



Fashioning Body Positivity

Consumer Perceptions and Purchase Behaviour in the Realm
of Body Positive Fashion Brands, considering Body Image
and Body Acceptance

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Title: Fashioning Body Positivity - Consumer Perceptions and Purchase Behaviour in the Realm of Body Positive Fashion Brands, considering Body Image and Body Acceptance

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Abstract

The rise of the body positivity movement within the fashion industry causes shifting consumer beliefs and attitudes. Evaluating self-appearance and acceptance emerges as a compelling and integral facet of consumer behaviour in this context. Consequently, this dissertation aims to ascertain the influence of the type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) on consumer perceptions, and purchase behaviour toward brands. Additionally, it examines the moderating role of body image and the mediating role of body appreciation on the relationship between the type of advertisement and consumers' perception and purchase behaviour.

The results derived from an experimental study, indicate a positive impact of body positive advertisement on brand perceptions and purchase behaviour. With decreasing levels of body image, increased differences between stereotypical and body-positive advertisements emerge on perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and WTP. Specifically, the positive effect on the variables is strongest at low levels of body image when presented with body positive advertising.

However, body acceptance falls short in terms of mediating consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour. Yet, belief congruence has shown to be an alternate mediating factor that influences brand perceptions and purchase behaviour, advocating for aligning consumers' beliefs with advertising messages within the context of body positivity.

These results yield insightful perspectives on purpose-driven branding and consumer behaviour, which highlights the influence of body positivity in advertising. Furthermore, it shows the interplay between the evaluation of one's own appearance and decision-making, emphasizing the imperative for marketers to consider this aspect when developing campaigns targeted at final consumers.

Keywords: body positivity, body image, body acceptance, consumer behaviour, belief congruence, fashion

Resumo

O crescimento do movimento de positividade corporal na moda está transformando as crenças dos consumidores, destacando a autoavaliação e aceitação como elementos essenciais do comportamento do consumidor. Esta pesquisa explora o impacto do tipo de anúncio (positividade corporal vs. estereotipado) nas percepções e no comportamento de compra, considerando o papel moderador da imagem corporal e o papel mediador da apreciação corporal.

Os resultados de um estudo experimental revelam um impacto positivo da publicidade voltada para a positividade corporal na percepção da marca e no comportamento de compra. Com a diminuição da imagem corporal, surgem diferenças crescentes entre anúncios estereotipados e os focados na positividade corporal em ética percebida, intenções de compra e disposição para pagar. Esse efeito é mais pronunciado em níveis mais baixos de imagem corporal e com anúncios sobre positividade corporal.

No entanto, a aceitação do corpo não atua como mediadora significativa nas percepções e no comportamento de compra. A congruência de crenças emerge como um mediador alternativo, enfatizando a importância de alinhar as crenças dos consumidores com as mensagens publicitárias na positividade corporal.

Esses resultados contribuem para a compreensão da influência da positividade corporal na publicidade no âmbito do marketing com propósito e comportamento do consumidor, destacando a interação entre autoimagem e tomada de decisões. Isso sublinha a necessidade crucial de os profissionais de marketing considerarem esse aspecto no desenvolvimento de campanhas para o consumidor final.

Palavras-chave: positividade corporal, imagem corporal, aceitação corporal, comportamento do consumidor, congruência de crenças, moda, marketing com propósito.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Resumo	3
Acknowledgments	4
List of Figures	6
List of Tables	6
1. Introduction	8
1.1. Problem Definition and Relevance	8
1.2. Research Objectives and Questions	10
1.3. Research Outline	11
2. Academic Literature Review	11
2.1. Concepts of Inclusivity and Body Positivity	11
2.2. The Fashion Industry’s Relevance in the Inclusivity and Body Positivity Movement .14	
2.3. Discussion of Strategies of Brands in this Field	14
2.3.1. Purpose-driven Branding & Communication.....	14
2.3.2. Strategies of Inclusive and Diverse Brands.....	16
2.4. Consumer Behaviour in the Fashion Industry	17
2.4.1. Consumer Behaviour Trends.....	17
2.4.2. Decision-making in the Fashion Industry.....	18
2.4.3. Influencing Factors Shaping Consumer Behaviour.....	19
3. Conceptual Framework	21
4. Methodology	23
4.1. Research Method	23
4.2. Sampling	23
4.3. Research Instruments	24
4.4. Design and Procedure	25
4.5. Stimuli Development	26
4.6. Variable Description	27
5. Analysis and Results	28
5.1. Sample Characterization	28
5.2. Scale Reliability	29
5.3. Manipulation Check	30
5.4. Main Results	31
5.5. Further Analysis	39
6. Discussion	43

7. Conclusions and Implications	44
7.1. Theoretical Implications	45
7.2. Managerial Implications	46
8. Limitations	47
Appendices	49
Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire	49
Appendix 2: Sample Characterization.....	58
Literature	60

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework.....	21
Figure 2 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE.....	35
Figure 3 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention	35
Figure 4 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP.....	36
Figure 5 – Overview Mediation Body Acceptance	36
Figure 6 - Overview Mediation Belief Congruence.....	40

List of Tables

Table 1 – Pearson Correlation	24
Table 2 - Pre-Study Manipulation Check	25
Table 3 – Pearson Correlation	29
Table 4 – Cronbach’s alpha	30
Table 5 - Manipulation Check	30
Table 6 – MANOVA	32
Table 7 – Moderation	33
Table 8 - Conditional Effects.....	34
Table 9 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Brand Perception.....	37
Table 10 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Price.....	38
Table 11 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Quality.....	38
Table 12 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE..	38
Table 13 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention	39
Table 14 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP .	39

Table 15 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Brand Perception..... 40

Table 16 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Price..... 41

Table 17 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Quality..... 41

Table 18 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE 42

Table 19 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention 42

Table 20 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP43

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Definition and Relevance

Social issues like diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI), are highly present topics in public debate and academic discourse. Not only scholarly research calls for necessary practices to promote inclusivity and diversity, as this topic has also gained prominence as a relevant issue in the business context among brands and marketers (Bernstein et al., 2020; Demangeot et al., 2019).

For brands, these expectations lead to a stronger motive to express their identity, take responsibility and support changing customer values by introducing meaningful and authentic DEI initiatives across all business practices including product portfolios and marketing strategies (Ferraro et al., 2023).

To this day, a large part of society still focuses strongly on their body image and set the “perfect body” as a high priority, which is illustrated amongst other things by the fact that only one out of seven Americans feel “body positive” (Luzon, 2019). In this context, the general body positivity movement plays an essential role. It has evolved in various ways to embrace diverse perspectives and approaches across many industries such as fashion and advertising. The long-term goal remains to challenge unrealistic beauty ideals, enhance self-acceptance, and improve self-esteem by developing a positive self-image (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

Furthermore, psychological well-being has become a central topic of debate, especially in understanding the impact of appearance-related comparisons of unrealistic body images shown in mass media. Social comparison is frequently based on ultra-thin fashion model appearances, regardless of their unattainability for most of the population. Due to this prevailing tendency of comparison with advertising, the considerations of one’s own body image and body acceptance emerge as a captivating factor also within consumer behaviour as it sheds light on the intriguing dynamics that individuals navigate when exposed to advertisements (Featherstone, 2010).

According to research, unhealthy self-comparison practices negatively impact mental and physical health (Clayton et al., 2017) and it has developed to be a general public health issue. These concerns centred around body dissatisfaction can lead to significant risks such as intense dieting including the use of questionable diet pills and cosmetic surgeries as well as other

harmful practices (Grogan, 2022). Growing evidence for this topic stems from various literature sources but needs further study (Bucchianeri & Neumark-Sztainer, 2014).

Particularly in the fashion industry consumers are offered only narrow purchase options on the market and are exposed to stereotypical models in advertising. This includes companies like Zara, where sizing only goes up maximum to XL and models portray thin ideals (Zara, 2023). Other brands in this category are Levi's (Levis, 2023), Massimo Dutti (Massimo Dutti, 2023), and many more high-street brands.

The demand for fashion, clothing, and advertising that are inclusive in terms of body shapes and sizes, as well as age and ethnic backgrounds, is increasing and calls for alternatives that meet the needs of a wider proportion of society (Black, 2022). Furthermore, especially industries like fashion and advertising focus on unrealistic and homogeneous appearances which has led to body dissatisfaction of consumers and can be seen as a key contributor to health issues.

Recent changes and trends influenced various brands to change their strategies and take action towards fostering a positive body image (Craddock et al., 2019). For instance, the brand Dove has a strong position by introducing campaigns or product portfolios that promote a healthy way of accepting one's body (Unilever, 2023). As studies revealed that 70% of people feel excluded by the term "normal", the brand took action and is removing the word from every packaging design (Taylor, 2021) to underpin their continuous effort to develop positive relationships with bodies, improve self-esteem, and promote beauty as a source of confidence (Unilever, 2023). Moreover, the fashion brand Asos can be seen as a prime example of inclusive fashion. Their purpose statement summarises their core goal: to allow people to express themselves without judgment and give confidence to their customers (Asos, 2023a).

Therefore, this master dissertation explores the strategies of fashion brands that prioritize inclusivity and a positive body image and analyses how customers perceive them. More precisely, it studies the impact on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour of brands in this category. The study includes brands that challenge gender stereotypes and embrace diverse appearances in their branding, advertisement, and product range. Additionally, the perspective of the own body evaluation in the realm of consumer behaviour is considered to gain nuanced knowledge.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this research is to identify whether consumers' perceptions and the decision-making process are influenced by advertising strategies of brands that predominantly operate based on the purpose of inclusivity and body positivity.

This analysis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of body perception related to advertisements and product offerings and to identify whether consumers' attitudes towards these initiatives align with their willingness to purchase. These findings can be translated to derive business implications within the fashion industry and offer a greater knowledge of consumer behaviour in the context of body positivity initiatives.

Diversity and inclusion within advertising hold the potential to influence societal perceptions positively. Although it is of great importance, only limited research has been conducted to identify consumer reactions to these initiatives (Wilkie et al., 2023).

A large body of research offers information in the psychological field: how body dissatisfaction is impacted by non-inclusive media (Levine & Murnen, 2009; Want 2009), by warning labels on altered pictures in advertising (Tiggemann & Brown, 2018; Giorgianni et al., 2020) and whether body appreciation can protect body satisfaction (Halliwell, 2013) as well as studies investigating the topic with focus on eating disorders (Blomquist et al., 2022). A smaller part of the literature already touches on the impact of body positivity in advertising on purchase intention, with moderating roles of self-esteem (Venkat & Ogden, 2002; Bian & Wang, 2015), BMI (Borau & Bonnefon, 2017), perceived similarity (Lou & Tse, 2021) and perceived weight controllability (Martin & Xavier, 2010).

Most research predominantly focuses on the direction of psychological well-being and physical health, leaving a gap in the comprehensive evaluation of one's own body image and appreciation related to advertising, perceptions, and purchase behaviour (Tylka & Piran, 2019). To address this gap, this thesis evaluates the consumer response regarding consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour based on the following research questions.

Research Questions

RQ. 1: How do consumers perceive fashion brands that prioritize inclusivity and a positive body image in their advertising?

RQ. 2: How is consumers' purchase behaviour influenced by brands that strongly focus on inclusivity and body positivity in their advertising?

RQ. 3: What is the effect of inclusive and body-positive brand initiatives on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour when considering the factor of body image and body appreciation?

1.3. Research Outline

To answer the research questions, concepts of inclusivity, body image, the body positivity movement, body appreciation, and their relation to the fashion industry are described. Furthermore, the literature review introduces the concept of purpose-driven branding and communication, followed by the presentation of advertising strategies of elected brands that aim to be inclusive and foster a healthier perception of appearance. This analysis includes advertisements and product ranges designed to represent various body types to give the reader insights into the existing brand landscape.

Regarding the consumer perspective, this thesis elaborates on determinants that impact the decision-making process when buying clothing and identifies elements that influence perceptions and consumer behaviour within the broader context of the fashion industry. Furthermore, this research incorporates theoretical frameworks such as the social comparison theory as well as consumer-perceived ethicality and discerns trends that are important to shaping current consumer behaviour.

2. Academic Literature Review

2.1. Concepts of Inclusivity and Body Positivity

Inclusivity and self-acceptance have become vital aspects in the latest evolvments of society. Also, consumer perceptions and behaviours are increasingly affected by contemporary cultural beauty images (Pristini et al., 2023). Furthermore, individuals' perceptions of their bodies,

encompassing factors such as body image and body acceptance, play a pivotal role in shaping preferences and choices.

The notion of inclusivity serves as the basis of these changing ideals. At its core, inclusivity, refers to the intentional and proactive effort to create environments, systems, or communities that embrace and accommodate society's diverse needs and perspectives. It aims to promote equal opportunities, participation, and a sense of belonging for everyone and to foster a culture of respect and appreciation for differences (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Inclusivity from a marketing perspective is established upon the previous definition and attempts to offer a picture that is representative of a broader part of society. As the consumer market has changed, different values, beliefs, and expectations need to be represented in advertising. Appreciating and understanding diverse identities, differences, and backgrounds serve as a basis for creating mindful and respectful campaigns (Dimitrieska et al., 2019). It means to set communication standards on a level that nurtures a connection with an audience of a certain ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, language, or ability. This facilitates a holistic reflection on the consumer and leads to a perspective that regards the consumer as an individual (DePalma, 2020).

Considering self-evaluation aspects, the general definition of body image plays a vital part. The term "body image" stems from Schilder in 1950 and describes "the picture of our own body which we form in our minds, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves" Schilder (1950, 11). It represents the perceived form of the body, particularly its size and shape (Longo et al., 2009).

Researchers further developed this terminology, and it now represents a broader understanding of the body perception on a cognitive and emotional level (Wolff & Clark, 2001). It reflects the self-assessment of one's body appearance and can be seen as a universal structure (Mendelson et al., 2001), which combines the aspect of the external body appearance and the experiences the individual encounters.

The focus of this concept lies in the subjective evaluation and judgment of one's appearance involving comparisons of imposed societal standards, media portrayal, and cultural norms (Saylan & Soyigit, 2022). This concept focuses more on physical appearance, including weight, size, and shape and can be seen as an external appearance-based evaluation.

As cultural perceptions and consumer attitudes change, the positive body image or the body positivity perspective has evolved from the general concept of body image. The positive body image originates in positive psychology and intends to motivate people to identify their strengths related to one's own body (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a).

This concept serves as the basis for the body positivity movement, which is based on the social and cultural idea that all bodies are valuable and worthy of respect. It comprises the rejection of unattainable and unrealistic beauty standards and promotes challenging current ideals to accept diverse body types (Lazuka et al., 2020). By promoting embodiment and control over one's self-image, the movement aims to include any individual within and outside existing beauty standards.

Hence, the body positivity movement stands for the collective efforts of individuals or groups that renounce societal influences and the establishment of strict body norms. This approach covers a broad spectrum of aspects, such as supporting bodies with rolls, dimples, cellulite, acne, and diverse body weights as well as people with disabilities (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

However, a positive body image cannot be simplified by treating it as the opposite of a negative body image but has special components that need to be considered, specifically a positive opinion of the body despite its actual appearance, acceptance of the body regardless of weight, imperfections, and shape, respectful behaviour towards the body by engaging in healthy practices and responding to needs as well as protecting the body by refusing to align with unrealistic body images portrayed in media (Grogan, 2022). This advanced approach to body evaluation brings up the importance of conceptualising this topic in positive dimensions, contrary to common literature (Avalos et al., 2005).

The aforementioned factors can be described as the general understanding of body appreciation (BA) and are seen as a core element of a positive body image. This mindset allows a greater definition of beauty and is not as strongly impacted by sociocultural standards, leading to protection from the effects of media and culture that promote strict and specific appearance standards (Giorgianni et al., 2020).

Body appreciation represents a holistic approach, including the valuation of one's body and a cognitive aspect aimed at cultivating a positive attitude toward the body (Halliwell, 2013). Hence, body appreciation can be described as recognizing and valuing the functionality and the

uniqueness of one's body as well as being grateful for its capabilities contrary to only focusing on external aesthetics.

2.2. The Fashion Industry's Relevance in the Inclusivity and Body Positivity Movement

As previously mentioned, society and customers evolve and a more inclusive culture is demanded, and companies must adapt to these changes. In order to address body image issues more companies understand that is vital to include body positivity in their business actions (Luzon, 2019).

Supported by market data the relevance of inclusive approaches in the fashion industry becomes undeniable. Companies in this sector that focus on unreachable perfection are faced with declining demand and reputation issues. Initiatives that align with the purpose of being inclusive strongly impact shaping consumer behaviour and the general beauty image, making those companies responsible for how beauty is perceived (Prestini et al., 2023). Therefore, the fashion industry impacts the construction of consumers' identities, shapes tastes and meanings, and can be considered vital in this movement (McCracken, 2005).

How the body is interpreted influences the relationship with one's body and identity. Fashion plays a major role in this interpretation since fashion brands usually present the body however it suits the occasion best and thus does not always reflect reality. These specific representations allow fashion companies to guide and impose their power onto customers by promoting an imagined body that is not representative and vice versa (Prestini et al., 2023).

2.3. Discussion of Strategies of Brands in this Field

2.3.1. Purpose-driven Branding & Communication

Upon recognizing corporations' integral role within these societal movements and transformations, the significance of purpose-driven branding and communication emerges as a consequential concept.

The term purpose itself refers to the "why" of actions and efforts and describes the contribution to society and the world. The concept allows to create meaningful organizations in an increasingly uncertain environment. Purpose in this context can be considered as the "essence" that forms the basis for the company's mission and actions. Therefore, it is an overarching commitment to society with greater aspirations (Rey & Bastons, 2019).

Purpose can be seen as one of the core drivers for successful brands. Accordingly, brands must find their unique purpose, denoting a foundational orientation beyond their inherent value proposition (Stang, 2020).

This driver for integrating meaning into certain actions is created by shared values, acting as a channel between customer and company. Based on academia and practical cases this can be seen as a progression from the product or service focus to a perspective with stronger social meaning (Smith & Williams, 2022). Hence purpose should never be used as a tactic or buzzword but rather proven by actions and only those deeply rooted convictions are translated into communicational tools to foster actual transparency and authenticity.

As the purpose needs to be integrated into the basis of the corporate strategy, it also forms the heart of a brand's communication (Miller, 2022). It becomes critical to communicate these efforts and create understanding among stakeholders, especially customers, and employees (Aaker, 2022).

Consequently, purpose-driven marketing is seen as a concept with the intention of connecting brands with consumers via shared social goals. Purchasing decisions are more frequently based on how brands articulate and act on ideals and how the companies' actions benefit customers and society (Gülmez, 2021).

Expressing the purpose also comprises connecting with the customer on an emotional level. Due to this incorporated emotional relation the brand message and communication can be amplified (Porter Novelli & Cone, 2018). Honesty, transparency, and credibility are essential factors in purpose-driven communication. Thus, a firm anchoring the purpose in the brand's DNA and stringent alignment at all levels of the marketing mix is imperative for brand management. Another success factor is consistency, which is seen as the sole mechanism to create long-term added value for consumers and companies (Stang, 2020).

These engagements are additionally reflected in the need for specifically inclusive advertising initiatives (DIA), which are based on the expansion of various social and cultural norms like race, gender, sexuality, and physicality (Viglia, 2023).

2.3.2. Strategies of Inclusive and Diverse Brands

Based on the previously explained concept of purpose-driven brands, this chapter illustrates two successful purpose-driven fashion brands that address social concerns through inclusive and body positive advertising and product portfolios. These purpose-led brands strategically craft clear and compelling messages to inform customers about the central issue underpinning their strategy (Melloul et al., 2022).

Aerie

The fashion brand “Aerie”, focusing on lingerie products, established its strong standing of body positivity and inclusion with the “Real” marketing campaign in 2014. The advertising was centred around models that are not resembling the beauty standards of the time and no airbrushing techniques were used to honour natural beauty. These marketing efforts are rooted in their purpose of empowering women to love their bodies. What distinguishes the campaign compared to others is that imperfections such as beauty marks, tattoos, stretch marks, and dimples are visible on the models. Since then, no model has been retouched and a large variety of body types, imperfections, and ethnic backgrounds are featured in their campaigns and on their website.

Aspects like inclusion, a supporting community, and body positivity are deeply embedded in their mission and business strategy (Kohan, 2020). Their body positivity approach is described as a “movement” to empower women and make the world a better place. By challenging unrealistic perceptions of bodies and looks, the brand fosters authenticity and encourages one to embrace oneself (Aerie, 2023).

Correspondingly the website is in alignment with their values as it has features that allow the customer to see a product on a body type that resembles her own, to facilitate the decision-making process (Dockterman, 2014). The product lines cover up to 43 sizes for bras and for other lingerie or clothing the sizes range from XXS to XXL, making their portfolio inclusive for all sizes (Aerie, 2023).

Asos

Asos is a London-based online fashion retailer, offering over 80,000 retail brands and products from their own brands. Its purpose is rooted in the conviction that they want to give “fashion-loving 20-somethings the confidence to be whoever they want to be”. Their strategy is based

on an inclusive culture that encourages passion, enthusiasm, and development by acknowledging differences and building on them (Asos, 2023a).

Another part of their strategy is publishing pictures of models in different sizes with the same clothing, to showcase how the items look on different body types. This method is facilitated through augmented reality, enabling the company to publish a variety of photos within a feasible way to assist the consumer in the buying process (Santamaria, 2018).

Additionally, their approach is reflected in their “Style Guides” through the implementation of the “Insider Influencers” program, which entails collaborative partnerships with influencers, where each is distinguished by their unique aesthetic. They curate content through Asos-branded social media accounts which are also showcased on the website to feature individualized product recommendations for every type of person. This offers the customer a unique experience as the styles stem from real people and not directly from the brand.

Their holistic approach is reflected in their portfolio as they offer garments in the categories of petite, tall, curve, plus size, and maternity clothing. Moreover, the models featured in their webshop as well as in their advertising cover different ethnicities, body types, hair styles, and imperfections to foster a more realistic picture (Asos, 2023b).

2.4. Consumer Behaviour in the Fashion Industry

As societal values and expectations experience dynamic shifts, consumers respond to these changes in nuanced ways. Cultural norms, reflecting broader societal attitudes, shape consumer preferences and expectations. Consequently, understanding the specific elements that characterize consumer behavior within this context becomes imperative. The specific aspects to describe consumer behaviour in the fashion industry in the context of body positivity will be described in the following paragraphs.

2.4.1. Consumer Behaviour Trends

Visibility, technology, and media domination allow consumers to express their opinions and beliefs, not only privately but in a publicly visible sphere. This is reflected in various initiatives such as #metoo and eventually, this change in mindset and how it is communicated publicly can have an impact on their purchase decisions.

Brands face this kind of transformed consumer behaviour as not only the selection of products or prices is relevant, but what a brand stands for and how it acts. Accenture’s global survey

shows that more than 60% of customers expect companies to express their position on important matters and be transparent. Especially important is the alignment of own values with the customers' values, transparency, and authenticity, which allow meaningful relationships (Accenture, 2018).

Hence, consumers' shopping choices are becoming more influenced by social values. Traditional advertising accounts for lesser importance and the standing of companies is crucial for decision-making. Especially the aftermath of the pandemic led people to redefine their values and priorities (Carstea, 2022). This indicates a trust-based revolution, and expectations are created that influence businesses to play their part in solving big challenges including promoting inclusivity and diversity (Greene et al., 2022).

2.4.2. Decision-making in the Fashion Industry

Decision-making describes the way how products are evaluated and eventually chosen. The variety of processes happening internally and externally have a large range differing from the product and the person making the decision (Solomon, 2018). Upon widespread opinion, clothing can be considered as high involvement products with an extensive decision-making process, as symbolic meaning, image reinforcement, or psychological satisfaction play an essential role (Solomon, 1986).

The Social Comparison Theory holds particular importance in the realm of consumer behavior, especially within the context of body positivity. Consumers often engage in social comparisons regarding body image, appearance, and beauty standards and understanding this underlying cognitive process is vital for marketers and businesses as it provides insights into the factors influencing consumer decisions and preferences.

The theory was developed by Leon Festinger in 1954 and elaborates on the own evaluation via comparison with others. According to the author people have an internalized motivation to reach an accurate self-evaluation by comparing themselves to other members of society. One of the major components is the importance of similarity, which suggests that people are more likely to evaluate themselves with others who are similar (Yu et al., 2011). These comparisons have the potential to result in impaired self-esteem when measured against higher or unrealistic standards (Lennon et al., 1999).

Based on the previously described theory and viewed from a marketing perspective, the following can be stipulated. As customers are aware of their own self-concept, they use the

brand image to transfer it and use it as an evaluation criterion (Oh and Fiorito, 2002). Thus, the decision-making process is highly influenced by how much the brand's values align with the consumers' values (Voorn et al., 2021).

Additionally, the course of decision-making is highly influenced by brand perception, which can be described as the customer's mental image or feeling of what a brand stands for (Dunn, 2004). Consumers base their purchase intention on the perceived value that they attribute to the brand (Sadeghi et al., 2011). According to Aaker and Keller (1999), a positive brand image enhances consumer loyalty and trust and consequently affects decision-making. Regarding DIA positive reactions are mostly achieved by brands with a strong position of promoting social change, contrary to those that have controversy and discrimination in their history (Wilkie et al., 2023).

Also, the aspect of consumer-perceived ethicality can be seen as an important factor of consumer evaluation in terms of brands that engage in body positive practices. It involves the subjective evaluation by consumers of the ethical or moral attributes associated with a product, brand, or company. It aims to explain the consumer perspective of corporate ethics by conceptualizing potential determinants of CPE regarding a company or brand. This is achieved by examining consumers' ethical perceptions of businesses and their behaviour (Brunk, 2019).

CPE is a noteworthy determinant within consumer behaviour, as it can influence purchasing decisions. Positive associations can lead to favourable behaviours such as a positive product evaluation, making a purchase, or recommending a product to others. Ethics are becoming increasingly important in the socially conscious economy as consumers prefer products or brands that resonate with their values (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

2.4.3. Influencing Factors Shaping Consumer Behaviour

The primary goal of advertising is to capture consumer's attention and elicit positive attitudes that will achieve product preference and increase purchase intentions (García-Madariaga et al., 2020). Different beliefs of consumers strongly influence their reaction and perception of advertising as well as scepticism towards the authenticity of brand messages and intentions (Fransen et al., 2015). The effectiveness and resonance of advertising campaigns that include diversity and inclusivity are influenced by the following factors based on the research of Wilkie et al. (2023).

Consumer sentiment can be considered as one important factor that affects the evaluation of advertising. This describes the extent to which consumers support and perceive diversity and inclusion topics are appropriate for advertising. People who assess representation as appropriate react more positively and vice versa (Pomering & Johnson, 2009). According to social identity theory the individual's perception of fairness, regardless of whether the brand's communication aligns with the own social group, influences the assessment of diversity and inclusive advertising (DIA) as appropriate and favourable (Wilkie et al., 2023).

Another important influence factor is belief congruence established by Sirgy et al. (1997). Here the alignment between the own beliefs and those portrayed by the advertising plays a significant role (McDonald, Laverie & Manis, 2021). This can be explained based on the social identity theory as well, as it attributes these differences to the extent to which an individual derives belonging and validation from advertisements. Those who identify the representation of their beliefs as appropriate will respond positively, while those who perceive it as inappropriate will react negatively (Oakenfull, McCarthy & Greenlee, 2008)

Additional factors that contribute to understanding consumer behaviour in this context are individual factors. They entail the notion that people might seek to publicly signal support for diversity and inclusion to improve their social status by aligning with the values and beliefs of their respective groups. Therefore, a positive reaction to Diversity and Inclusion Advertising (DIA) can be explained by the person's inclination to conform to the norms and principles upheld by the group (Wilkie et al., 2023).

Execution factors rely on how connectedness influences a person's reaction to DIA. It can be described as the extent to which an individual sees their identity, experiences accurately mirrored in the advertising (Liljedal, Berg & Dahlen, 2020). In the context of DIA, a stronger sense of connectedness might elicit favourable responses to advertisements and vice versa (Wilkie et al., 2023).

Additionally, brand factors can be identified, which can be summarized as the perception of the authenticity of the brand and motives, the brands' altruism directed to stakeholders, and the brand engagement, which is based on interactive customer experiences (Wilkie et al., 2023).

3. Conceptual Framework

The preceding research concerning purpose-driven branding, inclusive marketing, and brands as well as consumer behaviour serves as the foundation for the empirical research and determines the relationships and variables to be tested.

Based on the analysis of existing theories and literature the association between the variables lies in a causal relationship (Eifler & Leitgöb, 2019). To address the research questions with statistical methods the dependent and independent variables need to be specified. In this context, the independent variable relates to the type of branding (body positive vs. stereotypical), while the dependent variables are comprised of consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour.

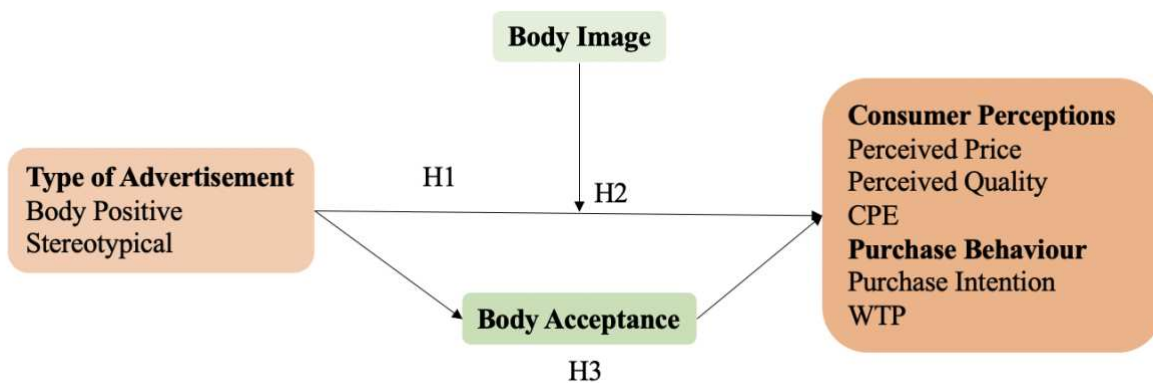


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

Consumers are increasingly influenced by social values and the standing of companies plays a pivotal role in the decision-making process (Carstea, 2022), which indicates the relevance for body positive advertising in consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the perceptions in a consumer's mind can be rooted in different areas such as situational attributes, benefit attributes, or quality attributes. Consequently, these aspects can act as triggers for the purchase decision (Romanuik & Sharp, 2002). This thesis assumes that inclusivity and body positivity serve as part of these triggers.

Research shows that the self-concept strongly impacts consumer behaviour. Theories suggest that self-image and product image must be comparable to influence purchase motivation positively. Purchases are facilitated through the consumers' perception of purchasing a positively valued product to uphold a positive self-image (Sirgy, 1982; Ross, 1971). This

supports the assumption that an advertisement that offers a realistic visualisation by being body positive leads to consistency, and thus decision-making in favour of the brand. Given these preliminary findings, the following is hypothesised:

H1: The type of advertisement that is body positive is more effective than stereotypical advertisement when promoting fashion products since there will be: **(a)** a more positive brand perception, **(b)** higher perceived quality, **(c)** higher perceived price, **(d)** higher CPE, **(e)** increased purchase intention, and **(f)** higher WTP.

As body image is highly impacted by what is portrayed in media, the effects consequently influence consumer behaviour (Yu et al., 2011). This allows the supposition that body positive media concepts positively impact body image and this research tests whether it has a moderating role in the relationship between the type of advertisement and consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour.

H2: The type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) will be moderated by body image so that: the lower the level of body image, the higher the impact of body positive (vs. stereotypical) advertisement on **(a)** brand perception, **(b)** perceived quality, **(c)** perceived price, **(d)** CPE, **(e)** purchase intention, and **(f)** WTP.

Research shows that high levels of body appreciation can lead to less reactivity to negative media images (Andrew et al., 2016). Being less negatively impacted by appearance standards, the decision-making is facilitated and can work in favour of the advertising brand. This suggests the underlying notion that body appreciation will indirectly affect the impact of the type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) on brand perceptions and purchase behaviour. Therefore, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Body appreciation will mediate the relationship between type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) and perceptions (brand perception, perceived quality, perceived price, CPE) and purchase behaviour (purchase intention, WTP) toward the brand.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Method

The state of knowledge in the respective research area determines the appropriate research method. This research subject already has a certain level of knowledge, and the focus lies on establishing data to define causal relationships among the variables (Riesenhuber, 2009).

The context of this research asks to identify the effect of a factor on a response; hence the experimental design is chosen. A notable distinction from alternative methodologies is the researcher's active intervention in the ongoing research scenario by choosing the levels of one or more inputs and observing the outcome (Berger et al., 2018).

For the design of the experiment, it is important to develop arrangements that allow for control of the factors. To achieve this, the author decided to use the parallel group model. In this approach the experimental group is exposed to the experimental effect, in this case, the advertisement that is "Body Positive". In contrast, the other group, the parallel group, or the control group, receives no manipulation by the factor (Eifler & Leitgöb, 2019).

The data collection is facilitated through an online survey on Qualtrics, as the primary objective is to collect opinions, attitudes, knowledge, thoughts, or feelings. In this case, a standardized questionnaire is used (Hug & Poscheschnik, 2015).

4.2. Sampling

The sampling process includes the selection of a suitable sampling technique. For this research, the group of non-probability sampling was chosen, more precisely convenience sampling (Taherdoost, 2016).

Convenience sampling describes the method of the data collection process by using respondents who are "convenient to the researcher" and readily or easily available. Its distinction lies in the fact, that there is no pattern in acquiring participants. Undertaking the method of convenience sampling includes asking friends, relatives, or other people convenient to reach (Galloway, 2005). This method has clear advantages in its inexpensiveness and easiness (Ackoff, 1953).

The prospective generation of consumers is potentially comprised of young and well-educated individuals, who can influence future consumption guided by social values. Inclusive consumers typically are younger and more diverse but hold the power to influence all

demographic groups (McKinsey, 2022). Hence, it can be explained why it is suitable to have a sample that includes a large proportion of university students as their opinions are crucial to understanding current and future behavioural patterns.

4.3. Research Instruments

For this research, two instruments were used to facilitate the empirical data collection, namely the pre-study and the main study. Both studies were conducted with the web-based software Qualtrics, where participants received an anonymous link to access the questionnaire. Anonymity was chosen to eliminate the social desirability bias, so respondents are not inclined to report more desirable attributes (Paulhus, 1984).

Pre-Study

The pre-study was designed to pre-emptively assess the efficacy of the questions and manipulations of the main study. A total of 22 participants completed the survey.

The participants were presented with two experimental conditions that showed either an advertisement featured as body positive or a stereotypical one. After seeing the advertisement, the respondents were introduced to two manipulation check items, where they were asked to state their perception of the advertising concerning body positivity and inclusivity.

Bivariate correlation analysis is performed for two-item scales to analyse the correlation of the two manipulation items (see Table 1). The Person correlation value r indicates the strength of the relationship between the two tested variables. A correlation of (-)1 indicates perfect correlation either positive or negative and a correlation of 0 implies no relationship (Ahlgren et al., 2003).

Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig (2-tailed)
Manipulation Check	.89	< .001

Table 1 – Pearson Correlation

According to Cohen (1988) the Person correlation is significant with $p < .001$ and the r above 0.5 indicates a strong positive correlation (see Table 1).

	Type of Advertisement				
	Stereotypical		Body Positive		t-Test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Manipulation Check	1.85	.47	5.8	1.2	3.44***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ⁺ $p \leq .1$
 Note: equal variances assumed

Table 2 - Pre-Study Manipulation Check

The analysis of this study showed that the experimental appeals evaluation means significantly differ depending on the type of advertisement ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 5.8$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 1.85$; $t(18) = 3.44$, $p < .001$) and thus are used in the main study (see Table 2).

Main Study

The central instrument used for this master thesis is the main study, which represents the foundation for the collection, quantification, and analysis of the data. A total of 131 respondents completed the survey out of 166 initial participants, which is above average for general response rates of online surveys (Wu, 2022). The web-based questionnaire was available for completion from the 21st of November until the 26th of November 2023.

Respondents were allocated randomly to either of the two experimental conditions. The body positive condition received a total of 66 participants, while the stereotypical condition included 65 participants. The group size is presumed to be large enough to align with the required number of observations for a randomized experimental study (Maxwell et al., 2017).

4.4. Design and Procedure

Initially, the participant was exposed to a short introductory text outlining the survey's scope without declaring its specific purpose. The study relied on a 2 (Type of Advertisement: body positive, stereotypical) between-within subjects design, with body image as a measured (continuous) variable, where one participant is either part of the treatment condition or control condition, with random allocation.

The type of advertisement was previously manipulated and included in the experimental group an advertisement stimulus that represents body positivity by showing various body types, ethnicities, styles, and bodily conditions as well as an advertisement text that focuses on the importance of embracing one's uniqueness. Whereas the other group received a very similar

manipulation but displayed only stereotypical models and was presented with a short text that solely focused on the offered fashion items.

Following the exposure of the stimuli the participants were asked to respond to the first two questions, which were intended to identify whether the previously shown stimuli evoke a sense of body positivity and, or inclusivity.

Subsequently, the study included a set of questions aimed at assessing the dependent variables, namely the participants' perception of the brand and the potential purchase behaviour. Furthermore, the variables for moderation and mediation were measured, specifically body image and body appreciation as well as belief congruence with the shown advertisement.

Finally, the participants were asked to answer demographic questions and the questionnaire was concluded with a statement acknowledging the participants' valuable contribution and time.

4.5. Stimuli Development

The author used a fictional brand named “aura” and a corresponding advertising example to ensure separation from existing brand preferences.

The stimuli used in this study were developed by digital manipulation and intended to showcase a simple branding element of a fictional fashion brand. Both advertisements were strategically placed on a neutral background and shared a common structural framework. They feature a group of models standing or sitting next to each other wearing clothes from the fashion brand. In both advertisements, the brand's logo is shown in the centre of the advertisement.

In the body positivity advertisement, a deliberate selection of the models comprised four female models and two male models. This choice aimed to reflect the diverse facets of body positivity. Hence it includes among the female models a plus-size model, two models with ethnical backgrounds, one model that does not have long hair, and a model with a skin condition. The two male models were similarly chosen and are comprised of two plus-size models, where one of them represents an ethnical background.

The stereotypical ad is designed to reflect the body positive advertisement in most aspects. The notable exception lies in portraying mainstream body types and appearances. This advertisement also comprised four female and two male models, all of whom are of Caucasian

ethnicity and exhibited slender body types. This approach aimed to create a sharp contrast with the body-positive advertisement by highlighting conventional beauty standards. The stimuli can be found in Appendix 1.

4.6. Variable Description

Manipulation Checks aimed to identify whether the advertisement was perceived as “body positive” and, or “inclusive,” on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

After the stimuli were presented, the dependent variables and the moderator and mediator were assessed.

Dependent Variables

Consumer Perceptions

Brand Perception was measured with two items. The first item assessed the participants' overall perception of the brand by asking them to evaluate their overall opinion of the brand's advertisement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – extremely negative, 7 – extremely positive). For the second item, the participants were presented with five attributes: authenticity, encouragement, realism, positive image, and trustworthiness, and had to rate their perception of the brand on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

Perceived Price was assessed by asking the participant to state the perceived price of the brand's products on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

Perceived Quality was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree) where the participant had to rate the perception of the brand's quality.

Consumer perceived ethicality was assessed by asking the participants about their level of agreement concerning the ethicality of the brand using two items “The products from "aura" are socially acceptable” and “The products from "aura" are good”, adapted from Brunk (2019), on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

Purchase Behaviour

Purchase Intention was evaluated by asking the participant about the likelihood of purchase on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – extremely unlikely, 7 – extremely likely).

Willingness to pay (WTP) was assessed with the slider function ranging from a price of 0€ to 100€ for a t-shirt from the brand.

Moderator & Mediator

Body Image as moderator was assessed by using the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) adapted from Cash (1990). This 69-item self-report is further categorized into subscales evaluating different aspects of the concept of body image such as appearance, fitness, health, and illness (Cash, 2000). The relevant subscale for this research is the Appearance Evaluation subscale (MBSRQ-AE), which contains 7 items to assess satisfaction with physical appearance such as: “I like my looks just the way they are” and “Most people would consider me good-looking“ (further items to be found in Appendix 1). The subscale is measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1 – definitely disagree, 5 – definitely agree) (Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990).

Body Appreciation was tested as a mediator using the Body Appreciation Scale-2 , adapted from Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015b) and consisted of 8 items assessing how respondents scored on internal characteristics related to acceptance, love, and respect for the body, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – never, 5 – always) such as “I respect my body” and “I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body” (further items to be found in Appendix 1).

Additional Variables

Belief Congruence was assessed by using a 2-item measure to evaluate self-congruence on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – extremely unlikely, 7 – extremely likely) of the statements “This brand is consistent with how I see myself” and “This brand reflects who I am“ adapted from the scale developed by Sirgy et al. (1997) (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

5. Analysis and Results

5.1. Sample Characterization

To perform the ongoing analysis, the sample is initially characterized by the help of descriptive statistics. To do so the demographical questions were assessed to identify homogeneity across the conditions. The sample is comprised of 67.9% women, 31.3% of men, and 0.8% who did not want to disclose their gender. The participants came from 16 different countries; however,

most participants stated their country of origin to be Austria with 50.4% and second most of the respondents came from Germany with 31.3%.

The respondents were mainly in the age groups of 26-30 (40.5%), followed by 18-25 (29.0%) and 31-35 (9.9%). The ages of the total sample ranged from below 18 to above 61 years. Regarding the education level, the sample represents a highly educated cohort, with 38.9% stating to have a bachelor's degree and 35.9% with a master's degree, and 20.6% with the highest level of education in high school. In terms of annual income, the respondents are represented in each category, with the majority belonging to the group below 10,000€ (17.6%), followed by 50,000 – 74,000€ and 20,000 – 29,999€ (13.7%) (see Appendix 2).

5.2. Scale Reliability

Scale reliability is tested to ensure the most accurate results although most of the scales are based on and adapted from reliable literature resources. The bivariate correlation analysis is performed for two-item scales to analyse their correlation. The scales in question are the manipulation check, consumer perceived ethicality, and belief congruence (see Table 3).

Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig (2-tailed)
Manipulation Check	.642	< .001
CPE	.578	< .001
Belief Congruence	.796	< .001

Table 3 – Pearson Correlation

All three Person correlations are significant with $p < .001$ and the r above 0.5 indicates a strong positive correlation according to Cohen (1988). Hereby it can be concluded that the scales used in the questionnaire have high levels of reliability and the items were re-coded in new variables.

To assess the reliability of multi-item scales a factor analysis with a principal component analysis and varimax rotation was conducted. This analysis was completed for the three variables: brand perception, body image, and body acceptance. For all three variables, only one component was extracted. Furthermore, the statistical test of Cronbach's alpha is used to assess the reliability of the Likert-type questions of the variables in question (see Table 4). Cronbach's alpha ranges on a scale from 0.1 to 1, where higher values indicate high degrees of internal consistency and reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011)

Variable	Initial number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha if items deleted	Items deleted	Final number of items
Brand Perception	6	.939	-	-	6
Body Image	4	.831	-	-	4
Body Acceptance	5	.902	-	-	5

Table 4 – Cronbach's alpha

Table 4 shows the results of the reliability analysis, and it can be concluded that for all variables Cronbach's alpha is sufficiently large with values ranging between 0.8 and above 0.9. This evaluation allows the assumption of high levels of internal consistency for all variables (DeVellis, 1991). Every variable was consequently transformed into new variables including all initial items.

5.3. Manipulation Check

An independent sample t-test for equality of means with a 95% confidence interval was performed to identify whether the manipulations were perceived in the intended way.

	Type of Advertisement				t-Test
	Stereotypical		Body Positive		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Manipulation Check	2.85	1.31	5.64	1.1	3.54***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $^+ p \leq .1$

Note: equal variances assumed

Table 5 - Manipulation Check

The results indicate significant differences in the effects of the type of advertisement stimuli on the manipulation check item. Participants who were shown the body positive advertisement rated it significantly higher in terms of inclusivity and body positivity than the stereotypical advertisement ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 5.64$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 2.85$; $t(129) = 3.54$, $p < .001$) (see Table 5).

5.4. Main Results

Hypothesis 1 – The Effect of Body Positive Advertisement

***H1:** The type of advertisement that is body positive is more effective than stereotypical advertisement when promoting fashion products since there will be: (a) a more positive brand perception, (b) higher perceived quality, (c) higher perceived price, (d) higher CPE, (e) increased purchase intention, and (f) higher WTP.*

To test hypothesis 1, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to identify the main effect of body positive advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) on the independent variables (see Table 6). This statistical test is typically used to assess the effect of one or more independent categorical variables on one or more continuous dependent variables (Fitzmaurice & Molenberghs, 2009).

MANOVA results show a statistically significant main effect of type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) on all the dependent variables, namely on: brand perception ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 5.25$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 3.04$, $F(1,130) = 157.371$, $p < .001$), perceived price ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 3.73$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 3.06$, $F(1, 130) = 6.62$, $p < .001$), perceived quality ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 4.35$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 2.83$, $F(1, 130) = 39.537$, $p < .01$), CPE ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 4.97$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 3.82$, $F(1,130) = 37.595$, $p < .001$), purchase intention ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 4.38$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 2.46$, $F(1,130) = 51.134$, $p < .001$), and WTP ($M_{\text{bodypositive}} = 26.94$ vs. $M_{\text{stereotypical}} = 18.54$, $F(1,130) = 22.327$, $p < .001$).

Findings show that the type of advertisement that is body positive is more favourably evaluated than stereotypical fashion advertising as seen in (a) a more positive brand perception, (b) an increased price perception, (c) an increased quality perception, (d) a higher CPE, (f) higher purchase intentions and (f) higher willingness to pay, fully supporting hypothesis 1.

Dependent Variables	Type of Advertisement				F-Test
	Stereotypical		Body Positive		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Brand Perception	3.04	1.04	5.25	.98	157.37***
Perceived Price	3.06	1.51	3.73	1.45	6.62***
Perceived Quality	2.83	1.32	4.35	1.44	39.54**
CPE	3.82	1.26	4.97	0.85	37.6***
Purchase Intention	2.46	1.35	4.38	1.7	51.13***
WTP	18.54	10.79	26.94	9.53	22.33***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $^+p \leq .1$

Note: equal variances assumed

Table 6 – MANOVA

Hypothesis 2 – Moderation of Body Image

H2: *The type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) will be moderated by body image so that: the lower the level of body image, the higher the impact of body positive (vs. stereotypical) advertisement on (a) brand perception, (b) perceived quality, (c) perceived price, (d) CPE, (e) purchase intention, and (f) WTP.*

The second hypothesis tests for the moderating effect of body image on the relationship between the type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) and consumers' perceptions (brand perception, perceived price, perceived quality, CPE) and purchase behaviour of brands (purchase intention and willingness to pay). To verify the second hypothesis a regression analysis was performed to test for a possible moderation effect with the help of the Process macro from Hayes (2012) using model 1 for moderation analysis.

According to this regression model, if the confidence interval includes zero, there is no significant moderating effect (Hayes, 2015). The body image variable was used as a continuous (mean-centered) variable, whereas the type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) was dummy-coded.

The analysis showed a significant type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) main effect on all dependent variables: brand perception ($R^2 = .55$, $F(3, 127) = 52.54$, $p < .001$), perceived price ($R^2 = .06$, $F(3, 127) = 2.72$, $p < .05$), perceived quality ($R^2 = .24$, $F(3, 127) = 13.33$, $p < .001$), CPE ($R^2 = .29$, $F(3, 127) = 17.15$, $p < .001$), purchase intention ($R^2 = .32$, $F(3, 127) = 20.04$, $p < .001$) and WTP ($R^2 = .21$, $F(3, 127) = 11.07$, $p < .001$).

In terms of moderation effects, the results show a significant yet negative body image x type of advertisement interaction effect on perceived consumer ethicality ($b = .52$, $SE = .22$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [-.96, -.08]), on purchase intention ($b = .75$, $SE = .32$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [-1.38, -.11]), and on WTP ($b = -6.5$, $SE = 2.11$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [-10.67, -2.33]). However, there is no significant interaction effect for brand perception ($p = .3$, NS), perceived price ($p = .39$, NS), and perceived quality ($p = .36$, NS) (see Table 7).

Dependent Variables	Overall Model		Estimate (b)	SE	Moderation		
	F-test	p-value			t-Test	LLCI	ULCI
Brand Perception	52.54***	< .001	.22	.22	1.4	-.65	.20
Perceived Price	2.72*	0.047	.29	.32	-.91	-.91	.34
Perceived Quality	13.33***	< .001	.25	.29	-.85	-.84	.33
CPE	17.15***	< .001	.52	.22	-2.32*	-.96	-.08
Purchase Intention	20.04***	< .001	.75	.32	-2.32*	-1.38	-.11
WTP	11.07***	< .001	-6.5	2.11	-3.09**	-10.67	-2.33

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; + $p \leq .1$

Table 7 – Moderation

To delve deeper into the identified moderation effects, the conditional effects of the type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) at $\pm 1SD$ values of the body image moderator for each independent variable were tested (see Table 8). In particular, a slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991; Fitzsimons, 2008) was executed, depicting the distinctions occurring at one standard deviation below and above the mean. However, it is noteworthy that for WTP, variations were identified solely at one standard deviation below the mean.

	Conditional Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCP
CPE				
Low Body Image (-1 SD)	1.59***	.26	1.08	2.1
High Body Image (+1 SD)	.74**	.26	.23	1.25
Purchase Intention				
Low Body Image (-1 SD)	2.53***	.37	1.79	3.27
High Body Image (+1 SD)	1.29***	.37	.56	2.04
WTP				
Low Body Image (-1 SD)	13.76***	2.45	8.92	18.63
High Body Image (+1 SD)	3.05	2.45	-1.79	7.90

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; + $p \leq .1$

Table 8 - Conditional Effects

The slope analysis ± 1 SD showed that on the centred body image variable, the relationship between the type of advertisement and CPE is positive, both at -1SD ($b = 1.59$, $SE = .26$, 95% CI = [1.08, 2.1]) and at + 1SD ($b = .74$, $SE = .26$, 95% CI = [.23, 1.25]). For purchase intention a comparable situation can be observed with a positive and significant type of advertisement x body image interaction at -1 SD ($b = 2.53$, $SE = .37$, 95% CI = [1.79, 3.26]) and + 1SD ($b = 1.29$, $SE = .37$, 95% CI = [.56, 2.04]). For the WTP dependent variable, the relationship between the type of advertisement and WTP is significant at - 1 SD ($b = 13.76$, $SE = 2.45$, 95% CI = [8.92, 18.63]).

The results show that overall, the evaluation of CPE, purchase intention, and WTP decreases when participants are exposed to stereotypical advertising and exhibit decreasing levels of body image (see Figure 2, 3 and 4).

This effect may be explained by the fact that, when individuals perceive their own body image more negatively and encounter stereotypical advertisements, their CPE, purchase intention and WTP for a brand is lower, due to the comparison with an unattainable standard (Lennon et al., 1999, Halliwall, 2013).

As the level of body image decreases, CPE evaluation also slightly decreases when participants are exposed to the body positive condition, while for the purchase intention and WTP dependent variables ratings increase (see Figure 2, 3 and 4). This effect shows that body image is indeed a relevant moderating factor that influences the strength of the relationship between the type of advertisement and consumers' perceived ethicality of brands, purchase intentions and WTP. For CPE the effect proves to be less strong however, the effect for purchase intention and WTP

can be explained by considering that the participants' lower body image leads to a greater desire for visualization of reality, which is fulfilled and consequently results in elevated purchase intentions and WTP (Yu et al., 2011).

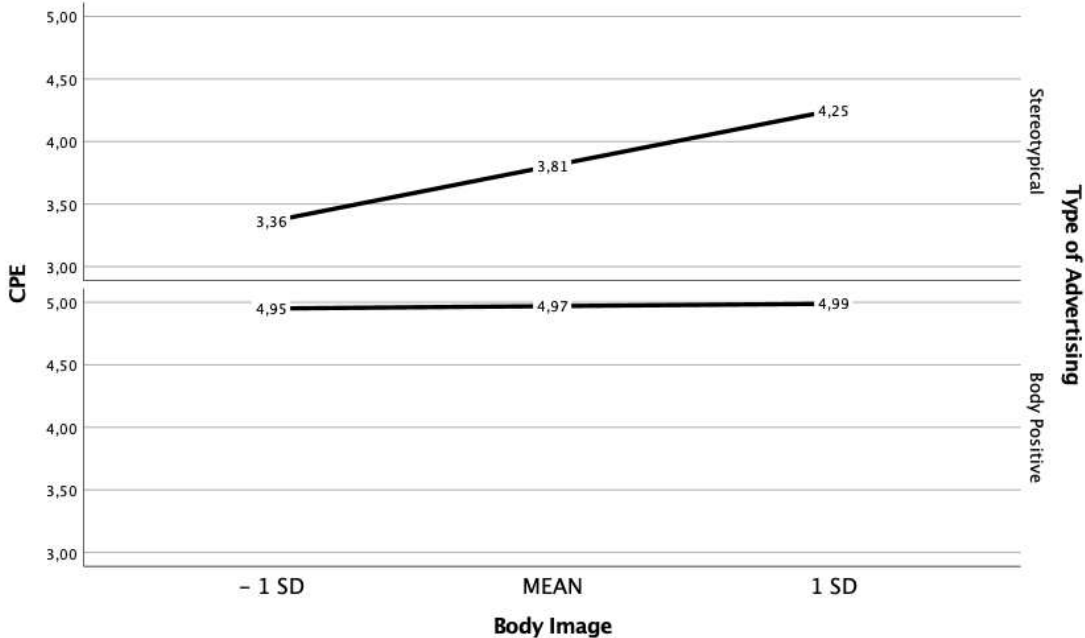


Figure 2 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE

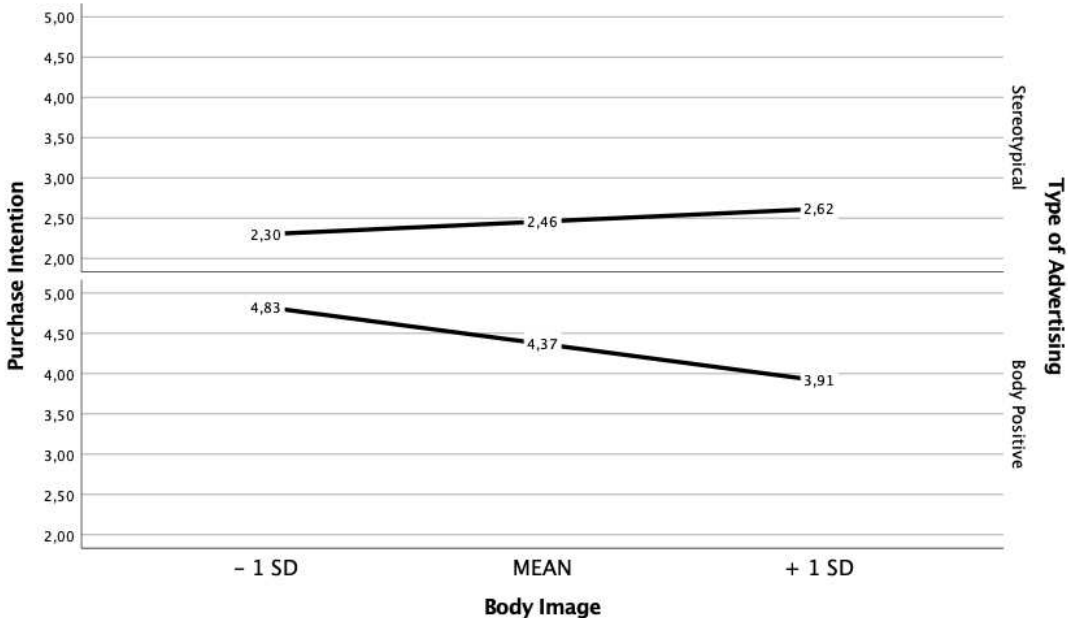


Figure 3 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention

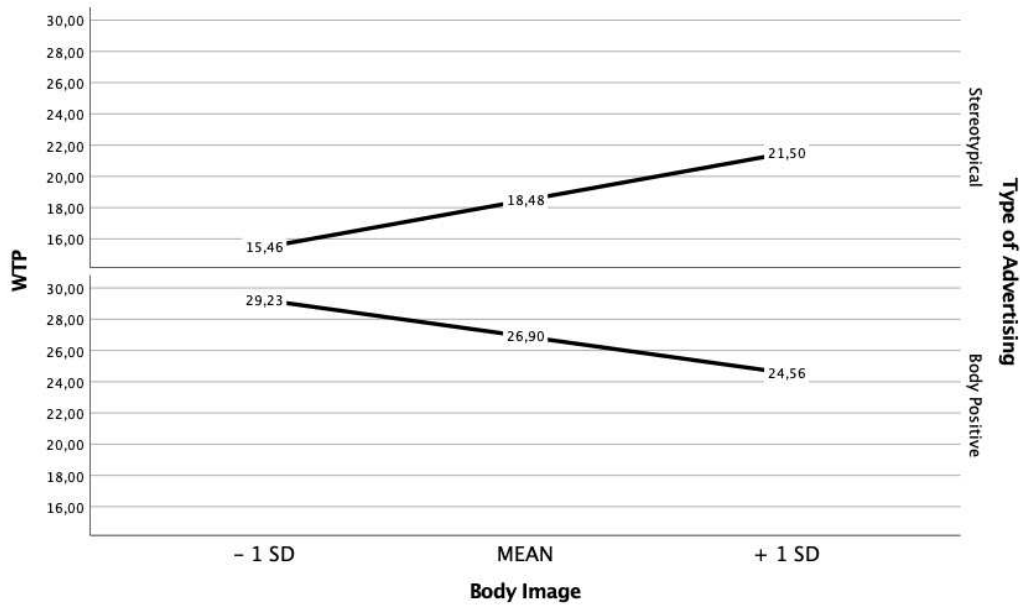


Figure 4 - Body Image as Moderator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP

Results fully validate H2 e f, partially accept H2 d despite rejecting H2 a b and c. Overall, hypothesis 2 is partially validated.

Hypothesis 3 – Mediating Role of Body Acceptance

H3: Body appreciation will mediate the relationship between type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) and perceptions (brand perception, perceived quality, perceived price, consumer perceived ethicality – CPE) and purchase behaviour (purchase intention, WTP) toward a brand.

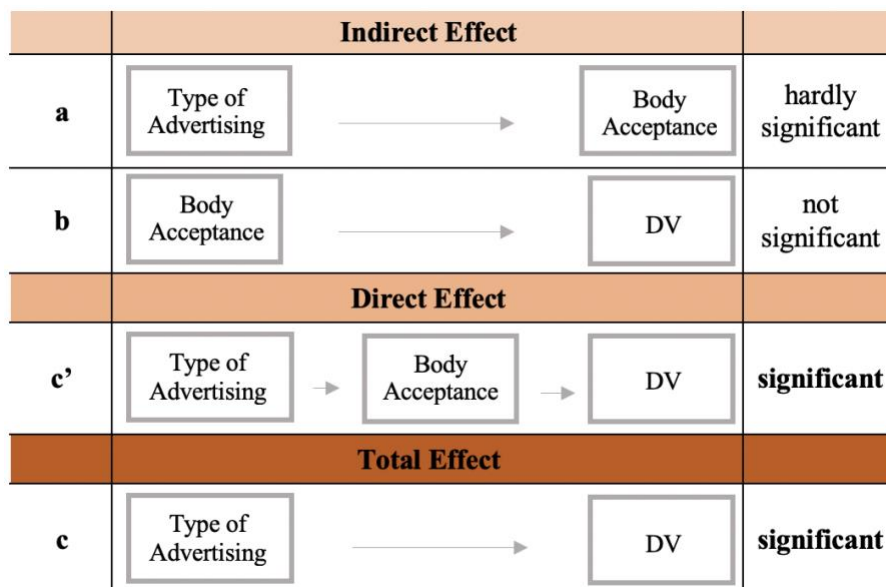


Figure 5 – Overview Mediation Body Acceptance

To test the third hypothesis a regression analysis was conducted using model 4 of Hayes' (2012) Process macro to analyse the potential mediation effect. The requirements for mediation are fulfilled under the condition that the c path is significant, the a path is statistically significant as well as significance for the b path, resulting in a significant indirect effect. Full mediation can be observed when the c' path is no longer significant, otherwise, partial mediation exists (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The results show that the body appearance does not mediate the effect of the type of advertisement on brand perception (*indirect effect* = .04, SE = .04, 95% CI = [-.01, .15]). The impact of type of advertisement on body acceptance (a) is not significant ($b = .25$, SE = .14, $p < .1$, 95% CI = [-.03, .53]) likewise is the impact of body acceptance on brand perception (b) not significant ($b = .17$, SE = .11, $p = .11$, 95% CI = [-.04, .37]). The direct effect of type of advertisement on brand perception in the presence of body acceptance proves to be statistically significant ($b = 2.17$, SE = .18, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.82, 2.52]) (see Table 9).

The indirect effect extends over 0, however most of the range for the indirect effect is above zero. Hence, it can be assumed that there might be an effect that could not be statistically proven due to the small sample size (Hackshaw, 2008), which also holds true for perceived price, perceived quality and CPE. The observed outcomes for the remaining dependent variables exhibit similar patterns with no prove for mediation (see Table 10 – 14).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → Brand Perception	.17	-.04	.37
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	.46	-.01	.15
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → Brand Perception	2.17***	1.82	2.52

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ⁺ $p \leq .1$

Table 9 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Brand Perception

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → Perceived Price	.08	-.24	.40
	Indirect Effect			
	a * b	.02	-.06	.14
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → Perceived Price	.65*	0.13	1.17

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; ⁺p ≤ .1

Table 10 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Price

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → Perceived Quality	.25 ⁺	-.05	.54
	Indirect Effect			
	a * b	.06	-.02	.19
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → Perceived Quality	1.46***	0.98	1.94

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001; ⁺p ≤ .1

Table 11 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Quality

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → CPE	.40***	.18	.62
	Indirect Effect			
	a * b	0.1	-.01	.28
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → CPE	1.06***	0.69	1.42

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; ⁺p ≤ .1

Table 12 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → Purchase Intention	-0.01	-.34	.32
	Indirect Effect			
	a * b	-.0	-.11	.11
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → Purchase Intention	1.92***	1.38	2.46

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; ⁺p ≤ .1

Table 13 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BA	.25 ⁺	-.03	.53
b	BA → WTP	.10	-2.08	2.29
	Indirect Effect			
	a * b	.03	-.54	.91
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BA → WTP	8.38***	4.80	11.95

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; ⁺p ≤ .1

Table 14 - Body Acceptance as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP

The analysis shows that the mediation is not significant for any of the dependent variables because the associated 95% confidence interval spans zero in the indirect effect analysis (a * b) (see Table 9 to 13), resulting in the rejection of Hypothesis 3.

5.5. Further Analysis

To analyse the relationship between the type of advertisement and the dependent variables another potentially noteworthy factor was tested. The participants' belief congruence was evaluated to examine whether their own beliefs were reflected in the advertisement.

According to Fishbein's attitude theory, beliefs can be viewed as mediators of attitude formation. The validity of this assumption was previously tested in terms of advertisement effects studies and showed mediation for consumer's beliefs on attitude formation and purchase behaviour (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Consequently, belief congruence was tested as an additional mediator.

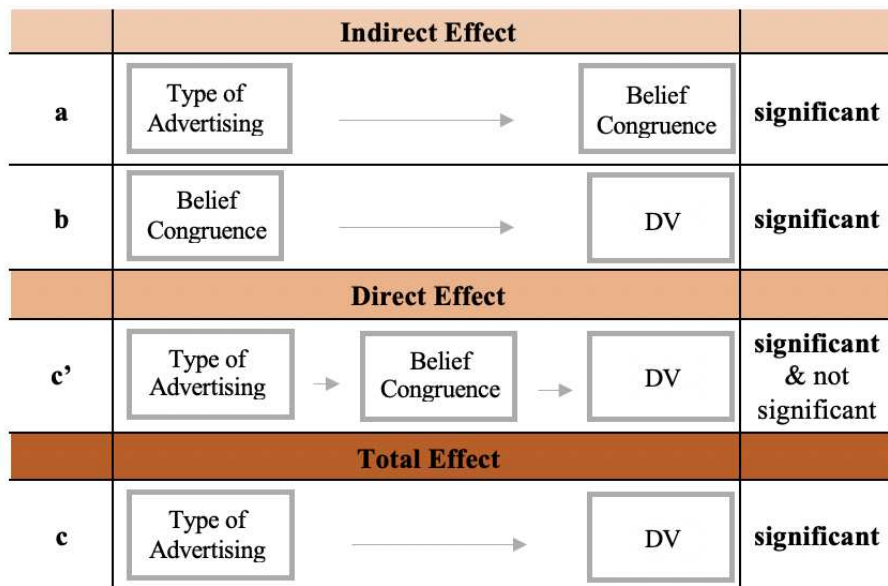


Figure 6 - Overview Mediation Belief Congruence

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → Brand Perception	.47***	.36	.58
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	.69	.45	.96
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → Brand Perception	1.52***	1.20	1.85

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 15 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Brand Perception

The results of this analysis show that belief congruence mediates the relationship of type of advertisement on brand perception (*indirect effect* = .69, SE = .13, 95% CI = [.45, .96]). Both the impact of type of advertisement on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) as well as the effect of belief congruence on brand perception ($b = .47$, SE = .06, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.36, .58]) are significant. It can be concluded that there is a partial mediation as the c' path is still significant ($b = 1.52$, SE = .17, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.87, 2.56]) (see Table 15).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → Perceived Price	.58***	.41	.76
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	.86	.52	1.24
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → Perceived Price	-.20	-.71	.32

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 16 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Price

The outcomes of this assessment indicate a mediated relationship (*indirect effect* = .86, SE = .18, 95% CI = [.52, 1.24]), as the type of advertisement has a significant impact on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) and belief congruence has a significant effect on perceived price ($b = .58$, SE = .09, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.41, .76]).

As the c' path is not significant ($b = .67$, SE = .26, $p = .45$, 95% CI = [.15, 1.18]), a full mediation of belief congruence on the effect of type of advertisement on perceived price can be derived. As the product of $a * b * c'$ is negative, there is inconsistent mediation or competitive mediation, which describes the mediation as a suppressor effect that decreases the impact of the type of advertisement on perceived price (Hair et al., 2021b) (see Table 16).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → Perceived Quality	.78***	.65	.91
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	1.15	.77	1.55
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → Perceived Quality	.37	-.02	.76

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 17 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Perceived Quality

Results obtained from the analysis of perceived quality present a significant mediation (*indirect effect* = 1.15, SE = .2, 95% CI = [.77, 1.55]). Both effect of the type of advertisement on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) and the effect of belief congruence on the dependent variable ($b = .78$, SE = .07, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.65, .91]) are significant. It can be extrapolated that there is full mediation as the c' path is not significant ($b = .37$, SE = .19, $p = .06$, 95% CI = [-.02, .76]). Also, here a competitive mediation can be observed (Hair et al., 2021b) (see Table 17).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → CPE	.38***	.25	.51
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	.56	.35	.80
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → CPE	.59**	.21	.98

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 18 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on CPE

Furthermore, the mediation can be confirmed for belief congruence on the effect of type of advertisement on CPE (*indirect effect* = .56, SE = .12, 95% CI = [.35, .80]). The data proves that the type of advertisement has a significant impact on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) and shows the significance of the effect of belief congruence on CPE ($b = .38$, SE = .07, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [.25, .51]). Moreover, it can be derived that partial mediation exists as the c' path is still significant ($b = .59$, SE = .20, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [-.21, .98]) (see Table 18).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → Purchase Intention	.82***	.66	.97
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	1.21	.8	1.66
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → Purchase Intention	.71**	.26	1.16

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 19 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on Purchase Intention

For the dependent variable purchase intention mediation can be proven (*indirect effect* = 1.21, SE = .21, 95% CI = [.8, 1.66]). The type of advertisement has a significant impact on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) and belief congruence has a significant impact on purchase intention ($b = .82$, SE = .08, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.66, .97]). Additionally, a partial mediation can be identified since the c' path is still significant ($b = .71$, SE = .23, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [.26, .1.16]) (see Table 19).

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
a	Type of Advertisement → BC	1.48***	1.04	1.92
b	BC → WTP	2.61***	1.30	3.93
	Indirect Effect			
	a*b	3.86	1.73	6.1
	Direct Effect Path			
c'	Type of Advertisement → BC → WTP	4.54*	.68	8.41

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; +p ≤ .1

Table 20 - Belief Congruence as Mediator on the Effect of Type of Advertisement on WTP

Lastly, the observations of the analysis on WTP signify the mediation effect (*indirect effect* = 3.86, SE = 1.11, 95% CI = [1.73, 6.1]). The type of advertisement has a significant impact on belief congruence ($b = 1.48$ SE = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.92]) and belief congruence has a significant influence on WTP ($b = 2.61$, SE = .67, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.30, 3.93]). Also, a partial mediation can be deduced as the c' path is still significant ($b = 4.54$, SE = 1.96, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [.68, 8.41]) (see Table 20).

In summary, the mediation analysis shows that the belief congruence mediates the relationship of type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) and the dependent variables. However, for perceived quality and perceived price, a full mediation could be observed and for brand perception, CPE, purchase intention, and WTP a partial mediation could be derived from the data.

6. Discussion

The key findings of the empirical research can be summarized as follows. The type of advertisement (body positive vs. stereotypical) has a significant positive impact on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour. Furthermore, body image moderates the strength of the relationship between the type of advertisement and CPE and purchase behaviours. Given body positive advertisements decreasing levels of body image yield positive effects on the purchase behaviour and negative effects on CPE. However, with stereotypical advertisements decreasing levels of body image lead to a negative impact on CPE and purchase behaviour. For the mediation of body appreciation, no statistical significance could be proven, nevertheless, the author suggests a tendency for a mediating effect for brand perception, perceived quality, and CPE. Further analysis of the factor belief congruence as a mediator, shows statistically

significant mediation effects for all dependent variables, however, belief congruence behaves as a suppressor for perceived price and perceived quality, which decreases the impact.

7. Conclusions and Implications

This thesis and the related empirical research aimed to investigate consumer behaviour patterns in the fashion industry based on body positive advertisement in the context of body image and body appreciation. The topic was subdivided more precisely into research questions, to identify how consumers perceive fashion brands that prioritize inclusivity and a positive body image in their advertisement (RQ 1). Furthermore, it was assessed how consumers' purchase behaviours are influenced by brands that strongly focus on inclusivity and body positivity in their advertisement (RQ 2) and lastly, the effect of inclusive and body positive brand initiatives on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour when considering the factor of body image and body appreciation was measured (RQ 3).

The findings have led to the overarching conclusion that body positive advertising positively influences consumer perceptions, particularly in terms of encouragement, authenticity, and image perception – the brand perception dependent variable. Moreover, notable differences have been observed regarding consumer ethicality, price and quality perception with brands that actively incorporate body positivity in their advertisement (RQ 1). This denotes a positive and multifaceted impact of body positive advertising on consumer perception, which suggests that such advertising strategies generate impactful results.

The investigations in terms of purchase behaviour have yielded interesting insights and consequential findings. Within considering body positive advertisements, the results indicate a robust influential effect on consumers' purchase intentions and the willingness to pay (RQ 2). These outcomes reflect the interplay between the communicative strategies employed in body positive advertisement and consumers' predispositions in purchase and payment. The observed impact further emphasises the salience of body positive advertisement as an important factor that shapes the economic behaviours and decisions of consumers.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the important moderating role of body image in consumer-perceived ethicality and economic decisions (RQ 3). The empirical study revealed that, in the case of body positive advertisements, low levels of body image lead to more favourable purchase intentions and increased willingness to pay compared to higher levels of body image.

However, CPE evaluations increase with increasing levels of body image when exposed to body positive advertising. In the realm of consumer perceptions, it is noteworthy that body image does not indicate a moderating effect.

The second facet of this research question was directed toward the mediating role of body appreciation on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour. In opposition to the findings based on the literature review (Giorgianni et al., 2020), this aspect could not be statistically proven and will be discussed in further detail in the limitation section.

To the best of the author's knowledge, research is limited to the aspect of how belief congruence impacts consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour in the body positivity dimension (Wilkie et al., 2023). Thus, a further analysis was conducted to identify a possible mediating role and results show that this aspect is a significant part of the causal path. Noteworthy is the suppressing effect belief congruence has on the relationship of type of advertising on perceived price and quality. Overall, these outcomes indicate that the belief congruence between the own beliefs and the advertisement within the framework of body positivity is an important factor to be considered when intending to comprehend consumer behaviour in the fashion industry.

7.1. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the existing literature on body positive advertisement, body image, body appreciation, and belief congruence within consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. The study systematically investigated the effects of body positive advertisements on consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour additionally incorporating the dimensions of body image and body appreciation as well as belief congruence.

The findings support the important role of body positive advertisements in shaping and influencing consumers' perceptions and purchase behaviour, namely brand perception, perceived price, perceived quality, CPE, purchase intentions, and willingness to pay. Convincing differences in stereotypical and body positive advertisements can be observed, which enrich the body positivity discourse and contribute to capturing a distinct part of the complexity of this topic (Tylka & Piran, 2019).

It is furthermore to be noted that the research extends the previous application of body evaluation scales (Lou & Tse, 2021), to offer a nuanced analysis of differences and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the impact on the consumer. The distinction between body

image and body acceptance acknowledges the multifaceted subject of the evaluation, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards the body and by linking it to consumption behaviour it offers new findings on how self-perception influences decision-making. Especially, body image emerges as an explanatory factor for purchase behaviour, although not for the facet of consumer perception. Body appreciation does not impact consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour significantly, which deviates from the results of previous research (Giorgianni et al., 2020). Yet, some indications lead towards this direction, which can be subject to further examination and study.

Ultimately, this paper offers insights into how belief congruence serves as an influential factor in terms of consumer behaviour considering body positive advertisements. The mediation of this aspect suggests the high importance of congruence between own beliefs and their representation in advertisement linked to body positivity as individuals derive belonging and validation from this congruence (Oakenfull, McCarthy & Greenlee, 2008).

7.2. Managerial Implications

Managerial and practical implications that can be extrapolated from this research can be grouped into three categories: general body positive advertisement, the recognition of body image, and belief congruence.

The findings of this thesis delve into the significant role of body positive advertisement and its convincing impact on consumers' perception and purchase behaviour. Key managerial insights include the importance of creating brands and advertisement that embrace inclusivity and body positivity to influence consumers and shape their perception in terms of good evaluation of the brand and fostering an improved intention to buy these products. This strategic orientation aligns with the prevailing consumer trend, where a growing number of consumers express a preference for brands that embody such values and are not willing to compromise on them (Accenture, 2018). Companies should centre their efforts on creating authenticity and encouragement within their communicative strategies to resonate with consumer needs.

Understanding the nuanced relationship between the own body image and purchase decisions is vital for creating sustained success for brands. Recognizing the consumer on this deep level is prone to be difficult but it is crucial to understand that different perceptions of the own body can result in different purchase behaviours. Companies that intend to enhance consumers' economic considerations, need to carefully curate campaigns that align with the diversity of the

target audiences' body image perceptions. Especially the aspect of low body image among consumers demands consideration in the development of advertising strategies, as it essentially shapes purchase behaviour.

Lastly, belief congruence plays an important role when designing successful branding and communication strategies. The consumers' beliefs need to be studied thoroughly to create messages that resonate effectively. Companies that successfully align their body positive message with consumers' beliefs, will increase not only brand perceptions about the brand but also achieve favourable purchase behaviour.

Concluding this section, this study offers practical insights into consumer behaviour and delves into influencing elements. Drawing from these insights, companies can strategically adapt and structure certain aspects of their advertisement and product portfolio to improve overall image perception and economic standing.

8. Limitations

Despite the new findings and implications this research has identified in the field of consumer behaviour related to body positive advertisement, it holds certain limitations, that need to be considered.

The primary shortcoming is the low level of representativeness of the sample and communication problems that arise due to a limited explanation of questions (Yarmak, 2017). Furthermore, there is generally higher participation from people who have an overall interest in the topic of the research, which might lead to biased answers (Andrade, 2020). Moreover, the sample size of this study can be considered small, which makes it difficult to ensure sufficient data to extrapolate the statistical outcomes onto general population. Hence, the interpretation of the tested statistical significance could also be imprecise and not reflect the actual effect (Hackshaw, 2008). Additionally, there could be a bias due to the prevailing gender, as the sample is comprised of two-thirds females. Furthermore, the presented stimulus is only created based on the possibilities the author had and cannot be compared to a professionally created advertisement. The advertisement was only presented in one way, not including different aspects of the brand, or incorporating various media channels.

Other aspects of the limitations include the social desirability bias, as the questions asked can be viewed to cover sensitive topics. Literature suggests that those topics evoke inaccurate

estimates due to self-presentation concerns and the need for social approval. Respondents of surveys tend to report socially undesirable answers less frequently and vice versa (Krumpal, 2013).

The study and research are written from the position of the Western perception of body evaluation, as body image observations were mostly created based on white women from cultures in the Western part of the world. Hence, they fail to take the body image perspective of people of colour into account. The influence of ethnic backgrounds and cultural differences in body perception are not taken into consideration as well as gender-specific disparities in this study (Sotiriou & Awad, 2020). This aspect presents an opportunity for further investigation, where a more nuanced exploration can be done to evaluate specific distinctions on a cultural and gender-based level.



The complex assessment of one's own body can pose inherent challenges to the participants. Offering the participants, a comprehensive and detailed evaluation procedure was not possible due to timely constraints. Hence, only selective facets received due attention. Consequently, the need arises for an even more profound investigation that takes body image as well as body appreciation fully into account and correlates it with consumer behaviour in all its aspects.

Given the lack of statistical significance that was observed in terms of the mediating role of body appreciation in the present study, it is important to note that based on literature (Hackshaw, 2008), the small cohort may account for this outcome. Hence, future research may benefit from extending this research on a larger scale to determine possible effects or to approve the limited role body appreciation plays in this context.

Moreover, future research should direct their focus toward examining the multifaceted dimension of body evaluation and its impact on brand trust, internal and external drivers of purchase motivations, and potential social influences as they were not covered in this study.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Stereotypical	Body Positive
	
<p>Elevate your Style with aura! We bring you the latest fashion trends for every occasion & style!</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Shop our new collection now!</p>	<p>Body Positive Embrace your uniqueness with aura! We bring you clothing that is designed to empower, inspire, and make you feel confident!</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Shop our new collection in sizes XXS to XXL !</p>

Dear participant,

thank you for participating in my study! 😊

This research study is being conducted as part of my master thesis at Católica Lisbon. This survey is expected to take **5 minutes** to complete and your participation is voluntary and anonymous. The data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used within

Now please carefully look at the advertising of a fashion brand shown on the next page.

1. After seeing the advertisement, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements, on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	1 - Strongly disagree (1)	2 - Disagree (2)	3 - Somewhat disagree (3)	4 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)	5 - Somewhat agree (5)	6 - Agree (6)	7 - Strongly agree (7)
For me the advertising represents inclusivity. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I perceive the advertising challenges current beauty ideals. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. How would you rate your **overall opinion** of this brand's advertising?

- 1. Extremely negative (1)
- 2. Moderately negative (2)
- 3. Slightly negative (3)
- 4. Neither positive nor negative (4)
- 5. Slightly positive (5)
- 6. Moderately positive (6)
- 7. Extremely positive (7)

3. Please rate your **overall perception** about the presented brand based on the attributes below, on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	1 - Strongly disagree (1)	2 - Disagree (2)	3 - Somewhat disagree (3)	4 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)	5 - Somewhat agree (5)	6 - Agree (6)	7 - Strongly agree (7)
Authentic (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Realistic (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Positive image (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthy (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please indicate how much you agree to the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	1 - Strongly disagree (1)	2 - Disagree (2)	3 - Somewhat disagree (3)	4 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)	5 - Somewhat agree (5)	6 - Agree (6)	7 - Strongly agree (7)
I perceive "aura" as a high quality brand. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me the brand "aura" is in the high price segment. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please indicate how much you agree to the following statements in terms of the products of the brand, on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	1 - Strongly disagree (1)	2 - Disagree (2)	3 - Somewhat disagree (3)	4 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)	5 - Somewhat agree (5)	6 - Agree (6)	7 - Strongly agree (7)
The products from "aura" are socially acceptable. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The products from "aura" are good. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

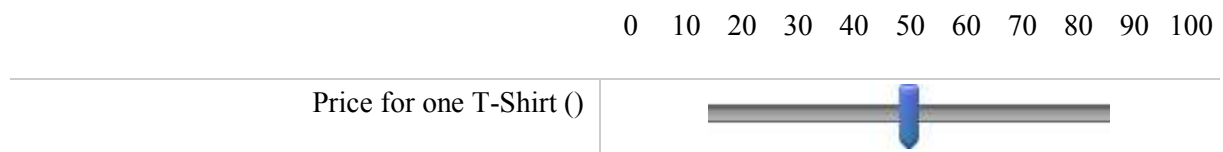
6. Please indicate how you **feel** after seeing this ad.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
empowered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	powerless
happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	sad
confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	insecure
inspired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	uninspired

7. Assume you want to purchase clothing. How likely would you purchase the before mentioned brand "aura" on a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely).

- 1. Extremely unlikely (1)
- 2. Moderately unlikely (2)
- 3. Slightly unlikely (3)
- 4. Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- 5. Slightly likely (5)
- 6. Moderately likely (6)
- 7. Extremely likely (7)

8. How much would you be willing to pay for a T-Shirt of this brand?
Euro €



You are almost at the end of the questionnaire! Now some questions about yourself will follow 😊

9. Please indicate whether the following statements are true about you.

	1 - Never (1)	2 - Seldom (2)	3 - Sometimes (3)	4 - Often (4)	5 - Always (5)
I respect my body. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel good about my body. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel love for my body. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors). (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Please indicate whether the following statements are true about you.

	1 - Definitely disagree (1)	2 - Somewhat disagree (2)	3 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4 - Somewhat agree (4)	5 - Definitely agree (5)
My body is sexually appealing. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like my looks just the way they are. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people would consider me good-looking. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the way my clothes fit me. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Congruity/Sentiment Please indicate how much you agree to the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Disagree (2)	3. Somewhat disagree (3)	4. Neither agree nor disagree (4)	5. Somewhat agree (5)	6. Agree (6)	7. Strongly agree (7)
This brand is consistent with how I see myself. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand reflects who I am. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I perceive diversity and inclusion topics are appropriate for advertising. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Familiarity How do you perceive your own familiarity with inclusive and body positive advertising in fashion?

- 1. Extremely unfamiliar (1)
- 2. Moderately unfamiliar (2)
- 3. Slightly unfamiliar (3)
- 4. Neither/ nor familiar (4)
- 5. Slightly familiar (5)
- 6. Moderately familiar (6)
- 7. Extremely familiar (7)

13. Please indicate your gender.

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

14. Please indicate your age.

▼ Under 18 (1) ... Above 61 (8)

15. Education What is the highest level of education you completed?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Bachelor Degree (3)
- Master Degree (4)
- Doctorate (5)

Professional Degree (6)

Prefer not to say (7)

16. Where do you come from?

▼ Please select below... (1) ... Other (195)

17. What is your current annual income in Euros?

Under €10,000 (1)

€10,000 - €19,999 (2)

€20,000 - €29,999 (3)

€30,000 - €39,999 (4)

€40,000 - €49,999 (5)

€50,000 - €74,999 (6)


€75,000 - €99,999 (7)

€100,000 - €150,000 (8)

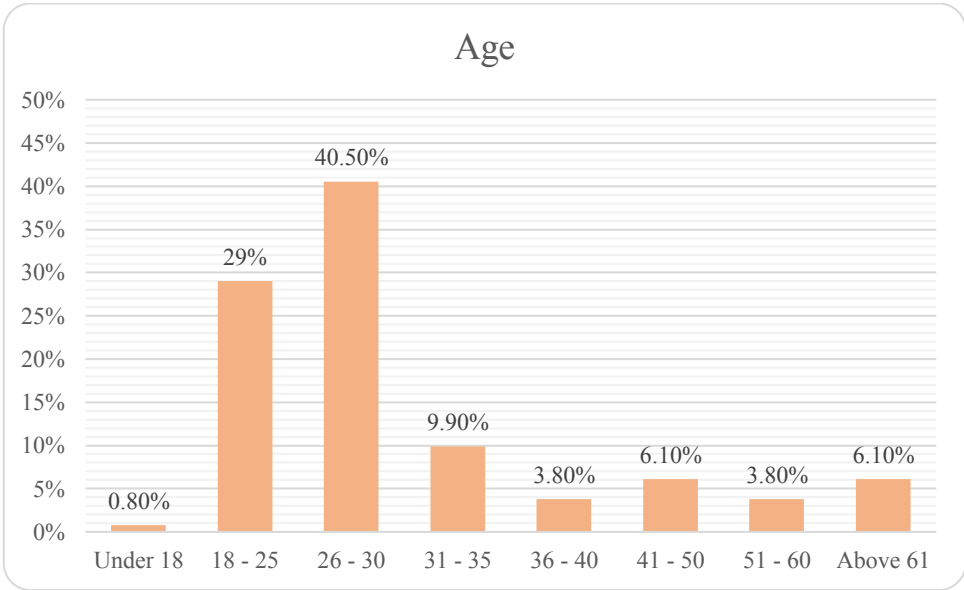
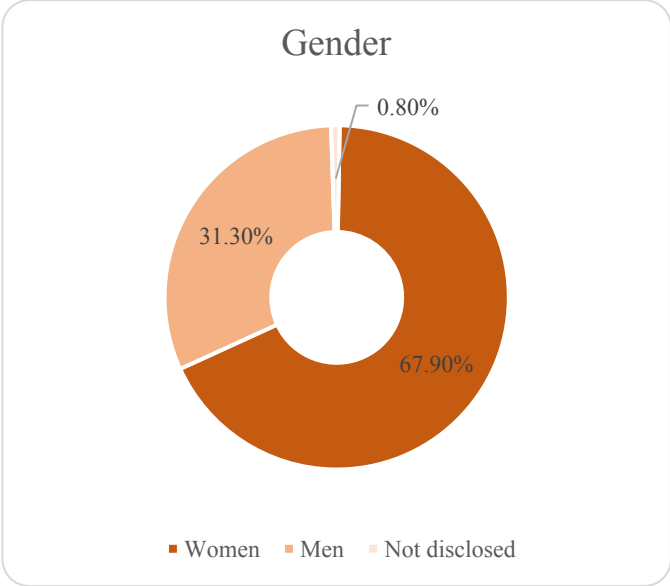
Over €150,000 (9)

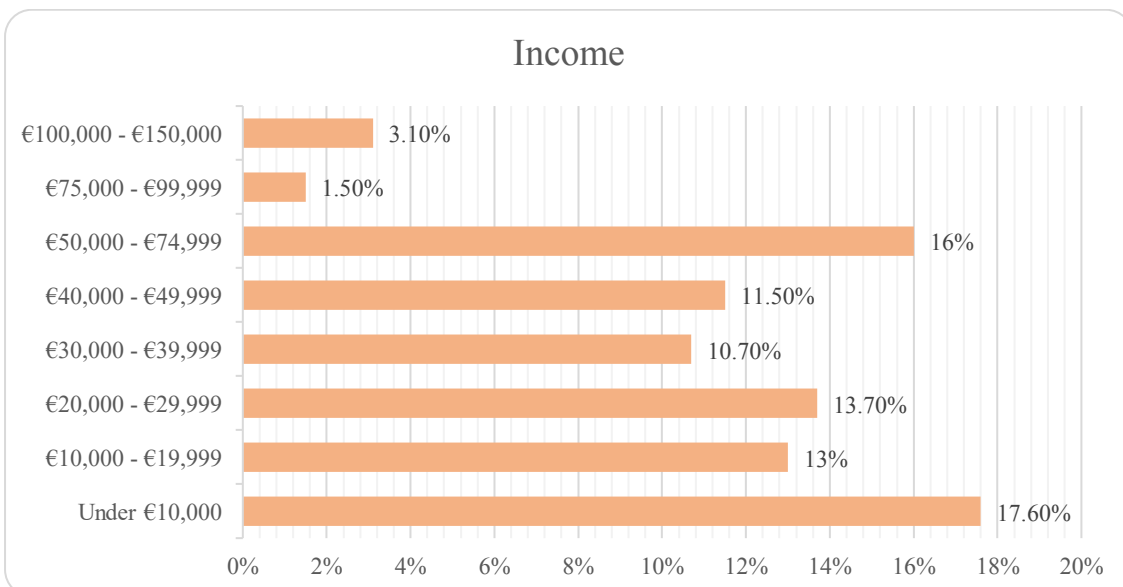
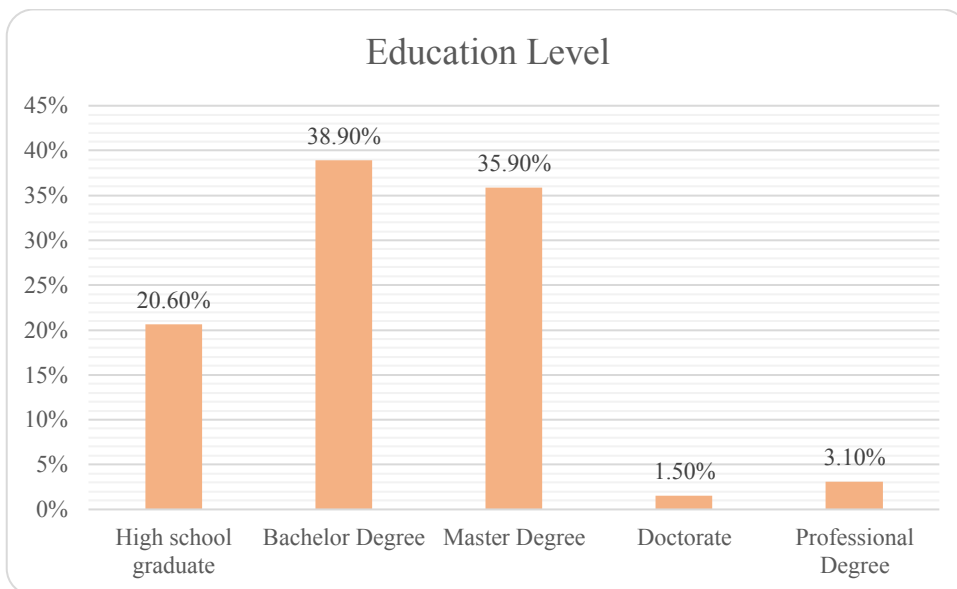
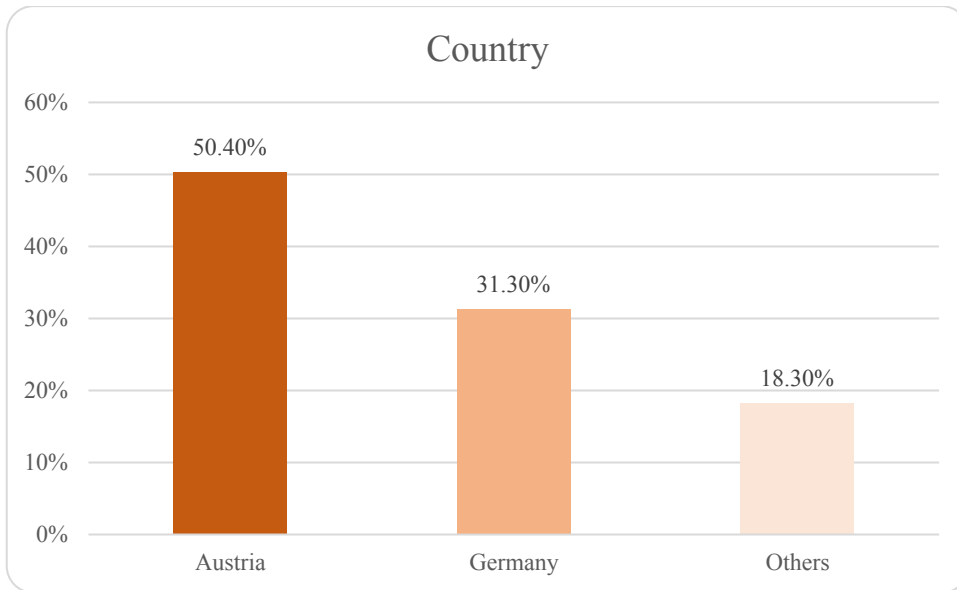
Prefer not to say (10)

End Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Please click on the button below to end the survey 

Appendix 2: Sample Characterization





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