please respond as intuitively as possible to the questions. It will not take you more than 4 minutes to respond.

If you have any further questions, feel free to reach out to me via s-vbraunfeld@ucp.pt

Thank you very much for your valuable support!

*** Gibt eine erforderliche Frage an**

Demographics

1. Please indicate your gender *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer

2. To which age cohort do you belong? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- 1981-1987
- 1988-1993
- 1994-2000
- None of the above

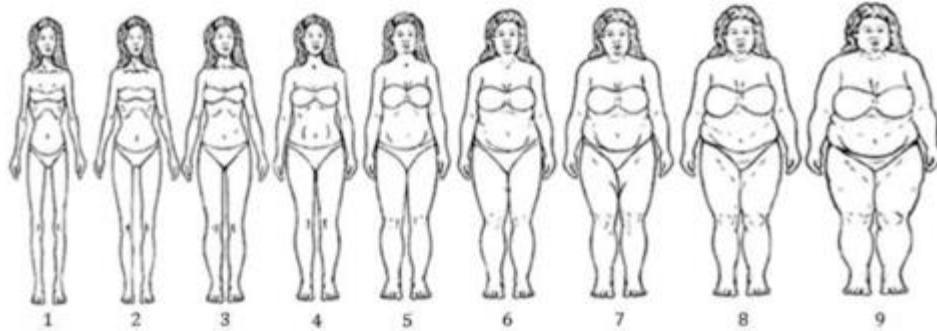
Demographics

3. Are you from Germany? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- Yes
- No

4. Which image would you assign yourself to? *



Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

5. Do you use the social media platform Instagram? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- Yes
- No

6. Are you following fashion brands on Instagram? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

7. Have you ever heard about the topic of body positivity? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

DEFINITION: Body positivity is a social movement and philosophy that promotes acceptance and appreciation of all body types, shapes, sizes, and abilities, while rejecting unrealistic beauty standards and harmful societal norms that contribute to body shaming and discrimination.

Which of these attributes define body positivity for you?

8. Overweight humans in commercials *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

9. Humans showing cellulite or / and stretch marks *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

10. Humans showing acne *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

11. Humans with bodily hair *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

12. Skinny humans *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

13. People with revealing clothes *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

14. The topic body positivity is very important for me *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

15. Do you follow any fashion brands on Instagram that promote body positivity? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes
 No

16. Do you like a fashion brand better when it shows body-positive content than when it doesn't?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

17. I frequently engage with body-positive content on Instagram (e.g., like, comment, share) *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

18. Brands that show body-positive content on their Instagram channel make a positive impression on me.

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

19. I find fashion brands that promote inclusion and use diverse models in their ad campaigns as opposed to those that tend to present the white, thin beauty ideal, very appealing.

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

20. Do you think that the way how brands communicate their clothes influences your attitude towards them?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

21. How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: "Brands that promote body positivity are more appealing to me than those that don't."

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

22. Do you see yourself represented in most ads/commercials? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

23. I often buy clothes online *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

24. Instagram is very important in influencing my purchasing decision *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

For each of the three following statements, please evaluate if these aspects affect your online purchasing behaviour for clothes, on Instagram in a positive way (from 1 to 5)

25. The way I relate to the model's body *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

26. The body diversity of models reflected in the content of the brand *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

27. My opinion on the fashion brand *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

28. When purchasing a product, I am influenced by the risk of the clothes not fitting me as well as they fit the model

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

29. I would be more likely to purchase the product online if the brand show body positive content

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

30. Based on this image, would you purchase the clothes? *



Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

31. Why? *

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- Shape of the Model
- Clothes
- Setup
- Pose
- Clothes fit
- Other

32. What were your reasons when you clicked "other"?

33. Based on this image, would you purchase the clothes? *



Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

34. Why? *

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- Shape of the Model
- Clothes
- Setup
- Pose
- Clothes fit
- Other

35. What were your reasons when you clicked "other"?

36. A brand that only posts skinny, idealized models on its Instagram account is very appealing to me

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

37. If strongly disagree, would you still buy a product there?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- Yes
- No

38. Are you more attracted to a product and have a higher purchase intention if it's shown with perfect, thin idealised body type or do you prefer it when the model has a body-positive body type?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- ...if it's shown with a perfect body type
 ...when the model has a body-positive body type

39. I often consider a brand's messaging around body positivity before making a purchase *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- 1 2 3 4 5
Stro Strongly agree

40. Have you ever made a purchase from a fashion brand just because of their body-positive messaging?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- 1 2 3 4 5
Stro Strongly agree

41. I am familiar with ARMEDANGELS as a fashion brand *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- 1 2 3 4 5
Stro Strongly agree

DESCRIPTION: ARMEDANGELS is a sustainable fashion brand based in Germany, that produces clothing made from eco-friendly and socially responsible materials. The brand is committed to fair trade practices and ethical manufacturing, with a focus on transparency and traceability throughout their supply chain. ARMEDANGELS offers a range of stylish and timeless pieces, from casual wear to formal attire, that are both fashion-forward and eco-conscious.

42. Are you following ARMEDANGELS on Instagram? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

43. I'm paying attention to what they post *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

44. I often engage with ARMEDANGELS on social media *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

45. I really like ARMEDANGELS? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

46. Have you ever purchased a product from ARMEDANGELS before? *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

Yes

No

47. What factors influence, influenced or would influence your decision to purchase clothes from ARMEDANGELS?

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

Image

Storytelling

Product

Content

Other

I have never bought anything

48. What were your reasons when you clicked "other"?

49. I would likely recommend ARMEDANGELS to others *

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

50. Do you feel that ARMEDANGELS represents a positive body image through their marketing

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

51. Would you make a purchase from ARMEDANGELS just because of their body-positive content?

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

Masterthesis

Thank you & Goodbye

The survey is now closed.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Please indicate your email address if you want to participate in the giveaway.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any issues regarding the survey or are interested in participating in an interview on this subject via **s-vbraunsfeld@ucp.pt**.

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Google

Formulare

Appendix F: Data Summary of relevant questions

	Overweight hum	Humans showing	Humans showing	Humans with bor	Skinny humans	Skinny humans	People with reve
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q5.2	Q6
count	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0
mean	4.211	4.578	4.238	4.075	2.361	3.639	2.939
std	1.035	0.721	0.902	0.951	1.37	1.37	1.106
min	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
50%	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	3.0
max	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

	Do you like a fas	I frequently enga	Brands that show	I find fashion bra	How much do yo	A brand that only
	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12.2
count	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0
mean	3.701	2.98	4.415	4.374	4.075	4.122
std	1.023	1.191	0.757	0.846	0.944	0.851
min	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
50%	4.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
max	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

	The body divers	I would be more	I often consider	z Have you ever m	Are you more att
	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
count	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0
mean	3.531	4.231	2.878	2.925	1.891
std	1.036	0.853	1.146	1.36	0.313
min	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
50%	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
max	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	2.0

	I am familiar with	Are you following	I'm paying attent	I often engage w	I really like ARME	Have you ever pi	I would likely reo	Do you feel that	Would you make
	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26
count	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0	147.0
mean	3.707	0.51	2.483	2.082	3.469	0.551	3.401	3.333	2.993
std	1.189	0.502	1.279	1.132	1.009	0.499	1.09	1.002	0.99
min	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
50%	4.0	1.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
max	5.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

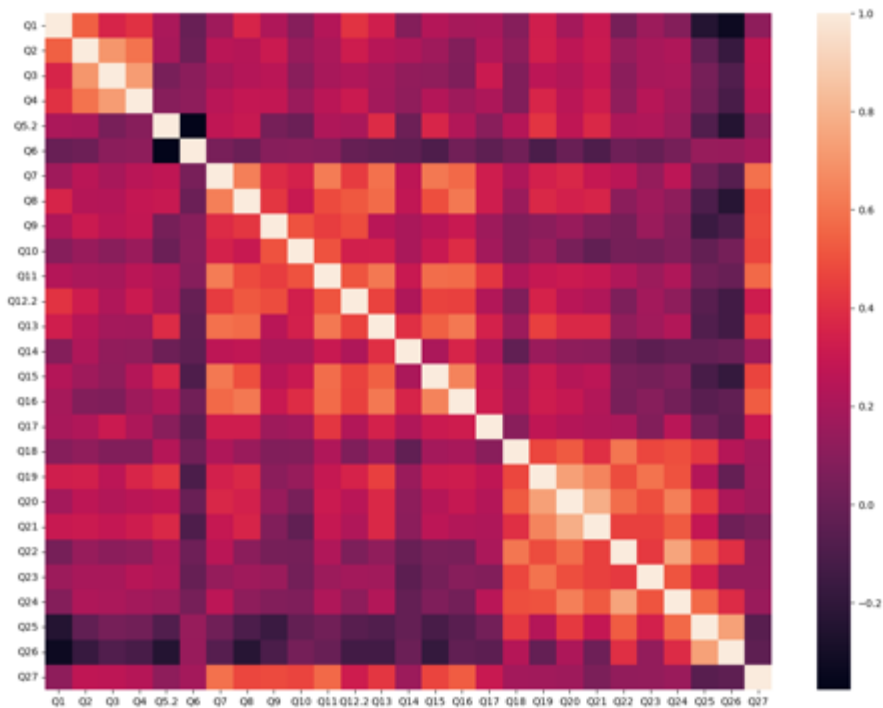
	The topic body p
	Q27
count	147.0
mean	4.088
std	0.819
min	2.0
50%	4.0
max	5.0

Appendix G: Cronbach's Alpha Consumer Behavior and Brand Attitude

Cronbach Alpha Consumer Behavior 0.75721
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude 0.83295
Cronbach Alpha Body Positivity 0.57563

Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q7 0.79322
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q8 0.80529
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q9 0.8132
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q10 0.82545
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q11 0.78824
Cronbach Alpha Brand Attitude if dropping this column: Q12.2 0.80682

Appendix H: Correlation Matrix (Figure)



Appendix I: Correlation Matrix

	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
Q7	0.999999999999	0.621783721873	0.321456370542	0.324129309461	0.631490696565	0.428406196681	0.643789979006	0.327259954152	0.641521895649	0.606315948568	0.3111195818925128
Q8	0.621783721873	1.0	0.384210892508	0.297293202921	0.485504378157	0.522738477240	0.571417858338	0.314251257277	0.471722352393	0.616592561123	0.3246100968035982
Q9	0.321456370542	0.384210892508	1.0	0.591993929567	0.474032754010	0.503550543238	0.258737968233	0.196267617787	0.259555628829	0.323568335816	0.18448259819408327
Q10	0.324129309461	0.297293202921	0.591993929567	1.0	0.512297218489	0.387035151369	0.351098625444	0.249878530474	0.290923749698	0.402522742172	0.19251349860383325
Q11	0.631490696565	0.485504378157	0.474032754010	0.512297218489	0.999999999999	0.481605029571	0.615915288168	0.381607341795	0.572658351451	0.588093448683	0.37565137109966506
Q12	0.428406196681	0.522738477240	0.503550543238	0.387035151369	0.481605029571	1.0	0.465542244793	0.284671782866	0.463106598505	0.453830446938	0.19996557057900413
Q13	0.643789979006	0.571417858338	0.258737968233	0.351098625444	0.615915288168	0.465542244793	0.999999999999	0.386679466142	0.566031979277	0.639939949272	0.3262569543375707
Q14	0.327259954152	0.314251257277	0.196267617787	0.249878530474	0.381607341795	0.284671782866	0.386679466142	1.0	0.239127899105	0.407628404680	0.2658167388131854
Q15	0.641521895649	0.471722352393	0.259555628829	0.290923749698	0.572658351451	0.463106598505	0.566031979277	0.239127899105	1.0	0.642877132842	0.30683231915261433
Q16	0.606315948568	0.616592561123	0.323568335816	0.402522742172	0.588093448683	0.453830446938	0.639939949272	0.407628404680	0.642877132842	1.0	0.31709602772940954
Q17	0.311119581892	0.324610096803	0.184482598194	0.192513498603	0.375651371099	0.199965570579	0.326256954337	0.265816738813	0.306832319152	0.317096027729	0.9999999999999999