

“Let’s celebrate body diversity, not stigmatize it”

How do Asian and Western-European female students perceive body diverse models

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1.0 Introduction

“Let’s celebrate body diversity, not stigmatize it” (Rose, 2018, para, 1). According to Rose (2018), society should celebrate all body types instead of giving them labels such as ‘thin’ or ‘big’ because everyone around the world has diverse body shape and size. Nonetheless, the discussion of diversity and inclusion of all body types are generally overlooked, and a strong emphasis is placed on particular body ideals that are defined as beautiful and acceptable by societies around the world (Alexander, 2021). As Rose (2018) stated, societies today believe that it is acceptable to judge others based on their body shape or size; however, it is vital to acknowledge that everyone around the world possesses a different body shape and size, which makes each person unique. Therefore, all body types regardless of shape or size should be accepted, the acceptance of all body types is known as being body positive. Body positivity is celebrated through the body positivity movement which dates back to 1969 (BBC, 2020). The movement was established to legalize rights for ‘fat’ individuals to be treated fairly, which in turn established what is known as the “National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance” or NAAFA (BBC, 2020). It was not until 2013 when NAAFA was renamed the body positivity movement. Over the past decades, since the start of the movement, people went from parading and protesting on the streets to forming a community online, spreading body positive related contents via social media platforms (BBC, 2020). The spread of body-positive related contents includes, for example, “self-compassion” quotes, images of diverse body types and “before and after of ‘real’ vs ‘edited’ bodies” to raise awareness that digital tools are utilized to modify images (Cohen et al., 2019).

Since the establishment of the movement, there were three waves, the first being the establishment of the movement in 1969 to tackle discrimination against fat individuals (BBC, 2020). The second wave occurred during the 1990s, when body ideals and images of models displayed were becoming more unrealistic in the sense that, the ideal became ‘thinner’ than before also known as the ‘waif-like body’ (Howard, 2018; Lonergran, 2019). Following the first two waves, the third wave emerged in 2012, as an increasing number of women challenged the beauty standards set in society (Reid, 2021). Unlike the first two waves, the third wave of body positivity movement took place on social media; many people created and posted contents focusing primarily on self-love and body positivity (Yeboah, 2020). These posts included images of individuals showing off their bodies and the hashtag ‘#bodypositivity’ to further spread the movement on social media namely, Instagram (BBC, 2020; Yeboah, 2020).

As the body positivity movement continues to grow, it is important to understand that in some countries, the movement has yet to make an impact. One reason is that in some countries, specific body ideals remain embedded in society (Kittka 2016). Nevertheless, body ideals in the past differ across cultures (Yan & Bissell, 2014); however, over time due to globalization, the ideal body in respective cultures are beginning to resemble one another (Hankart, 2019). Despite greater acknowledgement and acceptance of all body types, being ‘thin’ remains prevalent in many countries

especially countries in ‘the East’ (Yan & Bissell, 2014). This ideal slim body type is of concern to societies because it influences one’s body image and self-esteem, studies found that there is a strong emphasis by society for women to be ‘thin’ (Betz & Ramsey, 2017). According to Betz and Ramsey (2017), this may result in negative consequences such as body dissatisfaction and may even encourage eating disorders. Furthermore, frequent exposure to advertisements or images on social media featuring slim models can also negatively influence particularly younger generations (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019; Quittkat et al., 2019). In light of these negative consequences, studies found that the media and brands play a role in displaying unrealistic images of women’s body (Grogan, 2017; Lazuka et al., 2020). As mentioned, exposure to unrealistic images influences women’s self-esteem and body image, for this reason, customers are demanding a wider representation of body types (Pounders, 2018). In response to this demand, fashion brands featured more models of diverse body types in advertisements.

Based on the discussion above, this thesis paper is interested in examining how individuals of different cultural backgrounds perceive body diverse models. The paper will first examine how body ideals differ across cultures, before moving into the discussion around body positivity and body diversity. Perception is studied because it is significant to understand how individuals of different cultures perceive differently. Another reason is that there are few studies examining how different cultures perceive body diverse models. Therefore, to fill the gap in the literature, this thesis will conduct research with the following main research question *How do female students from all over the world perceive models with diverse body types presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?* And sub-research questions (1) *How do Asian female students perceive model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?* (2) *How do Western-European female students perceive model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?*

To address the main research and sub-research question, 12 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with participants who were born in Asian and Western-European countries. Participants of Asian and Western-European were selected because the research question’s purpose is to explore how perception towards body diverse models differ across cultures. Furthermore, by recruiting participants of different nationalities, they can share their perspectives of how their culture perceives body diverse models. Hence, increasing the validity of this research paper. Nonetheless, to examine perception, 16 images from four different clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ were provided to participants.

1.1 Academic and Societal Relevance

This thesis has both academic and societal relevance. For a long period of time, studies have found a lack of body diverse models portrayed in the media, with overrepresentation of ‘thin’ models (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Weinar, 2019). As mentioned, being exposed to unrealistic images of women can negatively impact women, leaving them to feel dissatisfied about their body shape and size which lowers their self-esteem (Betz & Ramsey, 2017). This is one of the reasons for the third wave of the body positivity movement in 2012, society realized that the thin-ideal was affecting many women especially younger women (Howard, 2018). Furthermore, despite the continuous growth of the movement, the representation of diverse body models is little and almost absent in the media (Cohen et al., 2019). For this reason, brands were demanded to become more inclusive and representative, for example, by recruiting body diverse models to model and offering more clothing size options (Pounders, 2018; Petro, 2019). With ongoing discussions around being body positive, brands are becoming aware of its importance. From a brands’ point of view, this is a business opportunity to improve sales and also customers’ perception towards the brand as a whole (Luzon, 2019). In this era, it is important for brands to support issues that are of societal concern (YPulse, 2020) such as the abovementioned, overrepresentation of ‘thin’ bodies, which is affecting younger women’s self-image.

1.2 Concepts

This section will discuss all the important concepts for this thesis paper. The concept of ‘body diversity can be defined as greater ‘inclusion’ of all body shapes and size (Pounders, 2018). The term ‘inclusion’ is included when defining the term ‘diversity’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). However, according to the definition by Pounders (2018), it is the ‘greater’ inclusion, which could mean a ‘better’ inclusion rather than the ‘need’ to include all body types. Hence, Pounders’ (2018) definition of body diversity may suggest wider inclusivity, with attempts to represent all body types.

As the research topic was sensitive, the following terms were utilized throughout this thesis paper when describing body types. The terms ‘thin’ and ‘big’ were utilized predominantly to describe women’s body types. Occasionally, the terms ‘plus-size’ and ‘curvy’ appeared in the results and discussion chapter because participants utilized the terms to describe body types that were ‘big’. Nonetheless, these two terms were utilized by some of the following authors Betz and Ramsey (2017), Pounders (2018), Cohen et al. (2019) and Banfield (2020) when describing body types.

Furthermore, in the results and discussion chapter, when referring to where participants are from, their nationalities were introduced. Likewise, this thesis chose to combine discussion around countries from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ to conduct a cross-cultural study, examining the differences in perception in different cultures. With the same criteria for selecting brands, the same was utilized when selecting the countries. This was discussed in the methodology chapter.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The outline of this thesis paper will be as follows, after the introductory chapter, this thesis will proceed with the literature review chapter which will focus on three main discussion sections: body ideals, body positivity and body diversity. Body positivity and body diversity will be discussed under one section as the topics had overlapped. To begin, the first section discussed the concept of body ideals and exploring differences in body ideals across countries in ‘the East’ and ‘the West’. The following section explored the concept of body positivity and body diversity, which was related to the discussion of body image and self-esteem, the negative impacts that body ideals have on women in the previous section. This section discussed the purpose of the body positivity movement and how brands implemented body positivity into their business. In addition, how different cultures perceive body positivity and body diversity was also discussed.

As abovementioned, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and interview transcripts were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis which resulted in the following main categories, normalization and representation, and sub-categories, realistic, relatable, confidence and inclusivity. This chapter will also discuss the ethical implications of this research study. The next chapter discussed both results and discussion, examined in-depth the main and sub-categories with reference to the literature review. Discussions began with participants’ perception of the stimulus materials, which addressed the sub-research questions, then followed by discussions of the main and sub-categories. Finally, this thesis paper concludes by addressing the research question, limitations involved and included suggestions for future research.

2.0 Literature Review

This literature review chapter will discuss in-depth the following three topics, body ideals, body positivity and body diversity. There are overlaps between the topics of body positivity and body diversity; therefore, both topics will be discussed under one section. Nonetheless, this chapter will begin by discussing the topic of body ideals, in particular the shift from a 'fuller' body to the 'thin' ideal. This section will proceed to discuss body ideals in countries in the East (China and South Korea) and the West (the United States and the United Kingdom). A sub-section under body ideals will discuss the negative consequences of exposure to the thin-ideal. The chapter will continue with the topics, body positivity and body diversity, which will discuss the following, body positivity movement, inclusivity and representation of different body types and how countries in the East and the West perceive body diverse models.

2.1 Body Ideals

Beauty ideals differ across the globe and across different cultures and these ideals were traditionally established and evaluated locally in native communities (Yan & Bissell, 2014; Givhan, 2020). In other words, communities perceive beauty differently, this is due to respective cultural beliefs and traditions. However, over the years many studies found that due to globalization, local indigenous beauty ideals evolved. Globalization opened the doors of many societies and cultures, influence from the West, particularly "western media contents" were pronounced (Yan & Bissell, 2014, p. 195). When referring to "western media contents", this section focuses on the influence of traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television and non-digital forms of advertising (Shah, 2020). Traditional mass media generally portrayed attractive women (Grogan, 2017). According to Yan and Bissell (2014), "values, norms, and ideals" of beauty were transferred and heavily emphasized through images of female models and celebrities. Over time, due to globalization, these western media contents of various media formats were transmitted to other countries and cultures (Yan & Bissell, 2014). Thus, it was found that many local beauty ideals were increasingly resembling beauty ideals from the West (Jones, 2011; Yan & Bissell, 2014; Zhang et al., 2018; Hankart, 2019).

However, this research paper will focus on the discussion around the idealized 'thin' female body. The thin-ideal became pronounced during the 19th century, before this, the 'ideal body' in many cultures in the East and the West was described as "full-bodied, round, and plump" (Swami, 2013, p. 2). During the 1960s and 1970s, being 'thin' became more pronounced until the beginning of the 21st century when society began to embrace body diversity (Howards, 2018). Nonetheless, being 'thin' remains prevalent and desired by many around the world (Yan & Bissell, 2014; Poundersm 2018). There are many similar definitions explaining the thin-ideal such as having "a slender build but with a generous bosom and a narrow waist" (Givhan, 2020, para 8) or attaining "the physically impossible, tall, thin and busty Barbie-doll stereotype" (Grogan, 2017, p. 38). The definitions

described perfectly the Barbie doll body type. Researchers described Barbie’s body type as unrealistic, adding that “less than 1 in 100,000 adult women” would have Barbie’s body proportion (Yager, 2014, para 3). Figure 1 below showcases Barbie’s body proportion in comparison to an average female body in the U.S., which is realistically unattainable.

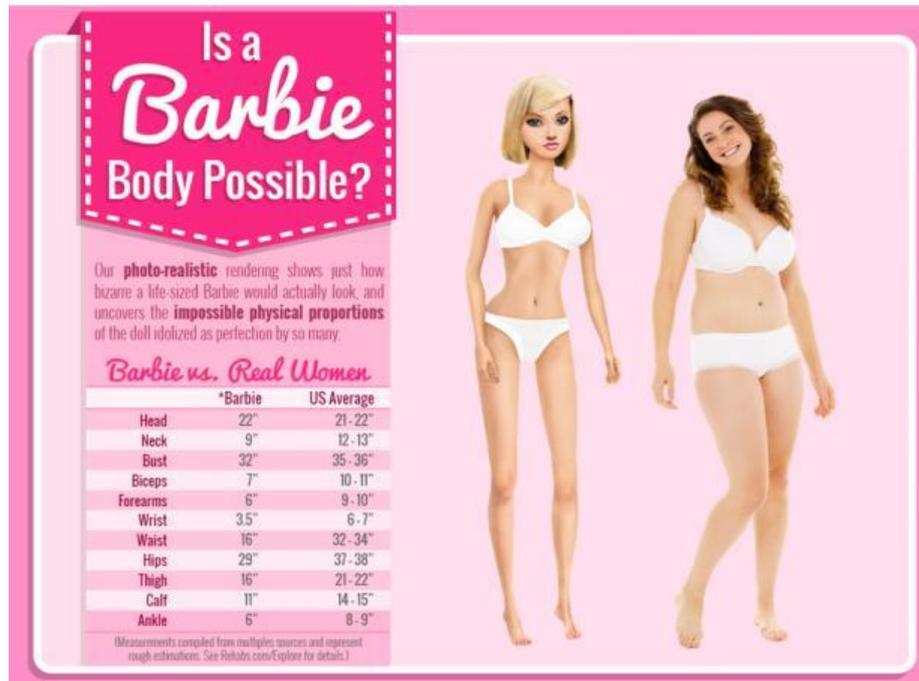


Figure 1: Barbie-doll body proportions (Heeg-Kotrla, 2019)

From the discussion above, it can be said that the thin-’ideal body’ is physically impossible to attain. Despite this, this ‘ideal body’ type remains prevalent across many countries and cultures (Zhang et al., 2018). In other words, many women aspired to have the ‘thin’ ideal. In China, studies found that women who strived to attain the thin-ideal have a BMI of below 18.5 (Zhang et al., 2018). A BMI of 18.5 and below is considered to be underweight, this is calculated by dividing weight (kg) by height (m²) (CDC, 2020). Hence, this finding suggests that for women in China, being underweight implies that they achieved the ‘thin’ ideal.

Centuries ago, in many Eastern and Western countries such as China and the U.K, it was believed that being ‘thin’ signified “malnutrition, poverty, and infectious disease” (Grogan, 2017, p. 29). Meanwhile, having a ‘bigger’ body type symbolized “health, wealth and prosperity” (Grogan, 2017, p. 29; Zhang et al., 2018). Thus, the ‘ideal body’ type was to have a ‘bigger’ body. Today, these beliefs have reversed, countries in the East and the West associate women of ‘bigger’ body size with laziness and lack of self-control (Grogan, 2017). Hence, the shift towards the thin-ideal. Further discussion around the historical shift towards thin-ideal in specific countries in the East and West will be in the following sections 2.1.1.

2.1.1 Body ideals in the East and West

For this paper, this section will focus on four countries, two in the East, namely China and South Korea and two in the West, namely the United States and the United Kingdom. These four countries are focussed predominantly as it is linked to addressing the research question. When discussing body ideals in the East, researchers questioned the unrealistic beauty standards displayed by the media (Lee, 2018; Lin, 2020). In this section, 'media' is referred to as the new media such as social media and digital forms of advertising (Shah, 2020). Unrealistic beauty standards can be found all over the world, for example, as mentioned the thin-ideal which was referred to as the Barbie-doll stereotype. Unlike in the past, beauty standards are becoming more unrealistic due to various reasons. One being digital alteration tools such as photoshop, women's body was digitally modified to illustrate the perfect 'thin' body (Bamdass, 2020). As researchers stated, there is less than 0.001 percent (1 in 100,000) of people able to attain the Barbie-doll like body type which was used to describe the 'thin' ideal. Therefore, one way to attain this body ideal is through modifying areas of the body to fit the ideal. Studies found that even celebrity figures whose bodies are strived by many were modified to fit the ideal (Yager, 2014; Bamdass, 2020). Hence, implying that even celebrities do not have the ideal 'thin' body.

Having mentioned that, celebrities can be considered influential figures based on their talent or physical appearance. This research paper will focus on celebrities' physical appearance specifically their body. As influential figures in the entertainment world, fans and followers are prompted to achieve body types that resemble their favourite celebrities (Cliff, 2019). An example is the 'slim thick' body type, which was described as having a "small waist, flat stomach and larger hips, bum and thighs" (Cliff, 2019; Fargo, 2021, para 5). This body type was not considered as the 'ideal body' type rather, it was desired and strived by many women as it became a popular trend (Fargo, 2021). During the summer of 2019, many women strived for this body type because it was on-trend and also it was possessed by many well-known celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner, as well as other famous Instagrammers (Cliff, 2019). This desired body type was predominantly strived in the West. Meanwhile, in the East, body types of celebrity figures such as Fan Bingbing, Angelababy, and K-pop stars are desired and strived by many women (Zhuang, 2020; Yeromiyana, 2021). These celebrity figures are well-known for representing the thin ideal beauty standards (Kane, 2016). However, unlike the example of the West, this 'thin' body was considered as the 'ideal body' desired by many women. Nonetheless, further discussion on the shift towards the thin-ideal will be discussed below under respective countries. *The East*

According to Kittka (2016), some countries in the East such as China and South Korea has yet to accept diverse body types. One reason being as mentioned, it is believed that 'bigger' bodies are associated with being lazy, this is especially for countries in the East. Due to heavy emphasis on being 'thin', Zhang et al. (2018) shared that the thin-ideal has become extreme amongst women whereby being "underweight has become synonymous with beauty" (p. 2). As mentioned above, being

underweight entails the achievement of the thin-'ideal body', thus, the notion of beauty is to be underweight.

Following the discussion on body ideal and desirability to achieve it, studies found that women from the East are believed to be naturally thin due to genetics and eating habits (Zhang, 2012). Eating habits is an important factor to staying slim, many countries in the East have a balanced diet that keeps them 'thin' but healthy, for example, the importance of having rice, fruits, and vegetables, drinking tea which helps with digestion (Margolin, 2014; Roizma, 2018). However, Asian's eating habits today have changed due to globalization, thus, exposing the culture to other cuisines, this change in diet as well changed people's body shape and size, which resulted in the establishments of different diets to attain and retain a slender body (Polivy & Herman, 2004; Ramachandran et al., 2012). Some of these diets include binge eating or using substances such as laxatives, these habits can result in negative consequences (Nozari, 2016), which will be further discussed under section 2.1.2.

China

During the Tang Dynasty between 618 to 906 AD., the 'ideal body' type amongst Chinese women was to be 'big', being 'big' was much desired and regarded by society as attractive (Zhang et al., 2018). Over time, the body ideal shifted from a 'big' body to a 'thin' body which is common and valued by many women in the Chinese culture as being 'thin' is as mentioned described as appealing (Lee, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018; Coy, 2021). In other words, women are more attractive if they possess a 'thin' body. Referring to Zhang et al.'s (2018) finding on underweight women being attractive, there are currently no studies suggesting a borderline for when a severely underweight body becomes less desirable. Instead, there are many studies about the challenges established for individuals to prove that they are 'thin'. Most of these challenges begun on China's social media platform 'Sina Weibo' (Proudfoot, 2016), some of the most well-known challenges include the belly button challenge or the A4 waist challenge (Wei, 2016). Keep in mind that both challenges were to show how 'thin' an individual's waist is, thus, showcasing how thin they are. The A4 waist challenge took place in 2016, as shown in figure 2 below, the challenge asked for women to hold up a piece of A4 paper vertically covering their waist and if their waist does not appear outside of the paper, they are then considered as thin (Wei, 2016). Thus, attained the desirable 'thin' 'ideal body'.

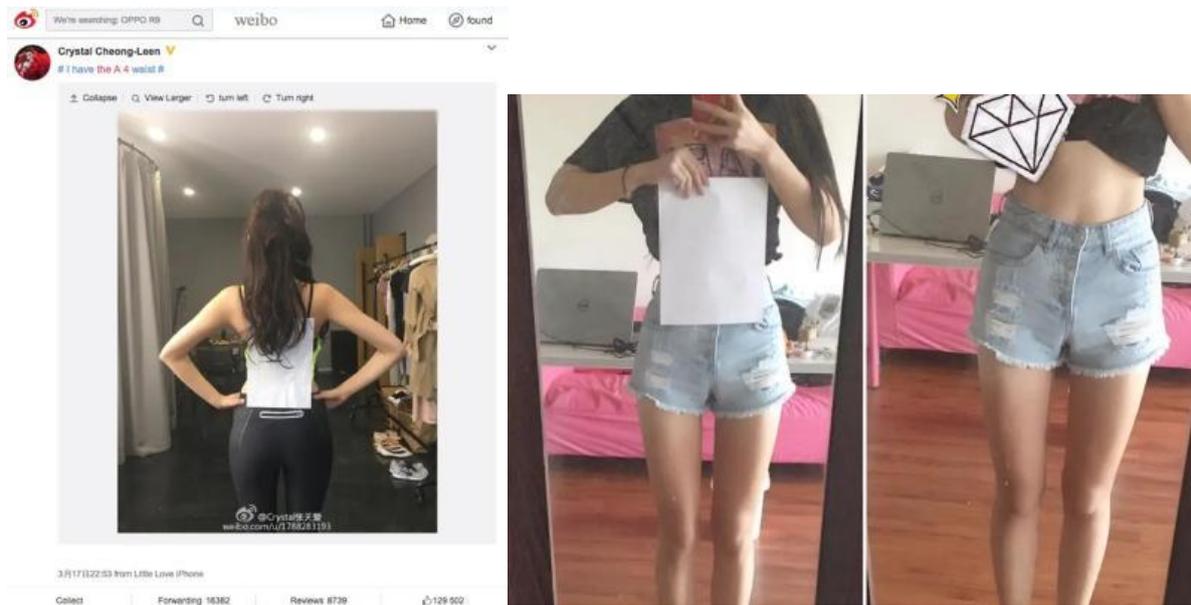


Figure 2: A4 waist challenge (Willet-Wei, 2016)

Furthermore, women that have the ‘A4 waist’ have a waist that measures approximately 25 inches or smaller (Willet-Wei, 2016). In the same year, this challenge was spread across social media around the world, some took the challenge, and some criticized it (Willet-Wei, 2016). Many of these challenges were designed for women to prove and show off their ‘thin’ body and waist. However, the challenge was heavily criticized by many women labelling it as “horrifying” (Moss, 2016, para 6). These challenges were negatively received by women and associations such as eating disorders charity ‘Beat’ and body image bloggers stating that these images can result in low self-esteem, eating disorders and also encouraged women to attain unrealistic body standards (Proudfoot, 2016; Moss, 2016). Having said that, the Chinese ‘ideal body’ heavily stresses the idea that being as ‘thin’ as possible is equal to being attractive. Then again, this form of ideal proves to be controversial as it is body-shaming and can negatively impact young women (Moss, 2016).

South Korea

In South Korea, women’s body shape is described using Roman alphabets such as S-line, “ample breasts and buttocks when viewed from the side” or X-line “long legs and arms connected by a narrow waist”, see figure 3 below (Waldman, 2014, para 2). When someone describes the ‘ideal body’ type, instead of simply saying a ‘thin’ body, they would utilize Roman alphabets. S and X-line are two of the most desired and strived body type by many South Korean women (Keng, 2021).



Figure 3: South Korean Roman alphabet categorization S-line and X-line (Keng, 2021)

It is well-known around the world that the beauty standards in South Korea are very strict, many strive to be thin and tall in hopes to achieve the body standards (Koreaboo, 2020). In South Korea, celebrities play a role in setting body ideals, many women envy K-pop idols that have the ‘perfect’ body proportions (Koreaboo, 2020). According to Koreaboo (2020), many women are striving to achieve the “ideal height of 162cm and weight of 42kg” (para 1). This body ideal is deemed unattainable by many, but K-pop idols who were able to achieve and maintain this ‘ideal body’ had to follow strict diets and exercising (Koreaboo, 2020; Ng, 2021).

Research found that the obesity rate in South Korea is one of the world’s lowest; however, despite this, according to South Korea’s national survey, 60 percent of adult women are and would like to go on a diet to achieve the body ideal set by society (Wilde, 2019). According to Seoul Cosmetic Surgery (2020), besides going on weight-loss diets, some women turn to the option of getting plastic surgery procedures such as fat burning injections or liposuction. Plastic surgery is very common in South Korea, studies found that “around one in three South Koreans women between 19 and 29 have had plastic surgery”, this is approximately around 50 percent or even higher (Jacobs, 2018, para 2). Despite this high number, in South Korea, plastic surgery is considered as a beauty treatment for people to attain a desirable appearance which allows them to feel accepted by society (Adolph, 2020). Likewise, with strict beauty standards in the culture, studies found that many are feeling “societal pressure’, which is harming self-body image and self-esteem (Stevenson, 2018; Adolph, 2020). Nonetheless, similar to China, South Korean women place high importance on attaining the ideal ‘thin’ body that is to some extent almost unattainable. Then again, it could be attainable with the alternatives of getting plastic surgeries and strict diets and exercises.

The West

Similarly, to the East, studies have found that prior to the shift to the thin-ideal, having a fuller body was much desired in the West (Swami, 2015). According to Swami (2015), during the 19th century, Western-European women strived to have a body that is large, “round and plump” (p. 2). Although the shift to a thin-ideal occurred in the 1960s, it was not until the 1980s to 1990s when the thin-ideal became more prominent (Swami, 2015; Howard, 2018). As being ‘thin’ became more pronounced, many women were striving for a whole different type of ‘thin’ body known as the ‘waif-like’ body type (Howard, 2018). A ‘waif-like’ body is described as “thinner-than-thin” (Heiman, 2019, para 1). This body type is thus, similar to the East which found underweight women to be attractive. In addition, western media featured only “ultra-slim models, actresses, and other media figures”, and disregarded women of ‘bigger’ bodies (Polivy & Herman, 2004, p. 2; Swami, 2016). Hence, highlighting that a ‘thin’ body was much more desired and attractive.

In comparison to the East, perception towards the thin-ideal differs, in the East, the thin-ideal is to be as thin as possible, while in the West, women desire a body that is thin but with a strong emphasis on being fit or toned (Coy, 2021). The ideal to be thin and fit begun as a trend in 2015, this was a positive step forward and away from the ‘thin’ only ideal, which was focused solely on being thin (Kindelan, 2018). Today, other thin-ideal includes having curves in particular body areas such as the breast and bosom, to be slim around the waist and thighs (Bradley University, 2021). In other words, there is more than one ‘thin’ ideal in the West.

United States

A survey conducted by Hoff (2019) on 1000 Americans found that their ‘ideal body’ is described as being 165cm (5’5) tall and weighing 58kg (128 pounds) with a waist measuring at 26-inches. According to Bradley University (2021), this ‘ideal body’ is said to be unattainable unless “using extremely unhealthy means” (para 4). Figure 4 below, showcases the body ideal in the U.S., this image was digitally altered to fit the ‘ideal body’ of respective countries.



Figure 4: (left) original image, (right) image after alteration of the U.S. body ideal (Vagianos, 2015)

Overall, the model's body became much 'thinner', looking closer, the model's waist became slimmer and an apparent thigh gap. It is noticeable that after alteration, the model resembles the body ideal of 'thin' but curvy in certain body areas.

Nonetheless, to shift away from solely being 'thin', many new body ideals are being established (Betz & Ramsey, 2017), one being as mentioned the 'thin' but fit ideal, also known as 'fitspiration' (Bozsik et al., 2018). The fitspiration ideal is one example of a continuous shift to a new body ideal, similar to a challenge, one of the most well-known fitness gurus, Kayla Itsines shares on social media images and workout video contents to encourage her followers to join in (Safaya, 2018; Richardson, 2020). However, studies found that the fitspiration ideal negatively influenced women's body image (Bozsik & Bennett, 2018). The reason being that being 'thin' was still part of the ideal, if for example, an individual is fit but not thin, they will not be able to relate to this ideal, thus, feeling dissatisfied with their body (Bozsik & Bennett, 2018). Furthermore, attaining a 'thin' but fit body requires one to decrease their calorie intake and an increase in "muscle-building exercise routine" (Bozsik & Bennett, 2018, para 24).

Since the start of the 21st century, many people both men and women in the U.S. begun embracing and celebrating diverse body types (Howard, 2018). This shift can be described as 'realism', in from an artistic view, this term can be utilized to describe "artwork painted in a realistic almost photographic way" (Tate, n.d.). In other words, the keyword here is 'realistic'. Moving away from constructing body ideals to accepting all forms of body shape and size is considered to be realistic as it reflects the population's body shape and size. This describes the purpose of the body positivity movement which will be further discussed under section 2.2.

United Kingdom

The body ideal in the U.K. is described as having thin legs and arms, a flat stomach, full breasts and curves and overall a ‘thin’ but not too ‘thin’ body with a height of about 170cm (5’7) (Fitzmaurice, 2016; Lewis, 2018). Figure 5 below, illustrates the body ideal in the U.K., similar to figure 4, this image on the right was digitally altered to fit the U.K. body ideal. The image perfectly fits the mentioned body ideal with curves in certain body areas which is very much alike to the ‘slim thick’ ideal.



Figure 5: (left) original image, (right) image after alteration of the U.K. body ideal (Vagianos, 2015)

Likewise, the U.K.’s body ideals over time resembled the U.S., wherein the thin ideal became more pronounced in the 1990s (Swami, 2016). As mentioned, women with ‘bigger’ bodies were disregarded in western media, but when regarded, it was found that they were portrayed on television as “unintelligent and greedy” (Swami, 2016, para 10), in other words, criticizing and treating them differently because of their body size.

2.1.2 Body Image, body dissatisfaction and self-esteem

With reference to the discussion on body ideals, being ‘thin’ is heavily emphasized in the East and the West. Many researchers such as Ring (2000), Halliwell and Dittmar (2004), Yan and Bissell (2014) and Ogden et al. (2020) raised concerns about the consequences of attempting to attain images of the “ideal body” displayed by the media. These images are described by researchers as unrealistic and unattainable, which can negatively influence, for example, an individual’s body image and body satisfaction (Betz & Ramsey, 2017).

In relation to the discussion on the thin-ideal, studies found a positive relationship between the exposure of the thin-ideal and an individual's body image (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Yan & Bissell, 2014; McKay et al., 2018). In other words, one's body image is negatively influenced when exposed to images displaying the 'thin' ideal. The reason being that, when an individual is exposed to images of women with the 'perfect' or in this case the thin-ideal, they begin to judge and compare their own body in the sense that they may or may not conform to the "ideal body" (Cohen et al., 2019) which can result in as mentioned, body dissatisfaction. In addition, studies found that "exposure to idealized imagery" can also influence an individual's self-esteem (Keh et al., 2016; Pounders, 2018, p. 134). Hence, lowered self-esteem due to inability to attain the "ideal body". Likewise, although self-esteem is not classified as a mental illness; however, it is related to one's mental and emotional wellbeing (Gold, 2016).

From the discussion above, due to exposure to unrealistic body ideals, many women are unable to attain or relate, thus, suffering from negative body image, body dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem. Keeping this in mind, one of the researchers Betz and Ramsey (2017) who raised concerns on the negative consequence involved shared that various body ideals are now constructed to encourage people to move beyond the 'thin' ideal. However, as discussed in section 2.1, despite that body ideal constructed are shifting away from the thin-ideal, a majority remain around being 'thin' but either 'thin but fit' or 'slim thick'.

2.2 Body Positivity & Diversity

As mentioned, the shift away from the thin-ideal to other body ideals can be viewed as a positive counter-movement towards 'realism', which describes the purpose of the body positivity movement. Before moving into the discussion around the body positivity movement, the term 'body positivity' will be defined. According to Leboeuf (2019), 'body positivity' can be defined as accepting one's own body "regardless of size, shape, skin tone, gender, and physical abilities" (p. 113). Thus, encouraging individuals to accept their body as it is. Similarly, the definition of the body positivity movement includes the keyword 'acceptance', it is defined as the "promotion and acceptance of diverse body sizes and appearances" and denouncing unrealistic images of beauty standards displayed by the media and social media platforms (Lazuka et al., 2020, p.85). This definition encourages the wider population to celebrate inclusivity of all body types by, for example, displaying a wider representation of women with diverse body types (Banfield, 2020).

Likewise, it was discussed that prior to what is known as the body positivity movement today, the movement was established under the name 'National Association to Aid Fat Americans' then 'National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance' of NAAFA (BBC, 2020). The movement was renamed in 2013 the body positivity movement (Tonic, 2019; BBC, 2020). The purpose of the movement shifted from solely focusing on equal rights for individuals with 'bigger' bodies to embracing all body shapes and sizes (Cohen et al., 2019; BBC, 2020). In other words, the movement

is calling for inclusivity and rejection of “narrowly-defined and inaccessible body ideals”, which is in this case the thin-ideal (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 48). Having said that, unlike in the past when supporters or advocates would parade on the streets to raise awareness about body positivity (BBC, 2020), today, many take advantage of social media platforms. With a growing number of social media users, the body positivity movement shifted to sharing and spreading self-love and positivity via social media platforms (BBC, 2020; Cohen et al., 2020). Likewise, studies found that the promotion of body positivity grew immensely particularly on Instagram; as of 2020, there are over 11 million posts by users displaying and showing their body with the hashtag #bodypositive (Cohen et al., 2020). The purpose of these social media posts was to spread self-love and to raise awareness and acknowledge all body types that are underrepresented in, for example, the fashion industry (Banfield, 2020) and traditional and new media such as advertisements (Cohen et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, these body positivity related contents on social media were shared by many influencers, in particular ‘plus-size’ influencers (Gulino, 2021). Celebrity ambassadors such as Jameela Jamil and Megan Crabbe also supported and promoted the movement and both “aiming to fight against stereotypical beauty” (Ogden et al., 2020, p.1167). Ashley Graham, an influential American model highlighted that the movement “should be the norm...in the next 10 years, we don’t even have to discuss this. Beauty is beyond size.” (Moulton, 2019, para 7). According to Ashley’s statement, the body positivity movement should be normalized in the coming future, through which there is no need for further discussion or promotion because, in 10 years’ time, all body types should be accepted. Keeping this in mind, over the years, the body positivity movement has made many accomplishments such as brands eliminating the use of digital alteration tools such as Photoshop, which as mentioned was utilized to make models appear to be ‘thinner’ to fit the ‘ideal body’. Another accomplishment includes “TV shows casting a wider range of body types”, thus, being inclusive by displaying a wider representation of body shapes and sizes (Malacoff, 2018, para 4).

Having said that, as abovementioned, the celebration of body positivity involves embracing all body types regardless of size or shape, this inclusivity of all body types is what defines the concept of body diversity (Pounders, 2018; Leboeuf, 2019). Before proceeding with the discussion around body diversity, the term ‘diversity’ will be defined. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term diversity is defined as “the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organization” (n.d.). By combining the term diversity and body, body diversity can be defined as the inclusion of all forms of body shapes and sizes.

As discussed, exposure to unrealistic images of women’s body was negatively impacting women’s self-body image and self-esteem, thus, many women are demanding for brands to embrace body positivity and to include a wider representation of diverse body models (Kemp, 2018; Pounders, 2018). The lack of representation of models with diverse body types is of concern raised by many researchers such as abovementioned, Cohen et al. (2019) and Banfield (2020) and many more such as Toomey (2015) and Hawn (2019). By being representative of different body types, studies found that

women are more likely to “feel positive about their own bodies”, thus, improving their self-body image and self-esteem (Ogden et al., 2020, p. 1174). Ogden et al. (2020) conducted an experimental study, evaluating the “impact of body diversity images and whether these could act as a buffer against thin-ideal norms” (p. 1165). The study found that by displaying a more diverse range of body types, women’s tendency to criticize their own body shape and size decreased. Thus, this suggests that exposure to different body types can improve women’s self-body image and self-esteem because the images displayed realistic and attainable body types. At the same time, they were able to relate to the body types in the images, as it represented the body types seen in society today.

Brand’s body positivity message

Since the establishment of the body positivity movement, brands have become more aware of the need for and importance of embracing body diversity. This realization was brought upon by the change in society’s body shape and size, hence, for brands, in particular, catering “only to a specific size or body type” is unacceptable (Petro, 2019, para 1). Clothing brands such as H&M, ASOS, Missguided and Nike took action by adjusting their clothing size according to respective countries and launched campaigns portraying women of diverse body shapes and sizes (Petro, 2019; Baram, 2019). These are some examples of brands stepping up and implementing body positivity messages. However, despite having a clear body positivity message, some messages were in turn perceived negatively.

Nike is a brand example that experienced a backlash after displaying ‘plus-size’ mannequins in its store. In 2017, Nike launched its plus-size clothing collection and in the following year displayed plus-size mannequins in its London stores (Taylor, 2019). The brand intended to share the message of celebrating “diversity and inclusivity of sport” (Vivinetto, 2019, para 4; Hanson, 2019). Thus, the purpose of displaying mannequins of different sizes in stores was to showcase a wider representation of body types (Dooley & Rearick, 2019) because this allows people who shop in stores to see how the clothing would look or fit on their body type. With such a powerful message, the brand initially received positive responses particularly from ‘plus-size’ women (Rivas, 2019). However, the brand was later criticized by The Telegraph journalist, Tanya Gold. The article by Tanya argued that the brand was promoting ‘fat acceptance’ and encouraging “people to deny possible health risks related to obesity” (Taylor, 2019, para 6; Dooley & Rearick, 2019). She described the mannequin in figure 6 below as “immense, gargantuan, vast. She heaves with fat” (Gold, 2019). Tanya further discussed the relation between the mannequin’s size with health, explaining that an obese individual is unable to exercise and is likely to pose serious health risks (Taylor, 2019).



Figure 6: Nike's 'plus-size' mannequin displayed in its London stores (Hanson, 2019)

Tanya's article garnered the attention of many women, some criticized Tanya and argued that being 'plus-size' does not imply that an individual is unhealthy (Moran, 2019). Moreover, women who disagreed with Tanya shared on social media stating that women of 'bigger' bodies can in fact exercise (Moran, 2019). Figure 7 illustrates a woman sharing an image of her body next to Nike's 'plus-size' mannequin with a description explaining that her body resembles Nike's mannequin and that she is still able to exercise and run marathons (Rivas, 2019). Likewise, researcher Jasmine Fardouly responded to the claim that 'plus-size' individuals are unhealthy by explaining that "people can be unhealthy at any body size and exercising is good for everyone" (Moran, 2019, para 12). She further explained that there is an increasing number of 'bigger' body individuals; therefore, displaying 'plus-size' mannequins can better represent the population growing in size (Moran, 2019).



Figure 7: Social media post disagreeing with Tanya Gold's article (Moran, 2019)

Based on Tanya Gold's statement, it appears that from her point of view body positivity is seen as unacceptable for obese body types because being obese indicates that the individual is unhealthy. Then again, body positivity is to embrace all body types, hence, accepting individuals of diverse body shape and size (Lazuka et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, studies have found that it may be risky for brands to be inclusive and representative of all body types, one of the reasons being that there is an increasing number of countries with growing obesity rates such as the U.K. and the U.S. (Pounders, 2018; ProCon, 2020). Therefore, brands will need to be cautious when promoting diverse body shapes and sizes, most importantly brands need to be "health conscious" (Pounders, 2018, 134). Pounders (2018) found evidence suggesting that "some consumers believe brands featuring plus-size models are promoting obesity and unhealthy behaviours" (p. 134). Furthermore, Pounders and Flynn (2019) conducted another study about "consumer response towards plus-size models featured in the mainstream media" (p. 1355), the following expressions were found towards images of 'plus-size' models, 'anger and disgust' and 'genuine health concerns'. Consumers who expressed anger and disgust predominantly mentioned that the images are promoting and 'normalizing' obesity. Meanwhile, consumers who expressed genuine health concerns stating that the models are 'bigger' than average women, thus, are

likely to be suffering from health issues. Furthermore, consumers suggested that brands should consider featuring models of diverse body types that are healthy (Pounders and Flynn, 2019). Having said that, with this example, consumers' response certainly contradicts the objectives of the body positivity movement

Another brand example is Mattel's iconic Barbie dolls with 62 years of history. The brand faced controversies for more than five decades, many adult women and parents criticized the brand for selling and promoting unrealistic images of women, which was influencing young girls' body image (O'Connor, 2016; Dockterman, 2016). From the year 2012 to 2014, the brand experienced a 20 percent decrease in sales, this sales reduction continued in the following years. With the brand long criticized, sales falling and body ideals changing, they decided to give Barbie new bodies. In 2016, Mattel launched the new Barbie within three body types, curvy, tall and petite, see figure 8. The brands' objective was to have Barbie "closely reflect their young owners' world", in other words, reflecting the populations' body shape and size (Dockterman, 2016, para 4).



Figure 8: Barbie in three new body type: curvy, petite and tall (Dockterman, 2016)

The general manager and senior vice president of Mattel stated, "we believe we have a responsibility to girls and parents to reflect a broader view of beauty" (O'Connor, 2016, para 5). With the launch of the new collection, some women argued that the brand could have included more body types, for example, the 'curvy' Barbie could have been 'curvier', but overall positive responses and feedbacks were received, and mothers stated that they would want to give their child a doll-like Barbie (Dockterman, 2016). Nonetheless, Barbie is one of many brands stepping forward to display a

wider representation of body types, but it can consider adding more body types to better reflect different body types seen in society today.

Body positivity and diversity in the East

As mentioned, diverse bodies have yet to be fully accepted by countries in the East such as China and South Korea (Kittka 2016; Schiwng, 2020). However, with globalization, the younger generations now have better access to western media and cultures, which suggests that they are more likely to be open-minded and accepting of diverse body types (Gu, 2018). Then again, it is important to understand that this does not entail that the younger generation will automatically accept diverse body types. Rather, as Gu (2018) mentioned, this is an opportunity to place in their radar awareness about body positivity and body diversity.

With China's body ideal set a being 'thin', studies found that the population's body size is growing, and many viewed this as a business opportunity to expand the sale of plus-size clothing due to limited choices available (Twigg, 2019; Tang, 2020). Similarly, South Korea is also experiencing a growth in population body size, thus, many women of 'bigger' bodies are struggling to find clothing that is suitable for them due to limited sizing options (Anderson, 2018). Due to a lack of clothing size options, some Asian brands stepped forward to develop a wider range of clothing size, particularly for women of 'bigger' bodies.

In China, the first brand to embrace body diversity is a lingerie brand called Neiwai, established in 2012. The brand has over the years expanded its product line "to meet the diverse needs of different body types that make up today's China" (Snelling, 2020, para 3; Neiwai, 2021). Similar to the abovementioned brands such as H&M and Nike, Neiwai also made an adjustment to the size of their clothing collection according to the shape and size of the women in the country. During the launch of its new product line, Neiwai designed a campaign featuring women of diverse body types, the goal was to showcase real and relatable women (Snelling, 2020). As shown in figure 9, women that were featured in the campaign reflected not all but some body types seen in society.



Figure 9: Neiwai ‘No body is nobody’ campaign (Snelling, 2020)

Furthermore, the brand stated that regardless of breast size, age and body size and shape, they want women to find products that suit them at Neiwai (Jiang, 2020). Thus, this is a step forward to embracing and accepting body diversity.

J Style is one of the few brands in South Korea that predominantly caters to plus-size women, but also designs ‘smaller’ size clothing, which many other brands in the West do (Soo, 2018). This is uncommon in South Korea as the country was named “one of the world’s thinnest” (Soo, 2018). According to Soo (2018), J Style’s aim is to “challenge conventional notions about beauty and promote alternative beauty” (para 3). The conventional notion of beauty in South Korea is to be ‘thin’, from J Style’s perspective, an alternative beauty is to embrace all forms of body shapes and sizes (Soo, 2018). J Style’s current representatives stated that “plus-size models can become role models to the average people” (Anderson, 2018, para 7). They refer ‘average people’ to the population that does not fit into the country’s ‘ideal body’. The brand is striving to raise awareness about the lack of diverse body types as well as, clothing size options. In spite of the challenges to move forward with embracing body positivity and diverse bodies in China and South Korea, brands like Neiwai and J Style are continuously taking action to change society’s perception.

Body positivity and diversity in the West

Meanwhile, in the West, people are more accepting of diverse body types and are demanding for clothing brands to be authentic and realistic, by means of being inclusive and diverse in, for example, clothing size (Kittka, 2016; Ho, 2020). ASOS, for example, is well-known for catering to a variety of body types, the online fashion retailer launched in 2020 the “See My Fit tool on their platform to let users view dresses on 16 different body types across sizes 4 to 18”, see figure 10 (Ho, 2020, para 1).



Figure 10: ASOS ‘See My Fit’ tool (Ho, 2020)

Unlike in the East, countries in the West such as the U.S. and U.K. have a higher number of ‘obese’ and ‘overweight’ individuals (Sponsor, 2020). In the U.S., ‘plus-size’ clothing begins from size 10 to 14, and 67 percent of women wear U.S. size 14 (EU 44) or above (Westover, 2020), while in the U.K., 45 percent of women wear U.K. size 16 (EU 44) (Sponsor, 2020). This suggests that a majority of women in the U.S. and U.K. leaned towards having a ‘bigger’ body. With women’s body size increasing, some brands are moving forward to be inclusive and representative of all body types by designing clothing catered to this growing population.

One example of a brand being inclusive is the American brand Universal Standard, which became one of the “world’s most inclusive brand with a size range from 00 to 40” (EU 28 to 48) in 2019 (Westover, 2020, para 2). The brand’s purpose is to “set new standards”, hence, highlighting various body types which were considered as the new body standards (Benberry, 2020). Likewise, similar to China and South Korea, there are concerns in the U.S. about the lack of clothing options available for plus-size women (Benberry, 2020), which is one of the reasons why Universal Standard expanded its clothing line by offering a wider range of clothing sizes. Furthermore, in light of this concern, other brands such as Adidas and J. Crew formed a partnership with Universal Standard to “develop inclusive size ranges” (Howland, 2019, para 5). Meanwhile, in the U.K., British fashion retailer ASOS was praised for embracing body positivity by featuring women of diverse body types to model for their new clothing collections (Hendriksz, 2018). The brand explained that by utilizing body diverse women to model for their clothing, they are showcasing realistic images of real women that can represent not all, but some of the population (Cosmopolitan, 2019). Nonetheless, the brand explained that with the ‘See My Fit’ tool and images of diverse body types “customers can get a better

sense of how something might fit their body shape” (Hendriksz, 2018, para 5; Ho, 2020), In other words, as stated, by utilizing realistic models that reflect the body types seen every day, women will feel more confident that they are too able to look good wearing the outfit (Banfield, 2020).

3.0 Methods

This methodology chapter will address the research design employed in this paper to answer the following research question: *How do female students from all over the world perceive models with diverse body types presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram* and sub-research questions: sub-RQ1 *How do Asian female students perceive model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?* And sub-RQ2 *How do Western-European female students perceive model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?*

The chapter will begin by describing the research methodology, semi-structured interview and the characteristics of the interviewees, followed by an analysis of the interview format and introducing stimulus materials utilized in the study. Moreover, this chapter will also explain the method utilized to analyse the data and explain the use of the data analysis method to answer the sub-research questions. Finally, this chapter will discuss the ethical implications of the research study.

3.1 Characteristics of Semi-structured Interview and Interviewees

To answer the main research question and sub-research questions, a total of 12 semi-structured interviews was conducted. Interviews were selected as the research method because it allows for an exchange of opinions and thoughts regarding a subject matter between two or more individuals (Brinkmann, 2020). By utilizing this research method, the paper aimed at gathering participants’ opinions on the concept of body ideals, body positivity, and body diversity, but most importantly, how participants perceive models with diverse body types displayed by clothing brands on Instagram. As stated, it is necessary to understand that perceptions towards body diverse models may differ across nationalities. The beliefs of one country may differ from another due to cultural differences. Thus, an individual’s perception of what is a ‘thin’ or ‘big’ body may differ. All 12 interviews predominantly focused on gathering participants’ understanding and point of view on the concept of body diversity because the discussion around this theme helped prompt further discussion when referring to the stimulus materials. Subsequently, due to the nature of this research method, interviewees were allowed to freely express and share their thoughts and opinions on the subject of discussion in private (Bolderston, 2012). Conducting an interview in a private setting was highly essential and preferred as it stimulated greater information sharing and ensured that interviewees felt relaxed and comfortable with their surrounding (Bolderston, 2012). In addition, keeping the general atmosphere of the interview informal allowed the interviewees to feel relaxed and at ease (Crawford, 1997).

For this research paper, semi-structured interviews constituted the most appropriate method to answer the proposed sub-research questions because the research topic is a topic that can have various perspectives, which provides the researcher with an abundance of information to analyse (Adams et al., 2015). A semi-structured interview is a partially structured interview that incorporates both “closed- and open-ended questions”, allowing interviewees to share openly their opinions (Adams et

al., 2015). As the interview includes closed and open-ended questions, extended probing is possible, allowing further elaboration on particular topics (Adams et al., 2015). This implies that the interviewer can include follow-up questions, for example, having participants elaborate further on specific questions or provided responses (Adams et al., 2015). This technique increases the possibilities of collecting more information from interviewees, which are relevant to the research (Bolderston, 2012; Brinkmann, 2020). Thus, this interview technique, also known as probing, allows the interviewer to collect more information and also verifies vague responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Likewise, this research method enables interviewers to keep the conversation around the research topic but also allows interviewees to freely express their views. Therefore, this ensures that the information collected can accurately answer and is relevant to the research question. Furthermore, the quality of the information shared by interviewees was highly dependent not only on the design of the questions but also on the interviewer's probing skills (Johnson et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important that the interviewer listens carefully and make notes during the interview (Guion et al., 2011). Notes made during the interviews for this research study were handwritten in a notebook (see Appendix Q).

In preparation to conduct the interviews, there are a few stages that the interviewer considered: the selection of participants, interview location and designing of the interview questions (Guion et al., 2011; Adams et al., 2015). After completing these three stages, the interviewer proceeded with conducting the interviews, then transcribing, and followed by analysing interview transcripts using thematic analysis to gather relevant information to answer the sub-research questions (Guion et al., 2011; Adams et al., 2015).

For this research paper, participants were selected based on the purpose of the research study, which was to examine how female students from all over the world perceive models with diverse body types. Therefore, participants selected for the interviews are of different nationalities from Asia and Western-Europe. The selection and recruitment of participants utilized two methods, purposive sampling and friends of friends. Purposive sampling is a sampling method that produces "a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative to the population" (Battaglia, 2011, p. 645). As the researcher has friends from around the globe, recruiting participants through this sampling method was most convenient and suitable as this research study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to recruiting the participants, the researcher first contacted friends requesting them to recommend their friends who may be interested in participating in the interview. This was proceeded by contact exchange namely, WhatsApp of the friend's friend who was interested. The researcher then contacted the participant through WhatsApp, asking for their approval to participate and e-mail address for the researcher to send additional information such as the informed consent form and interview schedule. Participants were notified to sign the informed consent form if they agree with all the terms listed and to keep the form as a copy.

Nonetheless, the friends of friends sampling method allowed participants to feel more comfortable in sharing their personal opinions and thoughts because participants were to an extent familiar with the researcher (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, 2011; Brewis, 2014). Reason being that the researcher's friend may have shared some information about the researcher prior to agreeing to participate in the interview. Hence, this information may have placed the interviewee at ease as they are somewhat familiar with the researcher as an individual. However, after contacting the interviewees, the interviewer did not communicate further to preserve unfamiliarity before the interview. Because according to Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011), close acquaintance with participants may affect the validity of the interview; for example, some information may be omitted as participants are familiar with the interviewer. Therefore, conducting interviews with friends or friends is preferable as there remains some unfamiliarity between the interviewer and interviewee, which allows the interviewee to elaborate further (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, 2011).

In addition, the following inclusion criteria were utilized when recruiting participants: university student of any studies, different nationalities and preferably residing in respective countries of their nationality. The reason for this is, for example, if the participant is from 'the East' and is residing in 'the West', their thoughts and opinions may be influenced by 'the West'. For example, Jess from Thailand was born and raised in Thailand, but she studied abroad in 'the West' for a few years, thus, her perception of a female body is likely to have been influenced. Therefore, this will be acknowledged when analysing the transcripts under the results and discussion chapter. Subsequently, student participants were selected based on the assumption that students are representative of the younger population (Evans & Rooney, 2013). For this reason, all participants recruited for the interviews were young students either pursuing their bachelor's or master's degree in any studies. Furthermore, this research study recruited female participants because studies have found that the younger female population are most affected by social media contents displaying thin ideals (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). Therefore, the purpose of recruiting young female students is to examine their thoughts and opinions upon seeing images of diverse body types by clothing brands on social media specifically Instagram.

As aforementioned, participants for this research study were of different nationalities from 'the East' and 'the West'. Table 1 illustrates the list of participants recruited whose name was kept confidential due to privacy concerns and as stated in the informed consent form, and thus, were named under different pseudonyms (see table 1). With a total of 12 participants, 6 were from 'the East' and 6 from 'the West'. Participants' age range was from 22 to 26.

	Name	Age	Nationality
Asian	Jess	24	Thai
	Daisy	25	Indian
	Jacky	26	Malaysian Chinese
	Rose	24	Japanese
	Ola	25	Hong Kong, China
	Winnie	24	Hong Kong, China
Western-European	Mary	22	Dutch
	Sarah	24	Norwegian
	Sandra	26	French
	Valorie	26	Finnish
	Cathy	22	Dutch
	Riley	22	Dutch

Table 1: Participant’s information (pseudonyms, age and nationality)

As stated, this research study conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews, each lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. For this particular research study, 12 interviews were deemed sufficient as all interviews provided relevant information to answer the sub-research questions. Furthermore, information collected showed similar findings, thus, data saturation was reached. All interviews were conducted face-to-face online with the video calling application ‘Zoom’. Interviews were conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and for safety reasons, it was more appropriate to conduct remote interviews. In addition, conducting a video call was more convenient and feasible for participants residing in ‘the East’. Likewise, despite that some participants from ‘the West’ reside in the same country as the interviewer, it is, as mentioned, however, realistically more convenient to conduct all interviews online. This was to ensure that all interviewees have the same interview environment. Furthermore, by conducting all interviews online, the interviewer ensured that the interview setting was controlled. Despite little differences found in the quality of data when conducting interviews in-person in contrast to video interviews, interviews in-person, however, facilitates a more “natural conversational setting” (Johnson et al., 2019, p. 2). Moreover, a natural interview setting allows the interviewer to build rapport, which may be lost when interviews are conducted online (Rowley, 2012). To overcome this, interviews for this research study were conducted informally, by which each interview was in a casual and comfortable setting. Hence, interviewees were comfortable in their environment. As they were comfortable, they responded to questions openly and natural (Longhurst, 2003). Nonetheless, according to Johnson et al. (2019), as mentioned, the quality of data collected from face-to-face interviews in-person in contrast to online

face-to-face interviews are equally as good, and in some cases, online face-to-face interviews may produce an even higher quality of data.

Furthermore, similar to interviewing in person, the interview location was an important element for consideration for both the interviewer and interviewee to attend the interview. For example, selecting a location that is private and “with minimal background noise” to prevent any form of disturbance or distractions during the interview is desirable (Bolderston, 2012, p.72). Subsequently, as the interviews were conducted online, it was recommended for interviewees to select their preferred location where they feel more relaxed and comfortable. This was to ensure that interviewees feel more comfortable when sharing their opinions and thoughts (Brennen, 2017). Other forms of ensuring that interviewees are feeling comfortable and relaxed will be discussed further in the interview format section.

3.2 Interview Format and Stimulus Materials

Following the selection of participants and location of the interview, the next phase will discuss the preparation process for the interviews which includes, the layout of the interview guide, interview question design, stimulus materials and pilot testing. As mentioned, this research study will conduct semi-structured interviews with predominantly open-ended questions. The final version of the interview guide was structured as followed, two icebreaker questions to begin. Before diving into the interview, the interviewer and interviewee had a short conversation with two icebreaker questions to ensure that the interviewees feel comfortable and at ease (Adam et al., 2015; Brennen, 2017). Questions include “how are you feeling today” and “the interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes; do you have this amount of time set aside?”. Following the icebreaker questions, interviewees were given a brief introduction about the researcher, the purpose of the study and information about the stimulus materials. Next, participants were provided with the stimulus materials, then questions around the three discussion themes, body ideals, body positivity, body diversity. The interview continued by providing participants once again with the stimulus materials and finally ending with a question asking participants if they had additional information to share. Including the icebreaker questions, the interview consisted of 16 main questions in total, with 2 questions being closed-ended. All 14 questions were coloured in black indicating that these questions will be asked. On the other hand, there were 11 pre-made follow-up questions coloured in blue that were utilized for additional probing depending on interviewees’ responses (see Appendix A).

Each of the theme mentioned was selected to gather relevant information to answer the research and sub-research questions (Rowley, 2012; Adams et al., 2015). However, there may be overlaps between the themes, which is why questions in the interview guide were linked to one another. Furthermore, the discussion themes revolved around the concept of body shapes and size, thus, explaining the overlaps. As stated, the stimulus materials were provided to participants twice during the interview, in the beginning, and at the end. As the interviews were conducted online, the stimulus

materials were sent using the chatbox on Zoom after they were briefed. Interviewees were told to put the stimulus materials away for later after providing an initial overview. The idea was to first have interviewees familiarize themselves with the images and then providing an overview of their initial thoughts before proceeding to the questions around the three themes. Following that, when the stimulus materials were provided for a second time, interviewees were asked for additional inputs, if any. This was essential as it examines how participants of different nationalities perceived models of diverse body types after the discussions.

Moving on to the design of the interview questions, topics of discussion for this research study was around body shapes and sizes, thus, can be perceived as a sensitive topic. Due to this, the researcher ensured that the questions designed were not too personal or in any ways directed towards interviewees. For example, in the first interview guide, the researcher included the question “do you feel that you are able to relate to when seeing models with diverse body types on advertisements or social media?”. This question posed ethical implications because it was asking for interviewees to assess their body, which could have been uncomfortable to answer. On the other hand, interviewees could have misinterpreted the question as if they could not relate to the bodies displayed in advertisements, thus, they are ‘different’. Further discussion about ethical implications will be discussed in section 3.4. However, in some cases, this may not be prevented as each interviewee’s responses differ, thus, some may respond by using their body as an example. Nevertheless, according to Bolderston (2012) and Rowley (2012), interview questions should be kept clear and concise to avoid confusion or misunderstandings. This is not specific for this research study, but it was important that the questions asked were easy to understand. Then again, the researcher can clarify when a question is not clear, which did occur a few times during the interviews. Furthermore, it was important for the interviewer when making clarification to not make any assumptions that may influence interviewees’ thoughts or opinions.

As abovementioned, all questions utilized in this research study were clear and straightforward to ensure that interviewees do not feel uncomfortable. This was executed by creating open-ended questions, allowing interviewees to express their thoughts and opinions that they were comfortable with sharing. In addition, follow-up questions were included based on interviewees’ responses. For example, “what do you think the current beauty ideal is?” and “what are your thoughts on seeing advertisements featuring women with diverse body types?”. Both are open-ended questions asking for interviewees to share personal thoughts and opinions. Most importantly, interviewees were told that there were no right or wrong answers and that they are allowed to share any information, provided that they are comfortable.

As part of this research study, stimulus materials were utilized. The materials included 16 images of Instagram posts from 4 different clothing brands from China, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. Thus, 4 images of the Instagram posts per brand. The selection of the brands was based on the following criteria: the brand is a clothing brand that includes lingerie and the brand’s

Instagram must feature models of diverse body types. Unlike ‘the West’, there are fewer clothing brands in ‘the East’ that feature models of diverse body types on Instagram. Which explains why lingerie was also included. The lingerie brand selected was a Chinese brand called ‘Neiwai’, the brand is known for being one of the first brands in China to embrace and celebrate body diversity by featuring “6 real women” of different beauty and body standards (Snelling, 2020, para 2). South Korean brand ‘J Style’ is a clothing brand catering to plus-size women, the brand features professional plus-size models that are “redefining beauty” (para 1) and spreading body positive messages in a country that views curves as a taboo (Anderson, 2018). On the other hand, in comparison to ‘the East’, it was found that there were more brands from ‘the West’ featuring diverse body types on Instagram (Lopez, 2018). ‘ASOS’ a British retailer that caters to all types of body shapes and sizes is well-known for embracing body diversity by featuring models of diverse body types (Hendriksz, 2018). Although the brand is well-known worldwide, its Instagram account showcases a wide representation of body types from all around the world. As for the American brand ‘Universal Standard’, the brand embraces body diversity by offering clothing that caters to women of all shapes and sizes, thus, “shifting plus-size from niche to norm” (Crepax, 2019, para 1). In addition, all images were selected based on the following criteria: each image will include one or more models, models are of diverse body types and image of models can be half or full-bodied.

The reason for utilizing stimulus materials in this study was to examine the perceptions of female students from all over the world towards models of diverse body types. The purpose of stimulus materials allows for further elaboration around a discussion topic and can be utilized to prompt for additional information (Stacey & Vincent, 2011). The stimulus materials were utilized to answer the sub-research questions. According to Chrzanowska (2011), when utilizing stimulus materials, interviewees can be provided with different materials such as visual images. This allows them to see the topic of discussion instead of imagining or creating a picture in their heads (Chrzanowska, 2011). With visual images present, interviewees were able to better convey their responses, as well as shared additional relevant information discovered after seeing the images (Chrzanowska, 2011).

With the interview guide, interview questions, and stimulus materials prepared, a pilot study was conducted to prior to conducting the actual interviews. A pilot study is utilized to trial the interview questions and structure to ensure that it “would work in practice” (Kim, 2010, p.191). The pilot test was conducted as if it was the actual interview, the participant was recruited using the friends of friends sampling method and corresponded with the criteria. A schedule timeslot for the interview was provided to the participant through e-mail and the interview itself was conducted using the video calling application Zoom. The pilot interview begun with the icebreaker questions before proceeding with a brief introduction. Next, the participant received the stimulus materials via Zoom’s chatbox in 2 separate documents, labelled ‘the East’ and ‘the West’. This was to differentiate which part of the world the brands are from. The participant was told to first look at 4 images from either document,

provide an overview and putting the documents away for later. The pilot interview then proceeded with the discussion and finally another overview of the stimulus materials.

After completing the pilot interview, it was found that showing 4 images in the beginning of the interview and at the end was unhelpful in terms of the information shared by the participant. In the beginning the interviewee shared a general overview of the images such as the body appearance and clothing style. When asked to provide a second overview, the interviewee again provided the again a general overview of the remaining images with additional points about brands displaying more body diverse models. Furthermore, the interviewee had difficulties responding to some questions while referring to a specific image because it was in located in two separate documents. Therefore, for the actual interviews, the stimulus materials which consisted of 16 images were compiled into one pdf document. This was proved to have been more convenient during the actual interviews. In addition, participants were asked to provide an overview of all the images in the beginning and at the end of the interview. This adjustment resulted in more information provided by interviewees. As for the interview questions, an additional question “how do you think body positivity and/ or body diversity is visible” was added under the theme ‘body diversity’. This question was a follow-up question asked during the pilot interview and the interviewee responded with information that is relevant for the research study. Therefore, it was decided that the question will be added to the final interview guide. Moreover, that question was also linked to the next question “how do you think brands have incorporated body diversity and/or body diversity in advertising”.

With the pilot study completed and changes applied, the interview guide was ready. A day prior to the interview, participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the following, the description of the research study such as the study purpose ‘perception towards body diversity in models’, audio recording during the interview, right to withdraw from the interview at any given time, right to have the interview recording removed after the interview, time involvement and that all information collected was to be kept anonymous and confidential. As mentioned, interviews were conducted via the video calling application ‘Zoom’ and the interviews were conducted using Zoom’s recording tool which are stored for only 30 days. After 30 days, the recordings are removed automatically. At the end of the interview, participants were debriefed and were asked if they had any additional information to share or questions about the interview. Finally, each participant was once again reminded about the terms in the consent form, if they were to want their recording or information such as the interview transcript removed.

3.3 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

After executing the data collection phase, the next phase involves transcribing the interviews by generating verbatim texts (Guion et al., 2011). This research study will utilize a ‘smooth verbatim’ transcription method, this is executed by transcribing the original content from the recording to a word document with no grammatic correction and no paraphrasing (Cucleschin, 2019). For this study,

it is important that every word, slang and detail from the recording is preserved, by doing so, the analysis of the interview transcripts will be of richer quality (Fiverr, 2020). Thus, during this phase, each of the interview was transcribed twice. Each interview was transcribed automatically by Zoom. Then transcribed again for the second time by the researcher in a document to ensure that no details or words were omitted or misinterpreted (see figure 10).

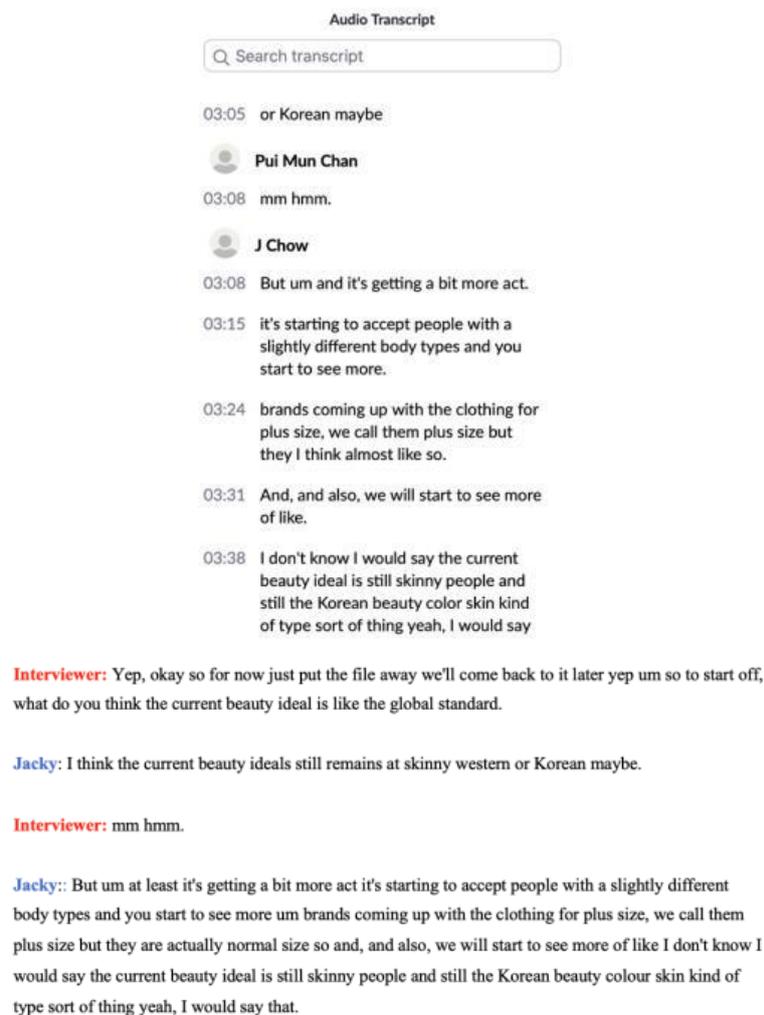


Figure 10: Zoom auto transcription (left), researcher hand transcription (right)

After completing the transcribing phase, the final phase involves analysing the interview transcripts. For this research paper, thematic analysis was selected as the method of analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p. 297). The thematic analysis allows for in-depth analysis of the data, by identifying patterns or themes across in this case interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2017).

This research paper applied the thematic analysis process by Braun and Clarke (2006) which consists of six phases. The first phase was to become familiar with the interview transcripts. During

this phase, the researcher highlighted in each interview transcripts, relevant responses and highlighted key themes that could be utilized as initial coding categories. This was transferred into a table, see figure 12 below. Short sentences coloured in red were utilized as sidenote to remind the researcher what the quote refers to and the keywords coloured in blue were possible key themes to be utilized as initial coding categories.

Interviewee	Findings (Direct quotes from transcript)
Jess (Thai)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...not typical plus size...like covering up the body but also showing off their curves (referring to <u>เจ้าชู้</u>) - ...people who have a more <u>more</u> of like a normal body with <u>with</u> skin like mark on their skin... (referring to universal standards) - ...trend of <u>empowering</u>...to love different kind of different size or different every type of body right...people right now are more open to <u>to</u> show off their body... - ...beauty ideal is <u>actually to to</u> be <u>confident</u> to show off your body... - Ideal body (overall): ...people who has got more of a curvy body as in of course, they would have a flat stomach <u>stomach</u> as you know you would expect, on a model... - ...<u>more curvy</u> um what should I say curvy body overall to you know look more sexually appealing... - Ideal body (respective culture): ...thin would still be preferred here in Asia, and especially in Thailand...there's two types of <u>thing</u>...curvy kind of thing or like a size zero model kind of thin - ...if you ask people normal people what they would prefer to look like or <u>or</u> what they think look more appealing or <u>more healthy</u> then a more curvy kind of thin would be preferable. - ...idealize that body is to put a lot of bodies at risk... (referring to <u>size zero body type</u>) - ... still a lot of work for <u>for</u> a lot of other of other people to understand that that there are no like normal <u>body</u> or you shouldn't shame other people for saying that they're insecure about their body because you perceive it as like a normal body or something.

Figure 12: Highlighting important findings (Phase 1)

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the second phase proceeds with establishing the initial codes with the noted findings. However, as potential initial coding categories were highlighted in phase 1, this phase was utilized to review the initial coding categories. The purpose of this phase was to categorize the initial codes into relevant segments, this process was conducted in a table format with initial 'coding categories' on one column and 'description' in another. The description columns are quotes that support the coding category, see figure 13 below for an example. The researcher also included additional notes next to each initial coding, noting down the meaning behind each code.

Initial Coding Categories	Description
Normal: seeing models of diverse body types, not the standard thin but all types/ different body shapes/sizes are 'normal', no specific definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...more people are demanding for a normal body... - ... embracing to not have the perfect body and to kind of normalize it more in the media... - ... we call them plus <u>size</u> but they are actually normal size... - ...this just show quite casing like different bodies, which is nice and empowering that it's like the normalizing bodies... - ... they're using kind of the same model, but they're also showcasing different bodies and like normalizing being quote unquote plus size... - ...they're both like both on the plus <u>size</u>, I don't like to say, like plus size, because they're all like normal size... - it doesn't matter if you're skinny or a little bit bigger or curvy doesn't matter you're still uh still normal and it's normalized in our society...

Figure 13: Initial coding categories (Phase 2)

The third phase was performed after all findings are coded and categorized, resulting in a list of identified codes. To sort out the list of codes, the purpose of this phase was to group different codes and place them under "potential themes" (p. 89) or sub-themes. In some cases, initial codes that do

not fit into any main or sub-themes will be placed under “a theme called miscellaneous” (p. 90). However, for this study, there were three main categories found and four sub-categories. Although there may be overlaps between the categories, each category differs in meaning and will be further discussed in the results and discussion chapter. A short overview of each category was added under ‘description’ to explain what each categories entails. The fourth phase was to review the themes established in the third phase. The process involves combining, refining, and separating themes to ensure that the codes are relevant and can support the themes. The fifth phase is to refine the themes, defining and labelling them. It is important to note that, the third, fourth and fifth phases were conducted in a table with 3 rows, labelled as main category, sub-category and description, see figure 14 below.

Main category	Sub-category	Description
Normalization	Realistic	Seeing all types of body shapes and sizes that appears around our daily life.
Representation	Relatable	Featuring diverse body shapes and sizes that reflect the general population.
	Confidence	People feel more assured when wearing the product after seeing a diverse range of body types modelling the product.
	Inclusivity	Seeing diverse body types featured gives people a sense of acceptance by society.

Figure 14: Main category and sub-category (Phase 3,4,5)

The description column was added to provide a summary explanation of each main category. A thematic map was created to display the link between the main category and sub-category, see figure 15 below.

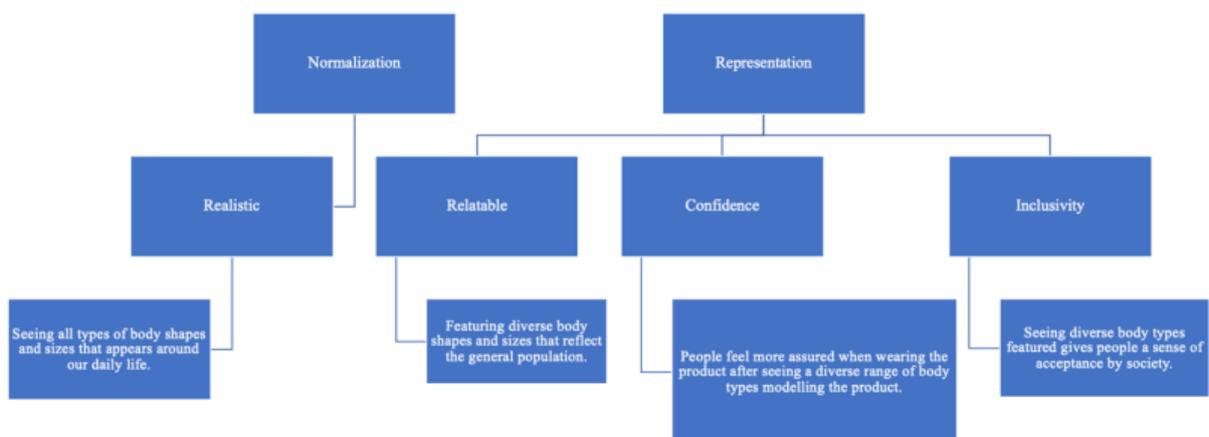


Figure 15: Thematic Map

Nonetheless, the full process for each phase can be found under Appendix O. The final stage of the data analysis will be to discuss the results by referring back to the main research questions, sub-research questions and literature review.

For this research paper, there were techniques utilized to ensure reliability and validity. Reliability was assured by displaying transparency of the research process, which includes criteria for selecting participants and stimulus materials, detailed explanation of the interview format such as the design of the interview guide, interview questions, stimulus materials and pilot study. And the method utilized to analyse the data was also explained. Likewise, according to Brinkmann and Kyale (2018) the process of transcribing the interviews can well increase reliability and validity by performing the transcription process twice which involves listening to the recording twice. As stated for this research, the interviews were transcribed twice, it was automatically transcribed by Zoom's recording tool for first time, and then transcribed again by the researcher for the second time. Thus, by performing transcription, this research study's reliability was assured, and validity was increased. In addition, when conducting interviews, reflexivity is important, the researcher is required to be aware of his or her role and understanding how his or her ideas can influence the research study (Symon & Cassell, 2012). As it was difficult and almost impossible to remain unbiased during the interviews, reflexivity allowed the researcher to be aware that sharing opinions or ideas may influence interviewees' responses. Despite there being possibilities, that interviewees were influenced, these interviews can be acknowledged as co-creation. In other words, the interviewer and interviewee are working together to create the interview, one responsible for creating the questions and the other answering.

3.4 Ethical Implications

This research paper has some ethical implications. The topics discussed in this research study was considered to be personal. However, as mentioned, questions designed for the interviews were ensured to not in any way direct towards interviewees. But this is not always the case as interviewees themselves were, for example, comparing their own bodies to the ideal body standards set in their culture when asked the following question "how do you perceive the ideal body standard in your culture". Question with these elements can be considered as sensitive and personal, which may result in interviewees feeling discomfort or dissatisfied with their own bodies. Then again, prior to the interview, interviewees were provided with an informed consent form stating specifically that they have the right to withdraw from the interview at any given time. Thus, if the interviewees felt uncomfortable with the questions being asked or with the interview, they had the right to end and leave the interview. Moreover, each interviewee was informed that they were not obligated to answer questions that they were not comfortable with, and they were not obligated to share information that were deemed too personal for them.

3.5 Chapter Summary

To sum up, in order to address the sub-research questions, a total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted using the video calling application Zoom. Interviews were conducted online because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants recruited for the interviews were female students from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’. Each of the interview was conducted with an interview guide consisting of 15 questions divided into 3 categories: body ideals, body positivity and body diversity. Most questions focused predominantly on the main theme of body diversity. Stimulus materials consisting of 16 images in total were utilized to allow interviewees to further elaborate on their responses surrounding body diversity. All interviews were transcribed twice, first with Zoom’s transcription tool and then again by the researcher. The interview transcripts were analysed by conducting thematic analysis to examine interviewees’ perception on models of diverse body types featured by brands on their Instagram. Finally, this research paper has some ethical implications concerning some questions being too personal.

4.0 Results & Discussion

Findings from the thematic analysis will be presented in this results and discussion chapter. The layout of this chapter will follow the format of the interview guide by beginning with examining participants' perception of the stimulus materials, then moving on to examining the body ideals in respective cultures, in this case, Asian and Western perspectives which address the sub-research questions. This chapter will proceed with an overview and discussion of how participants perceived brands that featured diverse body types. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the two main categories: normalization, representation and four sub-categories: realistic, relatable, confidence and inclusivity. Discussions will be done with reference to the literature.

4.1 Participants Perception

As discussed in the methodology chapter, during the start of the interview, interviewees were asked to provide a general overview of all four brands: Neiwai, J Style, Universal Standard and ASOS. Nine of the interviewees provided a brief overview of the stimulus materials by generally describing what they see, while the remaining three provided an in-depth overview of each image by describing, for example, their clothing style and their pose etc. Towards the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked again to provide additional information on top of their initial overview. All of the interviewees especially nine of them that initially provided a brief overview provided additional information about the stimulus materials. In addition, interviewees were also asked to focus specifically on which brands found showcased the most diversity in body types. This was a follow-up question for all twelve participants, this question was added because many participants pointed out when sharing their overview that certain brand included more body types while the other did not.

It was found that a majority of interviewees selected Universal Standard and Neiwai for being diverse. Based on the provided stimulus materials, interviewees that selected the American brand Universal Standard said that the brand is most diverse in terms of body diversity amongst the four brands. Reasons being given were, for example:

“...have very a variety of sizes were from people can then choose their own size and feel beautiful wearing their clothes no matter their body type” – Valorie (Finland)

“I'll say universal standard... page seven, the first picture...there's a mix of normal and plus size women...” - Jacky (Malaysia)

Similarly, Sandra shared that Universal Standard presented “both skinny and plus-size people”, she further praised the brand for featuring a ‘bigger’ model wearing lingerie and that the brand is very representative for showcasing a wide representation of body types in different clothing. Valorie as

well, added that the brand showcased different models wearing the same outfit, which allows customers to see how the outfit would look on their body type. She further explained:

“...a variety of sizes where people can then choose their own size and feel beautiful wearing their clothes no matter their body types...” – Valorie (Finland)

In other words, as Hendriksz (2018) and Ho (2020) stated, customers, can find a better fit when seeing an outfit on different body types that they can relate to.

Meanwhile, other participants argued that the Asian brand Neiwai is most diverse in terms of ethnicity and also attempted to display a diverse range of body types. Jess shared that many of the models were ‘thin’ but there are also ‘bigger’ models featured. However, Daisy and Winnie argued that although Neiwai presented a body diverse models, many of the models leaned towards a ‘thinner’ side despite some belly or chubby arms shown. Similarly, Sandra shared that Neiwai tried but there were only a few models “a little bit curvier than the rest”, hence, implying that these models are still on a ‘thinner’ side. A lack of ‘bigger’ body models by Neiwai maybe because as mentioned, a majority of Asian women are generally ‘thin’ due to genetics as well as, their eating habits and diets (Zhang, 2012). In addition, Asian women who are not genetically slim have strict diets because in some Asian countries as mentioned, individuals who are ‘big’ are viewed as lazy (Kittaka, 2016). This relates to the point that Ola shared in the interview arguing that it is generally not very common to see people of a ‘bigger’ size in her country because being ‘thin’ is the body standard and image embedded into the culture. Rose shared similar insights as Ola. She argued that people of bigger size are not common in her Japanese culture, therefore, she is unable to relate to the images by the Western brands.

“... I couldn't really relate to the photos of the western brands, because I don't really see people of these type of body types in Japan...” – Rose (Japan)

Uncommon does not entail that it is less ideal; however, from Ola and Rose’s explanation, it could be that being ‘big’ is less ideal. As Zhang (2012) and Kittka (2016) mentioned, thin remains prevalent for the Asian culture, one being that Asian are genetically ‘thin’ and two, having a ‘bigger’ body is considered to be negative and those of bigger bodies are described as being lazy and irresponsible for their physical health. Thus, explains why Rose and Ola rarely see women of a bigger body.

Subsequently, when describing Neiwai’s selection of models, Sandra argued:

“...they're kind of trying to be more diverse but it's still very much yeah within the Asian beauty standards...” – Sandra (France)

Based on Sandra's response, she associated the selection of models with the Asian culture, wherein the models selected were representatives of the Asian population. Furthermore, Sandra explained that Neiwai featured models that were of 'Asian beauty standards', which she described as thin-ideal. Thus, with this finding, Sandra, Daisy and Winnie's argument are very much alike when arguing that there are body diverse models present but it is diverse within the 'thin' group.

Unlike Neiwai, interviewees found that J Style displayed mostly 'bigger' women. Interestingly, Mary pointed out that the brand utilized models without the 'ideal body' or as Sandra describes the 'Asian beauty standards'. Mary explained that:

"...they use a lot of different body types like they don't use the ideal body type, I think, from what I can see in the advertisements, so no like really slim bodies, but kind of normal... what you would see out on the street like just actual normal like body types..." – Mary (Netherlands)

Mary described the body types outside of advertisements as 'normal', this 'normal' body type can be referred to like all the body types other than mainstream 'thin' bodies. This relates to J Style's goal of shifting away from mainstream thin-ideal to showcasing a wider variety of body types (Soo, 2018). Similarly, Sarah also pointed out that the brand was using models with the same body types, but at the same time, also displaying different bodies "like normalizing being quote-unquote plus size". The display of different bodies refers to the type of 'plus-size' bodies J Style displayed.

Similarly, to J Style, based on the provided images interviewees felt that the models ASOS featured were diverse but within the 'bigger' body type. For example, Sandra shared:

"...I think this models are actually yeah great representatives they don't really fit the kind of um standards within curvy standards... they're very diverse like even within like plus size people...I love that they actually include lingerie in those types of representations..." – Sandra (France)

The key sentence 'they're very diverse like even within like plus size', thus, this may suggest that although the models are on the 'bigger' side, they are all in diverse types of 'big' bodies. In other words, they are diverse within their body type. Furthermore, a different image other than the mainstream 'thin' model allows other women of diverse body types to relate better. Cathy shared that "it's nice just to see...how also clothes, you know they look different on different body types". This is a similar response to Valorie's response about Universal Standard.

Overall, based on provided stimulus materials, interviewees found that models selected by the Chinese brand Neiwai were more on the 'thin' side while the South Korean brand J Style was diverse in terms of the use of 'bigger' bodies. On the other hand, the American and British brand featured more models of diverse body types, but similar to J Style, ASOS as well displayed models of the diverse body within the 'bigger' body type group.

4.2 Body Ideals

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, people of different cultural backgrounds in addition to other factors such as exposure to other cultures' media or traditions can affect their perception of what constitutes an ideal female body. Therefore, as Yan and Bissell (2014) and Givhan (2020) stated, beauty standards can vary across different cultures globally. To better understand how people of different cultural backgrounds perceive female body ideals, this research recruited a diverse group of female participants from Asia and Western-Europe. After sharing an overview of the stimulus materials, the interview proceeded to the first theme 'body ideal' where participants were asked *what do you think the current beauty ideal is and what do you think is the ideal body type in your culture or country?* In response to the question, a majority of participants said that being 'thin' remains the current beauty ideal. However, some participants for example Mary, Sandra and Jess mentioned that there is a shift towards curviness as a body ideal.

"...beauty ideal is is for uh women being skinny I feel like has always sort of been the ideal however, instead of being skinny everywhere, nowadays, I feel like the beauty ideal sort of shifted to uh more being more curvy in certain places..." – Mary (Netherlands)

"... I would say is someone who was thin but curvy in the right places I would say I think that's the current beauty ideal where for example to waist is very skinny but then the hips are a little bit larger..." – Sandra (France)

"...people who has got more of a curvy body as in of course, they would have a flat stomach stomach as you know you would expect, on a model..." – Jess (Thailand)

Mary, Sandra and Jess all explained being 'thin' is the current 'ideal body' for many countries around the world; however, some are seeing a shift towards being 'thin', but 'curvy' in certain body areas. This shift away from the mainstream thin-ideal was seen in U.S. (Howard, 2018; Coy, 2021). Hence, may suggest that this shift was transmitted into other cultures around the world. Nonetheless, Jess who has an Asian background, stood out, especially because the other five Asian participants responded very much alike, stating that the current beauty ideal is to be thin. To explain this, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, Jess was exposed to the western culture for a period of time, which therefore changed her perception of what is the global 'ideal body'. In this case, which is why she added that there is a shift towards having 'curves' in certain body areas.

Over the years, celebrities have become role models for many followers or fans who are striving to achieve their body shape, one of the most well-known celebrities is Kim Kardashian with her 'slim thick' body shape (Cliff, 2019, para 1). As mentioned, this body shape is explained as being slim but 'thick' or 'curvy' in particular body areas such as the bum and thighs (Cliff, 2019). This shift

towards a 'curvy' 'thin' ideal can be described as a "modified thin ideal with the additional expectation of large breasts and a big butt" (Betz & Ramsey, 2017, p. 19). This 'curvy' 'thin' ideal was expressed by four participants, Mary, Sandra, Jess, Riley and Valorie. Besides celebrity influence, studies found that western media contents played a role in influencing many local beauty standards, due to this, there are growing similarities in beauty ideals around the world namely, being 'thin' (Jones, 2011; Yan & Bissell, 2014). This change reflects the findings from the analysis, through which it was found that all participants stated that the current 'ideal body' is to be 'thin'. However, the definition of being 'thin' differed amongst participants. For example, Mary, Sandra, Jess, Riley and Valorie mentioned 'thin' but 'curvy' in specific body areas. Other participants such as Ola, Daisy, Winnie, Sarah and Cathy mentioned the 'ideal body' is 'thin', but it is becoming more inclusive and accepting in terms of representation of other body types.

"... more inclusive like body size especially... embracing to not have the perfect body and to kind of normalize it more in the media..." – Ola (Hong Kong, China)

"...it's kind of more of a healthy but the trend is kind of more like you know they're trying to push forward the idea of you know accepting your body..." – Jacky (Malaysia)

Similar to Jacky's statement in section 4.1, Ola also brought up the keyword 'normal'; however, unlike Jacky's definition of 'normal' women, which was defined as women with body types that were other than the mainstream 'thin'. Ola's interpretation of 'normal' was to make it more common for society to learn that not having the 'perfect' 'thin' body is normal. Moreover, a diverse range of body types should be displayed in the media, for example, in advertisements or social media. With that said, being inclusive and embracing different body types is the core of the body positivity movement, therefore, further discussion around this topic area will be done when examining in-depth the main categories and sub-categories (4.3 & 4.4).

Followed by participants' response on the current global body ideal, the next questions asked what the current 'ideal body' in their culture or country is. As mentioned, participants were recruited from different countries from Asia and Western-Europe namely, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong/ China, Netherlands, France, Finland and Norway. Looking at Asian participants' responses, the analysis revealed that they all shared responses that were very much alike. Interestingly, Rose was the only Asian participant that specifically pointed out that 'curviness' is not ideal and that being 'thin' is much preferred in Japan. When asked what the global body ideal was, Rose did not describe what she meant by 'thin'. Subsequently, Jess from Thailand stated that being 'thin' is much preferred in Asia, especially in Thailand but again explained that despite that, she is also seeing a shift towards the 'curvy' ideal.

*“...if you ask people normal people what they would prefer to look like or or what they think look more appealing or more healthy then a more curvy kind of thin would be preferable.” – Jess
(Thailand)*

Nonetheless, referring to Jess’s response, she mentioned ‘normal people’s preference, somewhat implying that there are different body ideals preferences for normal people and another group. However, the participant later clarified normal people are those who are not models or actresses, hence, normal people’s preference or view towards an ideal body may differ from non-celebrities or models.

Moving onto Western participants, out of the six Western-European participants, only Sandra who is of French ethnicity shared that the French ideal body type is “very much the skinny type”. It is important to keep in mind that the ‘ideal body’ in countries in the West may differ. Nonetheless, on the contrary, the remaining five participants shared interesting responses. Valorie mentioned that athletic body types with a little bit of abs and muscles are the ‘ideal body’ in Finland. Bozsik et al. (2018) described this body type as ‘thin’ but fit. This movement is known as the ‘fitspiration’, which created an alternative body ideal to encourage more people to not only be thin but to be thin muscular (Betz & Ramsey, 2017). Meanwhile, in Norway, Sarah shared a similar response as Valorie, which is that the Norwegian ideal body standard is to be fit or ‘thin’, but not too ‘thin’ as in underweight ‘thin’. Similarly, Riley also described the Dutch body ideal as “not too extreme in any direction...just want you to look healthy”. This may mean that there is a boundary to an individual’s body shape and size, it should not be ‘too extreme’, which could be mean either not too ‘thin’ or ‘big’. Nonetheless, this explanation falls in the line of staying healthy rather than, focusing on one’s body shape and size. ‘Healthy’ can be defined as a “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Felman, 2020, para 5).

Subsequently, from Cathy’s point of view, the Dutch ideal celebrates all types of body shapes and sizes, and that the Dutch culture encourages all to be self-body positive.

“...I think we're more accepting of you know everyone should be you know confident in their own body... - Cathy (Netherlands)

However, the meaning of acceptance of diverse body types differs from an ‘ideal body’. Then again, from Cathy’s perspective, there may not be a general Dutch body ideal rather, the ‘ideal body’ is all body types. Having said that, the response from all three Dutch participants differs from each other. While Riley’s response leaned towards the idea of being ‘healthy’, Cathy’s response is that the Dutch ideal is accepting in the sense that there is no ideal rather it embraces different body types. As for Mary, her response is in line with her previous response to the current beauty ideal, which is to have curves in particular body area. However, she explained:

“...in general, I don't think the beauty standard is enforced as much like from what I what I know from my surroundings... I don't think it's as enforced this maybe in other countries, I would say it is a bit more like curvy like it's okay to have a little bit of butt like breasts and everything...” – Mary (Netherlands)

Based on participants' responses, the 'ideal body' in the West is to be 'thin' but curvy in some body areas, while in the East, 'thin' remains the ideal female body.

4.3 Normalization of diverse bodies

The idea of 'normal' and 'normalized' was brought up by many participants during the discussion surrounding the topic of body ideals and body diversity. From some participants' perspective, 'normalization' implies that the display of women with diverse body types in advertisements should become more common because, in reality, there are various types of body shapes and sizes. Therefore, participants argued that it is 'normal' to see diverse bodies and it should be common to display diverse body types in advertisements because these bodies reflect the general population. This is important because as mentioned, seeing body types that are relatable helps customers become confident as they are able to find their fit.

Having said that, based on participants' explanations, the terms 'normalization' and 'normalized' implies something being common and should be made common. Nonetheless, participants provided a contrasting explanation of the 'normalization'. For example, Sarah, Ola and Valorie explained that all body types should be 'normalized' in society and that regardless of “if you're skinny or a little bit bigger or curvy...you're still normal”. On the other hand, Daisy, Jacky and Cathy explained that 'normalization' is that people should not be surprised or shocked when seeing models of diverse body types featured in advertisements and magazines or feel pleased with brands that embraced body diversity because it is not unusual.

“I mean when I look at it...that's what the normal people are so so it doesn't shock me, neither does it disgusts me is just you know there's no specific special feelings...” – Jacky (Malaysia)

“...it shouldn't be noticeable right, it should be like that it should be diverse and that should be what it's like...” – Cathy (Netherlands)

Subsequently, when asked about thoughts on seeing more body diversity in advertisements, Sandra, Rose and Mary responded that they feel happy and that it is a positive change. Ola shared that seeing a woman of diverse body types showcases “more realistic of how people are”. Overall, there was a positive response from participants, many pointed out that this positive shift suggests that society is gradually accepting diverse body types.

‘Realistic’ was expressed by many participants, this term was placed under ‘normalization’ because there are overlaps. In reality, there are a variety of body types that surrounds us daily, not only skinny or plus-size. For this reason, as Banfield (2020) mentioned, there needs to be a wider representation of women with diverse body types in advertisements. Furthermore, with reference to Ola’s statement:

“I am so done with like uh seeing all this perfect images of women like I I rather see like more realistic kind of images...” – Ola (Hong Kong, China)

Here, she explains that there is a need to showcase more women that are real in a sense of women we see around us. However, ‘thin’ models are also considered as ‘real’. Then again, Ola’s meaning of ‘real’ could be to display more body types that reflect the population. Similarly, Jacky shared a similar response, stating ‘realistic’ implies difference from the usual models, body types that are more “real life”.

Correspondingly, Cathy and Valorie raised an interesting point about the absence of body types in the ‘middle’ or ‘in between’. In other words, body types are in between ‘thin’ and ‘big’.

“...it's always like all like the model body like what we see is a standard... maybe like what's in between is kind of left out sometimes...” – Cathy (Netherlands)

“...what you also see that it either goes only skinny models, or only larger people or both of them, so you kind of missed the middle part so like more of the of the curvy...” – Valorie (Finland)

Society today predominantly focuses on either the standard ‘thin’ or ‘big’ body types, what is left out is the body types in between, which according to Brar (2020) is “not represented in media” (para 2). This ‘in between’ are body types that are rarely discussed because it is assumed to be less significant as compared to body types that differ from the usual body such as the common skinny and plus-size body types (Jansen & Wehrle, 2018). Based on Cathy and Valorie’s response, ‘model-like’ or ‘larger’ body types is generally displayed and what is missing is body types that are in the ‘middle’. From Valorie’s perspective, an example of what is missing would be ‘curvy’ body types. This ‘curvy’ body type may be referred to as the ‘slim thick’ body type, which could be considered as the missing ‘in between’.

Moving to another perspective on the term ‘normal’, Daisy shares:

“... we should come to the point where we have to stop stressing on the importance of body diversity is the day, I think it would be termed as normal...” – Daisy (India)

Here, Daisy's explanation suggests that there is an excessive focus on the concept of body diversity, for society to 'normalized' diverse bodies and the fact that there exist different body types, we will need to as Daisy mentioned "stop stressing" on its importance. Similarly, as mentioned, Ashley Graham expressed that the body positivity movement should be a norm in 10 years with no further discussion required, hence, suggesting that all body types are accepted as 'normal'. On the other hand, the importance of embracing body diversity is understandable because it is a societal concern for women and young women, in particular, to understand that their body is normal. However, according to Daisy, to normalize the idea of body diversity, society will have to refrain from pointing out the differences. In other words, 'normalizing' and accepting that there are different body types.

4.4 Representation

According to Kemp (2018) and Pounders (2018), a wider representation of models of diverse body types are demanded. The meaning of feeling 'represented' is as mentioned, seeing body types displayed and being able to relate. Three sub-categories under 'representation', and are relatable, confidence and inclusivity. When individuals can associate with the models featured in brand advertisements, they will feel less excluded, giving them the confidence and assurance that they can also wear the product and look good (Banfield, 2020). As mentioned in Banfield's (2020) article, all diversity including body diversity in fashion should become a 'norm', people modelling for brands "should too represent the world we see around us" (para 22).

Nonetheless, participants were asked what their thoughts were when seeing advertisements featuring women with diverse body types. In response to this question, Mary, Sandra, Riley and Ola explained that brands' advertisements should be representative in terms of selecting models that reflect the population's body shape and size.

"...I feel represented...seeing a diverse like as diversity of models for like this specific brand like shows me that they actually do like care and that if I were to like go to their store or to their web shop, whatever they use to sell their products if I go to that with my friends, then we could all potentially like fit in their clothes, or like I wouldn't have to worry that oh I won't fit in..." – Mary (Netherlands)

"...I think that's what all brands should do, like all advertisement should be just a representation of reality..." – Sandra (France)

"...advertising should be accurate, or at least mostly accurate reflection of the world that we actually live in". – Riley (Netherlands)

“...more representative of like the just the population...different kind of wide shapes and kind of you know a good representative of how um it is for the everyday person like body shape...” – Ola (Hong Kong, China)

Based on the above responses, Mary explained ‘representation’ in terms of the availability of different sizes. Availability of clothing sizes was an issue discussed in section 2.2, many women of ‘bigger’ bodies in South Korea were having difficulties finding clothing that fits them (Anderson, 2018). According to Mary’s response, if a brand offers a diverse range of clothing size, she will feel ‘represented’ because she can purchase clothing that fits her. On the other hand, Sandra and Riley’s referred to the representation of body types displayed in advertisements. ‘Accurate reflection’, links to Banfield’s (2020) point about brands needing to recruit models that are representative of the population's bodies. On the other hand, Ola provided a more thorough explanation of what constitutes being ‘representative’ and that is by displaying different body types. The ‘everyday person like body shape’ perceived by Ola is body types that are seen in society. Furthermore, Jess, Ola, Sarah, Daisy and Rose as well, shared that when people see diverse bodies being represented by the media and in advertisements, they are likely to feel more confident and empowered to show off and feel proud of their body. With reference to Dove’s Real Beauty campaign, which featured “real women” of diverse body types in their advertisement (Zed, 2019, para 2), Sarah explained:

“... if we have more as like that it will be a more accepted society around body types and ideals and not be so hard on women...” – Sarah (Norway)

Here, Sarah explains that if more advertisements similar to Dove’s Real Beauty were showcased during the year 2000s, diverse body types would have been more accepted. Furthermore, her explanation suggests that the acknowledgement of diverse body types came too late, otherwise it would ‘not be so hard on women’. Hence, this may mean that because body diversity was not discussed in the past, many women today are as mentioned, suffering from body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Keth et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2019). Subsequently, when referring to the stimulus materials presented to them, Rose and Sarah mentioned the concept ‘confidence’. Rose described the models from all four brands as looking “confident and somewhat proud” as they were showing off their bodies and their ‘curves’.

Likewise, brands that stepped forward and took action to include body diverse models demonstrates that the brand takes into consideration societal concerns such as body dissatisfaction and as Mary and Sandra shared, it shows that brands “actually care about their customers and...want to represent their customers...show what the product would look like on their customers...”. There are many reasons as to why brands decided to include body diverse models and expanding sizing options. One being that some countries are noticing that their population is growing in size, hence, there is a

need to offer a wider variety of sizing options. Another reason is to respond to customers demand for a wider representation of body types.

Overall, the key idea taken from participants' statements is that models featured in brand advertisements should reflect the world we live in. Furthermore, brands can do so by being inclusive, embracing all body shapes and sizes. The term 'inclusivity' was referred to when defining 'diversity', which was described as the inclusion of all body shapes and sizes. Thus, for this paper, 'inclusivity' entails representing all types of bodies. A follow-up question was asked participants if there was enough body diversity showcased in brand advertisements. In response to the question, inclusivity was mentioned. Mary, Ola and Valorie responded positively stating:

"I think it's a good thing that brands are striving to be more inclusive that are selling clothes to that don't necessarily only fit like ideal body types" – Mary (Netherlands)

"... it says a lot about the brand...that they are um choosing these models...modelling for their clothes um it shows that the brand is trying to be more inclusive and um also giving the option of like um like including different sizes as well for their clothes so that more people can wear it..." – Ola (Hong Kong, China)

"...not only using skinny woman...using every type from a little bit petite, to a larger size...helps to bring that okay everybody is different, everyone has a different kind of body, and everybody should be accepted..." – Valorie (Finland)

This sentence from Mary's response 'don't necessarily only fit like ideal body types' is asking for brands to include a wider option of clothing sizes that fits diverse body types. Similarly, Ola and Valorie's texts highlight that the use of diverse body models illustrates to customers that the brand is inclusive and body-positive Overall, responses from Mary, Ola and Valorie were positive. They see a light at the end of the tunnel, through which brands are gradually becoming more inclusive and representative of body types. Nonetheless, many participants shared that increasing inclusiveness of diverse body types will have a positive influence on society and most importantly as mentioned, it can improve an individual's self-esteem and self-image (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

On the other hand, when asked if there is enough body diversity, a majority of participants responded that although brands are taking initiatives to become inclusive, more body diversity is needed. As Sandra explains, there needs to be a wider range of body types:

“... there needs to be more diversity, because, even if I mentioned brands that do have a lot of diversity there's still like the minority, like the majority of brands cater to the skinnier types or if they cater to like plus size models it's only plus size models... there definitely needs to be more diversity, even though it already exists, but it's still very much at a small-scale...” – Sandra (France)

From Sandra's explanation, there is a link between the discussion around the missing 'in between' and what Sandra explained as brands catering to either 'skinnier' or 'plus-size'. In other words, despite there being more brands catering to 'bigger' body types, brands need to acknowledge that there are other body types that need to be catered.

From the discussion above, the key message that participants shared is the need to display and include a diverse range of body types; by doing so, women will feel more represented as they see body types that they can relate to. This gives women confidence and the feeling of acceptance by society and the opportunity to buy clothing of their fit. Furthermore, despite an improvement in featuring more body diversity, participants felt that more can be done by brands. However, according to the interviewees, the process of gathering women that best represents the population proves to be difficult.

5.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how models with diverse body types are perceived by female students from different countries. To address the gap in the literature around how different cultures perceive body diverse models, the following main research and sub-research questions were designed. Research question: How do female students from all over the world perceive models with diverse body types presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram? And sub-research questions: (1) How do Asian female students perceive model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram? (2) How do Western-European female students perceive the model’s body diversity presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram?

This thesis focused on examining the perceptions of female students from different countries around the world. Focusing on perceptions was important for this research study because this research area has yet to be explored meaning that there is little literature around examining perceptions of an individual from a different cultural background. Hence, to address the gap in the literature, this thesis conducted 12 semi-structured interviews focusing on participants’ perception towards diverse body models presented by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram. 6 female students were from Asia and 6 from Western-Europe, each recruited to share their thoughts and opinions on how their culture perceives models of diverse body types. However, these participants cannot be accounted as representatives of their entire culture because then a higher number of participants would be needed. Thus, participants’ perspectives were taken into account as their perception of their culture. To examine participants’ perception of diverse body types, 16 images of models from 4 different clothing brands from ‘the East and ‘the West’ were provided as stimulus materials. After data collection, each of the interviews was transcribed and a thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts resulting in two main categories and four sub-categories.

An overarching answer from the findings was that there is a positive shift away from displaying mainstream models that are ‘thin’. When referring to the stimulus materials, participants’ response was predominantly positive namely, ‘happy’ to see a wider representation of body types displayed on Instagram. However, participants pointed out that although there are some diverse bodies displayed, more is needed. In particular, participants highlighted the missing ‘in between’, which are body types that fall between the ‘thin’ and ‘big’ body types. Nonetheless, to address the sub-research questions, a general finding that was similar between the Asian and Western-European participants was that brands from the East particularly Neiwai presented more models that leaned towards a ‘thinner’ side but were diverse within the ‘thin’ group. Meanwhile, J Style, also a brand from ‘the East’ was perceived as displaying models that were of ‘bigger’ bodies, but still ‘thinner’ in comparison to models displayed by brands from ‘the West’. On the other hand, brands from the West displayed more models that were ‘big’ but again was described to be diverse within the ‘bigger’ body group.

Furthermore, based on the provided images, participants perceived Universal Standard as most diverse in terms of showcasing diverse body types, particularly highlighting picture 13 (refer to Appendix) with four models of different body types wearing the same outfit. With reference to literature, displaying a wider representation of body types allows customers to view how the clothing would look on their body type, thus, finding a better fit. Having said that, based on the provided stimulus materials, participants shared that if models from all four brands were combined into one image, it will be considered inclusive and representative of all body types.

5.1 Limitations

There are some limitations to this research study which will be discussed. The first limitation was the selection of stimulus materials. Finding brands that displayed a diverse range of body types on Instagram was challenging especially for clothing brands in ‘the East’. After thorough research, the countries and brands selected for the study were Neiwai from China and J Style from South Korea. Neiwai is a lingerie brand and J Style is a ‘plus-size’ clothing brand, these two brands were selected because as mentioned, there are not many clothing brands in ‘the East’ that display a diverse range of body types on Instagram. The limitation here is that the comparison between the brands was less valid as all four brands focused on either clothing or lingerie. Selecting brands that are under the same category allows more accurate comparison especially when it is analysing body shapes and sizes. The reason being, for example, it is much easier to assess one’s body shape or size if they are less covered hence, dressed in lingerie allows for better analysis. However, as mentioned, lingerie was included because it was one of the only brands from China that displayed a wide representation of body types on Instagram. Furthermore, the criteria for brand selection were to display diverse body types on Instagram, which both Neiwai and J Style met.

The second limitation is related to the process of presenting the stimulus materials. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a total of 16 images was shown to participants. It was found after completing all interviews, that there were some misunderstandings with regards to the images. Keep in mind that, the images selected as stimulus materials comprised images of the model with diverse body types. Nonetheless, the misunderstanding occurred when some Asian participants who were not too familiar with the brand ASOS, expressed that the brand only displayed women of ‘bigger’ bodies rather than wider representation body types that were ‘slim’ and ‘big’. The limitation here was that the images selected did not display enough models of diverse body types. As the sub-research questions focus predominantly on how participants of different cultural backgrounds perceive body diverse models by clothing brands from ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ on Instagram, more images should have been utilized. Therefore, to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of images portraying diverse body types, an alternative could be to provide participants with the brands’ Instagram account. At the same time, participants will be given a few minutes to go through each Instagram page to ensure they get a better overview of the brand.

5.2 Suggestions for future research

More exploration around this study can be done with a different research method. As mentioned, the participants are from around the globe; however, they were representative of their entire culture. Therefore, a suggestion is to expand this research study utilizing quantitative research methods such as conducting surveys, which can gather a higher number of respondents. Furthermore, instead of displaying 16 images, participants are provided with links to the brands' Instagram page, which allows them to thoroughly look through all the images posted. This ensures that respondents have a clear view and understanding of whether the brand featured a wide representation of body types. With the survey questions, the design of the questions can focus predominantly on body diversity and body positivity as there are overlaps.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Icebreaker Questions

1. How are you feeling today?
2. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes, do you have this amount of time set aside?

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, thank you so much for sparing your time and agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Pui-Mun Chan, I am currently in the Media & Business Master programme at Erasmus University Rotterdam. This interview is part of my thesis project. Before starting the interview, could you please confirm that you have read and signed the informed consent form.

I will now share with you a file in the chat, please download it and open it only when I tell you to do so. I will now give you a brief overview of what is in the file, it consists a total of 16 Instagram posts from 4 different clothing brands from Asia and the West so 4 Instagram posts for respectively. The Asian brands include Neiwai a lingerie brand from China and Jstyle a clothing brand from South Korea. The Western brands include ASOS a clothing and lingerie company which also sells clothing of its own brand from the UK and Universal standard a clothing brand from the US.

Stimulus Materials 1

1. Can you describe to me what you see in the images?

Body ideals

2. What do you think the current beauty ideal is (global standard)?
3. What do you think is the ideal body type in your culture or country?
 - a. How do you perceive this ideal body type in your culture or country?
4. Do you think that beauty ideals differ across cultures?
 - a. How do beauty ideals differ across cultures?
 - b. Why do you think that beauty ideals differ across cultures?

Body positivity

5. Have you heard of the body positivity movement?
 - a. If yes: what do you think the movement entails?
 - b. If no: participant will be provided with brief explanation¹

¹ Purpose of the movement is to spread positivity, encouraging and support the acceptance of all types of bodies “regardless of size, shape, skin tone, gender, and physical abilities” (Leboeuf, 2019, p.113).

6. Have you heard of the body positivity movement on Instagram?
 - a. If yes: have you seen any of these related contents on social media?
 - b. If no: participant will be provided with brief explanation²
7. What are your thoughts on people sharing contents and images related to the movement on social media? (i.e., images of individuals with diverse body types)

Body diversity

8. In relation to the discussion of body positivity, what are your thoughts on body diversity?
 - a. How do you view body diversity?
9. How do you think body positivity and/ or body diversity is visible? (Besides on social media platforms)
10. How do you think brands have incorporated body positivity and/ or body diversity in advertising?
 - a. What are your thoughts on this?
11. What are your thoughts on seeing advertisements featuring women with diverse body types?
12. How do you feel when seeing models of diverse body types as oppose to seeing the more ‘traditional’ slim models?

Stimulus material 2

13. Could you please share your thoughts on the following images?
 - a. How do you feel seeing models with diverse body types featured on the brand’s Instagram account?
14. How do you perceive brands that feature models with diverse bodies on their social media accounts?
15. The body positivity movement has also been criticized; some people argue that the movement promotes obesity and unhealthy behaviours. What do you think about this criticism?

This is the end of the interview; do you have anything else to add or any question about the interview?

Thank you for your participation. I will now end the recording.

² Post about the movement was shared and spread across Instagram with contents focusing on self-love and body positive and the hashtag #bodypositivity was as well included. There were over 11 million posts tagging the movement.

Appendix B: E-mail to participants

Hello Ririka,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my interview.

Attached to this email is the *'informed consent' form*, if you agree with all the terms, please sign the form and keep the copy for your records.

The following information is your interview schedule timeslot: 7th of March (Sunday) 20:00 to 21:00pm (Japan time). I will send you a reminder a day prior to your scheduled interview date and time.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kind regards,

—

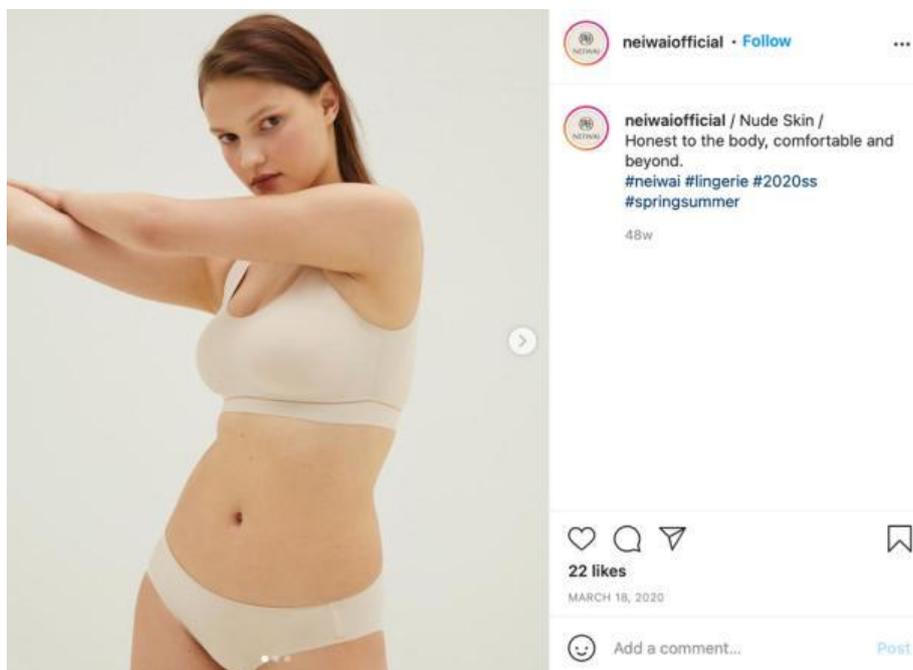
Pui Mun Chan

Appendix C: Stimulus Materials

Neiwai (China)



(Picture 1)



(Picture 2)

身材多元, 尺码自由。
Your Size is The Size



NEIWAI

neiwaiofficial · Follow

neiwaiofficial Barely Zero®

At the time of the brand's 8th anniversary, NEIWAI launches Barely Zero®, a new line of one-size lingerie. "To keep the wearer free and at ease" has always been the brand's core value, and Barely Zero® is a new expression of this spirit after 8 years. Sleekly designed and highly elastic, extra soft and smooth, this collection is able to fit different body shapes while ensuring a comfy experience .

You can wear it daily or as seamless underwear for occasions, even in bed or during pregnancy and lactation. At different times of life, with changes in wearing needs and

46 likes
MAY 29, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 3)

NO BODY IS NOBODY
没有一种身材, 是微不足道的。



NEIWAI

neiwaiofficial · Follow

neiwaiofficial Embrace the true body.

#neiwai #nobodyisnobody #luoyangphotography #2020ss

50w

contentcommerceinsider Love this campaign! We just wrote about it today ❤️❤️

50w Reply

28 likes
MARCH 5, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 4)

J Style (South Korea)



jstyle_avellet • Follow

jstyle_avellet 아니 원피스 ..하..(말잇못)
노랑에 갈색 체크 후..(말잇못)

말이 필요없는 #러블리 #끝판왕 #원피스

♡하체 커버 캉캉&허리조절 리본끈♡으
로
내 몸에 알맞게 다리는 #쪽 복부는 #속

19w

+

u_liette I want it 🥰💖🌟

19w 1 like Reply

— View replies (1)

2,228 likes

OCTOBER 8, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 5)



jstyle_avellet • Follow

jstyle_avellet [EVELLET FRIENDS]
#지금내가좋아 #ILOVEMYSELFNOW

다양한 곡선, 다양한 아름다움을 가지고있는
우리,
제이스타일은 당신의 아름다움을 지지합니
다.
We support your beauty.
#lovemyself

67w

9,456 likes

NOVEMBER 5, 2019

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 6)



jstyle_evellet · Follow

jstyle_evellet 2020 S/S EVELLET ACTIVEWEAR
#지금내가좋아 I PROUD OF MYSELF

56w

asma__doq__jaaaa 🥰❤️

56w 1 like Reply

777bts777 🥰🥰🥰👍🔍

56w 1 like Reply

yoongiswitchgf Yasss rock it girls! Y'all beautiful! Represent 🥰🥰🥰❤️

3,981 likes

JANUARY 23, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 7)



jstyle_evellet · Follow

jstyle_evellet <촬영장 그때그 상황 중>

👤-우리뭔가 예쁜걸로 양념되고 있는것 같아
👤-그러게 이거 언제 다 치우지..

우리 언니들에게 예쁜 수영복을 보여드릴 수만 있다면!!
종이조각 7862개 정도 치우는 것은 일도 아니에요~~ 🍷

알록 달록 색종이처럼 알록 달록한 색상의 비키니!
레드,블루,오렌지,퍼플,블랙 트윈룩으로도
굿 굿 🍷

32w

4,067 likes

JULY 9, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 8)

ASOS (The United Kingdom)



(Picture 9)



(Picture 10)



asos • Follow

asos We are not worthy of @curvynyome [she/her] 🙌

'I am a big girl from all angles, I never have to force a roll because I have them. The reality will always be the same for me. There is no "posed vs relaxed" or "insta vs reality".'

We Are We Wear bralette [1808496] and briefs [1808502] made from recycled materials

1w

gemmastyles 🙌

1w 24 likes Reply

View replies (3)

16,507 likes

FEBRUARY 9

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 11)



asos • Follow

asos @richloverockson [she/her] in this look is PROOF that cardigans are still having their moment 🍷

Daisy Street cardigan on ASOS

6w

tchaffte 🌹🌹🌹👍👍👍👍👍

6w 1 like Reply

mills.pretty_bobbybrown She looks pretty 💜

6w 2 likes Reply

leahpoulian Absolutely!! 🙌🙌

6,836 likes

JANUARY 10

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 12)

Universal Standard (The United States)



US universalstandard • Follow ...

US universalstandard Over it. #FOUNDATIONbyUS - the perfect layer for all of US. As we are.

Available in sizes 00 - 40.
Shop via link in bio.

110w

hmeCS072177 When I ordered the foundation kit, and this was one of the pieces, I had no idea what I would actually wear this with. It's now my go to piece.

110w 4 likes Reply

— View replies (1)

juliettesjov This is why I ordered

768 likes

JANUARY 8, 2019

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 13)



US universalstandard • Follow ...

US universalstandard The weather outside might be frightful where you are, but our sweaters are SO delightful. Stock up on cozy favorites like our Metros Cocoon Sweater to help you make it through the winter months in style!

9w

aspiringevermore This outfit is gorgeous, and so is the model!

9w 1 like Reply

thedivinesupreme @samwelsch_ 🙄🙄🙄

9w 1 like Reply

292 likes

DECEMBER 19, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 14)



US universalstandard • Follow ...

US universalstandard • ALL OF US. AS WE ARE. FOUNDATION. SIZES 00-40 COMING SOON

123w

+

sincerely__bella 🍌🍌🍌🍌❤️

120w Reply

shesosweetbaby Yesssssss🔥

120w Reply

9,675 likes

OCTOBER 8, 2018

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 15)



US universalstandard • Follow ...

US universalstandard • Who doesn't love a matching sleep set photo op?!

NEW ways to lounge! We recommend one for you & one for yours (link in bio)💕

10w

xomaurissaa 💕🥰

10w 2 likes Reply

missalissa So cute💕

10w 1 like Reply

hunkaa.a @fonz_ette @phedra_lyn matchy matchy?!🥰

562 likes

DECEMBER 7, 2020

Add a comment... Post

(Picture 16)

Appendix D: Coding Scheme

Thematic Analysis (Phase 1)

Overall observations (highlighting in the transcripts, marking in blue keywords)

Interviewee	Findings (Direct quotes from transcript)
Jess (Thai)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...not typical plus size...like covering up the body but also showing off their curves (referring to Jstyle) - ...people who have a more more of like a normal body with with skin like mark on their skin... (referring to universal standard) - ...trend of empowering...to love different kind of different size or different every type of body right...people right now are more open to to show off their body... - ...beauty ideal is actually to to be confident to show off your body... - Ideal body (overall): ...people who has got more of a curvy body as in of course, they would have a flat stomach stomach as you know you would expect, on a model... - ...more curvy um what should I say curvy body overall to you know look more sexually appealing... - Ideal body (respective culture): ...thin would still be preferred here in Asia, and especially in Thailand...there's two types of thing...curvy kind of thing or like a size zero model kind of thin - ...if you ask people normal people what they would prefer to look like or or what they think look more appealing or more healthy then a more curvy kind of thin would be preferable. - ...idealize that body is to put a lot of bodies at risk... (referring to size zero body type) - ... still a lot of work for for a lot of other of other people to understand that that there are no like normal body or you shouldn't shame other people for saying that they're insecure about their body because you perceive it as like a normal body or something. - Body positivity online: ...encouraging a lot of people to just sell a sexual content online... - Body diversity: grade B or C kind of brand those are the ones who promote more body diversity...cheaper for them to produce...mass amount, and also in the various kind of styles... - ...standard of what it takes to become a model... - Example brand celebrating body diversity: Dove - ...it feels like a kind of like a gimmick to you know, to get interest gain interest from people and...media attention and all that they reverse back to the same old (referring to brands featuring diverse body models) - ... women or men with um other body type...not like the model type I feel like if they see that, like represented in in media as a positive body or like being seen as appealing, then they can start you know, seeing themselves that they all they also can be beautiful as well... - ...positive kind of feelings toward this change... (referring to seeing diverse body models) - ...criteria of what makes a model, or what makes a person fit for a job...always been a certain kind of body...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...more people are demanding for a normal body... - ... they also have like skinny all models and also a more bigger body... (referring to Neiwai) - ...empowering just because you you see those are what products can also look like on on everyday people... (referring to scars and not edited appearance of the skin) - ...looking confident in in the product you just feel like oh okay, then It feels like you know, I have a chance to yeah. - ... people can connect to the to the image that you know they're perceiving as like like having someone who looks similar to them...in terms of like not normal beauty standard someone who looks different in some way... (referring to relatable)
<p>Daisy (Indian)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...starts with women who are um slightly slimmer and petite and then it goes on to. um women on the bigger size on the plus size but all of them are shown to be comfortable in their clothes. - Ideal body (general): ... stereotypical one where majorly, it is about if you're of a fairer skin and you are thinner... second idea which is more coming now...people are trying to tell each other to be comfortable in their own skin... - In my country it definitely is the first one it definitely is, you have to be thin... (respective culture) - Body positivity: ...being comfortable in your own body it's being um proud of who you are, how you look irrespective of what the society comes and tells you... - ... people who are suffering from from obesity uh they do not promote, a lot of them are suffering from it, because of medical conditions somebody might have thyroid somebody might have PCODs... more about telling that you have to get on the healthier side... (referring to the movement being criticized) - ... if I see someone who has fat arms or or you know, has tummy rolls and I see some cloth on it on on that person I will generally you know uh relate more to that product... so if I see someone wearing that as for my standards, I would think of buying it more... - ...normal that when you look at it, you should not certainly be taken aback by co-creators and obese, causing us to the element of surprise shock should not be there I think we have to be as normal with that, as we are the uh fairer thinner girls posing for it... - ... we should come to the point where we have to stop stressing on the importance of body diversity is the day I think it would be termed as normal... - ...obese girls and the thin ones posing together in few of the images... (referring to stimulus materials: Jstyle) - ... important to show that the women who have the stereotypical physique can also look can also be in the same place as the mean of the plus size... (referring to stimulus materials)

<p>Jacky (Malaysian)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different not mainstream models... not uh common body types as compared to you know skinny models like they are more... - ... we call them plus size but they are actually normal size... - Body ideal: ... it would be being skinny of course... - ...I mean when I look at it, I just say oh about that that's that's what the normal people are so so it doesn't shock me, neither does it disgusts me is just you know there's no specific special feelings... - Oh, it would be being skinny of course (respective culture) - Body positivity: ...plus size it doesn't mean that you're unhealthy, but then again being plus size could also mean you are obese... body positivity movement is good, but it is also in a danger of sort of saying it's okay to be obese... - ... brands just want to make money and they just want to make money by catering to other the general population... (referring to the question on the movement being criticize for promoting...) - ... if the general population let's say looks like if the general population let's say looks like obese we'll use that word, then I guess that's what they will make whether they are promoting they want to promote unhealthy lifestyle anything I don't really think is what they actually care like me I'm just making clothes, for you guys... weird to target the clothing brands that say they because they make those clothes, so they are promoting obesity no they're just making clothes, because the people need that... - Body diversity: ... I don't think so mainstream advertisements no merit mainstream advertisement is always the pretty girls... I wouldn't say it's widespread I would say, if we were to put it from a scale of one to 100 out say it's like the body diversity, one would probably just be 20% or 19.9% because I don't see that much... - ... just because you're bigger in size doesn't mean that you're unhealthy... - ... I don't know where do you draw the line not being body positivity and promoting obesity... - ... Americans one reflect the American population which is like slightly more on the obese obese side... - ...the Chinese one probably fall short on doing body positivity campaigns if it in terms of body diversity, because it's not exactly very diverse yeah but then you can also say the same for the rest because the rest are all than just solely plus size... (referring to stimulus materials) - I'll say universal standard... page seven, the first picture... she's the one you consider on the normal range whereas when you look and then there's a mix of normal and plus size women... (referring to stimulus materials) - ... they are catering, to the bigger market they are I don't know, are they embracing body positivity maybe they are maybe it's just hopping on the trend... you're making clothes for people and then people can wear it and you can look fashionable because in the past, being fashionable is somehow only reserved for the skinny one and now, even you know that you've been plus size, you can still do cool... (referring to perceiving brands that feature diverse body models)
<p>Rose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... they all look confident and somewhat proud of their themselves...

(Japanese)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... Yeah I think this advertisement is more natural than the first one, I think they're trying to promote the message that this this particular new line of lingerie could fit people different sizes yeah so I think the lady on the right, she has some belly she doesn't seem to care about it, which show this message... (referring to Neiwai 3rd picture) - ...the brand is kind of promoting what size can enjoy fashion... (referring to Jstyle) - ... so she's not the typical kind of feminine image but you can tell that this brand is not promoting those things... (referring to ASOS) - Body ideal: ... I think in Japan it's not really like the curviness but rather the thin, skinny type... - ... I wouldn't have a negative feeling I think it's important that they're confident with how they look... (referring to seeing women of diverse bodies) - ...I think it's important that people with different body shapes or body features and does not have to feel ashamed of their their bodies and it's yeah everybody has different body shapes so nothing is right and nothing is too wrong, so it's it's a good body... - ...if the model, for instance, is more how do you say, has the perfect ideal body shape then it doesn't make you feel confident, but if you see those models, with different body shapes and ethnicities makes you feel that you could be part of them as well, so you're close to the model... (referring to relatable) - ..., I don't think it's a very diverse body type compared to the photos in below the American then and then the English brand... (referring to Neiwai) - ... I couldn't really relate to the photos of the western brands, because I don't really see people of these type of body types in Japan... (referring to relatable) - ... or brands that I like I kind of expect them to be my goal or my ideal so for brands that I like I kind of expect them to be my goal or my ideal so yeah so yeah I think if the models look very pretty and very ideal I would be more attractive to that as well. (likeliness to purchase the product dependent on the models) - ...so I think some people have that body type, not because of their health awareness, but because they are naturally born like that or yeah or they might have some sort of illness or taking medication that might emphasize that...
Ola (Chinese)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Body ideals (general)... more inclusive like body size especially... embracing to not have the perfect body and to kind of normalize it more in the media... - ...although there are all kinds of body shapes of course I think that there is still like a positive outlook like when you are more on the skinny side...having a fuller size is like not a problem but it is seen differently... - Body ideals: ... most people of my culture are more on the thinner side like if they are like a heavier side it's not that very common... (referring to the Chinese culture)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...on Instagram um rather than refreshing it was more relieve I guess because um everyone is really trying to portray this perfect image but then if people are like kind of stigmatizing that kind of image then it is very hard for people to come out but even even then they people still did it and then you really saw like women really trying to support each other and that itself was really empowering. - Body positivity & body diversity: ... brands probably started to notice that there is a lot of critic of the consumers that they are really portraying like this perfect image of a certain model in their um advertising campaigns or like pictures they use of like modelling their clothes so I think they are its kind of like um a response to consumers... - ... incorporating more um different body types or like diversity in that sense in their pictures and campaigns and also like modelling the clothes even like for their web shop maybe or like in stores... - ... when you look at advertisements then you see comments like oh this is so not realistic blah blah blah or like you know I am so done with like uh seeing all this perfect images of women like I I rather see like more realistic kind of images... - ... more representative of like the just the population...different kind of wide shapes and kind of you know a good representative of how um it is for the everyday person like body shape... - ... more realistic of how people are as I mentioned earlier and it's also like empowering in a way because we've come a long way um in like traditional advertising or like digital advertising so for that to have this kind of huge change does mean a lot um and also has a lot of impact for us as well or like in society... - ... in the Asian advertisement there are more even though they are different sizes it is still a bit more on the slimmer side like a few of them and then um for Western its really um more like um more people that heavy a bit on the heavier side... (referring to stimulus materials) - ... it says a lot about the brand um the fact that they are um choosing these models to be part of their campaign or like modelling for their clothes um it shows that the brand is trying to be more inclusive and um also giving the option of like um like including different sizes as well for their clothes so that more people can wear it... (referring to seeing brands featuring body diverse models on Instagram) - ...happy to shop for a brand you know if they are more inclusive as well because um you know it's good to see people being able to wear clothes that they want and also um able to like available in their size as well... (likeliness to make a purchase) - ... I feel like them like them displaying the fuller models and then people are already criticizing again like you can never be fully in line with your audience or like the consumer... I feel like it's a good thing to include different sizes of like people on the heavier side then just do you you know, I don't think it's really promoting obesity because um its people's own choices what they want to do with their body...
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... being thin is so idealized in the society that it's very hard to start accepting...
<p>Winnie (Chinese)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... one thing I've noticed is that quite a lot of these pictures are of, plus size models, which is quite unusual for lingerie brands... (referring to stimulus materials) - Body ideals: ...it's kind of more of a healthy but the trend is kind of more like you know they're trying to push forward the idea of you know accepting your body is kind of loving yourself and kind of trying to stay away from the you know the typical normal of having a barbie like figure for example... - ... I think beauty standards is quite um is quite as strict model that people can follow so they don't really do so much as Western where you kind of go on and on about kind of accepting your body... I think the standard is more so kind of like you, you know, you aim for the more barbie like figure and the slimmer figure... (referring to Asian beauty standards) - ... partly to do with Asians have a small bone structure, compared to Westerners... - ... the Asian ideal is ideal body type is more like, kind of, if you think about the Barbie figure like I said, you know, you still got still got breast, you've still got a nice bottom but I also kind of like a slim waist, so kind of like more of an hourglass figure if possible, but on the slimmer side... - Body positivity: ...there's a line between being a little overweight and not meeting beauty standards and there's a line between you are you know uh medically obese you know you you can't tell me that a 600 pound woman is beautiful and she can do whatever she wants because it's her body, I mean she can because it's not my body of her body but you know she's 600 pounds you can't even get out of bed, how is that a good life like and you're trying to tell me that you should still tell them to be kind of for the positive like that to me does not make sense... - ... where people are pushing body positivity so much that they are literally forgetting about the health side of things it's not all about you know, being slim... - ... nowadays, where you have it too big, people say oh you're promoting a obesity you have to do, small people saying I was not precise enough you can't win either way... - Body diversity: ... everyone's different you can't all be the same otherwise we'd be kind of clones of each other, but I just I just think that people kind of need to realize that you should draw a line somewhere... - ... if you see the diversity now, then that really helps me and and that you'll see you know you've got plus size and you've got kind of maybe on the slimer side and you've got a wide range and you know, maybe some some shorter and by seeing that it's just it's the same as seeing race and you can you kind of feel like you're being represented... - ... they've kind of split it up really and that's why we don't see as much where you have kind of the norm, which is you know more slender and kind of the more ideal body shapes show say and then you've got the kind of plus size of like a separate line and I think that's why you don't really see

	<p>as often because it's a separate thing... (referring to seeing little ads. with body diverse models)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...if you look at the kind of the belly area and kind of look at the thickness of her arms and such so you can see, and you know that breast sizes are kind of different as well, so you can see that there is a diversity there but it's just one of those things where the stereotypically normal sizes, they don't differ so much that is very obvious... (referring to Neiwai picture 3, women of similar size) - ... if you put a slender slender woman next to a plus size woman then the difference is going to be very noticeable... (referring to seeing more diversity in body types) - ...might be surprising just because you know the traditional advertising and posting is kind of more aimed at kind of the stereotypically the ideal body shape, which is on the slimmer side, or maybe kind of a kind of hourglass figure... (referring to perceiving brands that feature diverse body models on Instagram) - ...trend with embracing your body and body positivity and and that's what people want and people really, really criticize a brand and even boycott brands who kind of don't promote that brands, are all kind of jumping on the bandwagon...
Mary (Dutch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beauty ideal: ...beauty ideal is is for uh women being skinny I feel like has always sort of been the ideal however, instead of being skinny everywhere, nowadays, I feel like the beauty ideal sort of shifted to uh more being more curvy in certain places... (general beauty standard) - ... in general I don't think the beauty standard is enforced as much like from what I what I know from my surroundings I don't think there's like. set well there's a set beauty standard... I would say it is a bit more like curvy like it's okay to have a little bit of butt like breasts and everything... (referring to Dutch ideal) - Body positivity: ...it helps with people actually like seeing like seeing that it's okay to maybe I don't know to to not have the ideal body type or stuff like that, because, like I said yeah you can tell someone that their body is beautiful, even if it's not the ideal body type, however, when they don't see anyone like with a body type as like being praised or actually don't see anyone else with our bodies, it makes it a lot more difficult to I don't know feel like your body type is accepted... - ...it could help in like the acceptance of someone's body... - ...a lot of them struggle with their body, maybe also because well, definitely because of what they see and Instagram and these other platforms is the these ideal body types that are being praised all over again they get the most likes get the most followers get the most views and to see actually people of other like the diverse diverse body types also getting that praise getting those views followers I feel like it's definitely would help teenage girls in like accepting their self-accepting our bodies accepting like that their body may not be the norm... - Body diversity: ...I feel represented in this yeah I think that's the right word to use seeing a diverse like as diversity of models for like this specific

	<p>brand like shows me that they actually do like care and that if I were to like go to their store or to their web shop, whatever they use to sell their products if I go to that with my friends, then we could all potentially like fit in their clothes, or like I wouldn't have to worry that oh I won't fit in...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...in terms of body positivity very good definitely could be better, the better they don't show plus size models, they do, however, show I say mid-size models so while that's a good thing, it could be better... (referring to Neiwai) - ...they use a lot of different body types like they don't use the ideal body type, I think, from what I can see in the advertisements, so no like really slim bodies, but kind of normal or like I don't want to say attainable bodies, because every single body should be attainable and achievable, but kind of what you would see out on the street like just actual normal like body types... (referring to Jstyle) - ... Asian brands, are trying to show inclusive of it but the majority of the models are mid-sized and not plus sized... - ...there's such a demand for like showing that showing diverse bodies, and you know spreading this movement that I don't think you would get away with it, however, looking at the Asian brands, I feel like in Asia, you still like even if you wouldn't participate in this body positivity trends, I feel like maybe you could like get away with it, or without like getting criticized, but in Western countries or in the Western market, I think people would prefer to have this diversity. (referring to the feeling of seeing diverse body models on Instagram)
<p>Sarah (Norwegian)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neiwai: ... I guess they're trying to represent diversity, and kind of empower female women. - ...also a child, which is interesting at least there's one woman, carrying or like she has like the child on her lap but the child is not wearing anything so, but I guess it's just to empower the woman hood or the motherhood... - Jstyle: ... it says we should support your beauty love myself so this is also like body positivity type of ad... - ...this just show quite casing like different bodies, which is nice and empowering that it's like the normalizing bodies... - ... they're using kind of the same model, but they're also showcasing different bodies and like normalizing being quote unquote plus size... - ... I see that they're doing active wear they are doing swimwear they doing underwear so they're like representing body types and different types of style... - ASOS: ... we have like an underwear picture she looks like directly into the camera she looks very badass very confident um texts I'm a big girl from all angles yeah, so it's also like empowering different body shapes... - ...they're doing like a whole range of plus size clothing, which is really needed I guess in this society, and normalizing the body shape... - Universal standard: ... she's wearing underwear as well but she's more on the heavily plus size but she's showing off her like shape from the side...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...two girls posing together in like a blue kind of lounge set...they're both like both on the plus size, I don't like to say, like plus size, because they're all like normal size... - Beauty ideals: ...beauty standard has been like very skinny white and pale maybe like blonde or like lighter hair straight nose round eyes, I feel like that has been like a very much the general beauty standards because it comes from the West... (general ideal) - ... rise of like social media and people have more outlets to see the rest of the world that beauty standard have like changed a lot... - ... the beauty ideal is just being healthy and confident but obviously you have more to compared to when you are on social media... - Yeah, I would say fit or skinny but not too skinny you know. - Body positivity: ... you should just be happy with what you kind of got you know, being more positive to and normalizing different kinds of bodies instead of just focusing on one ideal of being very, very skinny. - ... like mannequins and stores is really important, too, because that's what you walk past every single day and also ads some billboards and stuff like that anything that you see around you in the society can reflect back on body positivity... (referring to visibility of body positivity and diversity) - ... if we have more as like that it will be a more accepted society around body types and ideals and not be so hard on women... - ... if I saw that Dove ad a younger girl I think that would influence may not be as insecure when I grew up... if I grew up with lots of ads that were doing the same, I think I would be influenced a lot more than I am today so yeah. - ...I think in the western brands, the models are a lot more heavier if I can use that word I think, for example, would all almost last one she's like I guess technically from like Dr term whenever she's more on the obese side, whilst the Asian brands they're still there, I mean they're showcasing kind of normal bodies, but I don't know if they are um general, I think that aspect could put like plus size just it's just they're showing normal bodies and I don't know if they are calling it like plus size, clothing, or something but that's pretty much like a normal body really there's more people would kind of body than like a skinny body... (referring to both Neiwai and Jstyle) - ... but I guess the Western ASOS brand and the universal standard they have a lot more heavier girls, but I don't know if that has something to do with like the Western genetics, that we are much fatter in the West... - ... maybe in the Asian countries it's not like normal to showcase like a really obese woman guess that would be considered unhealthy...
Sandra (French)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... I see mostly skinnier types that are modelling I do see some diversity in the types of women they're trying to represent... (referring to Neiwai) - ... I do see some more diversity when it comes to body type. So, yeah, uh I'm guessing it's a brand that's targeted towards um plus sized people... (referring to Jstyle) - ... I can see some body diversity in this... (referring to ASOS)

- ... I'm looking at the universal standard brand. And I see um yeah, it's a very wide range of diversity so I see both skinny and plus size people... (referring to universal standard)
- **Body ideals:** ... I would say is someone who was thin but curvy in the right places I would say I think that's the current beauty ideal where for example to waist is very skinny but then the hips are a little bit larger... (general ideal)
- ... um I'm not, I do not really correspond to that type, so I never felt like I fit in. (referring to perceiving ideal in the French culture)
- ... it's very much the skinny type yeah...from as I said like north African ancestry or it's a very different thing where curvier about it, body types are the most ideal so, yeah, I would say like body diversity really differs between cultures, but to be honest I grew up around just a skinny ideal type...
- ...I think that celebrities have a lot of influence in this regard and I think that's also that's also linked with globalization because I do think that before like you the standard differed a lot between like parts of the world, but now it's becoming a lot more homogenized...
- **Body positivity:** ... I know that for example Instagram is very much used to represent a kind of ideal life, not necessarily fake but very embellished and uh I like actually that people are sharing what they really look like or like their imperfections because that's, I would say like, that's what **real women** are like...
- **Body diversity:** ... brands, who do that actually care about their customers and yeah they want to to **represent** their customers, as they are, or maybe their product and they want to show what the product would actually look like on their customers...
- ... whether they do it like like with good intentions or not, or like for monetary gain it's still representation... would make things better in the long term, and like push other brands, to also um yeah become become more representative of all women... (referring to genuinity of the brand when featuring body diverse models & that brands can set an example for other brands)
- ... there needs to be more diversity, because, even if I mentioned brands that do have a lot of diversity there's still like the minority, like the majority of brands cater to the skinner types or if they're cater to like plus size models it's only plus size models... there definitely needs to be more diversity, even though it already exists, but it's still very much at a small-scale um and yeah.
- ... I would just feel that it's more **represents** to a reality... (referring to seeing more diverse body models)
- ... I think it's skinny women still need to be **represented** uh but yeah it's just just need to be more diverse, and I think for me uh um yeah I will just feel more happy and I will just feel that okay these advertisements, I really like **represented** their customers... there's going to become less pressure I guess for people to fit within certain standards because um we might have more standards standards like of beauty...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...they tried to make it more diverse but not really I do see model that is a little bit curvier than the rest, but it's still not really I would say the Western type of curvy that is currently represented... they're kind of trying to be more diverse but it's still very much yeah within the Asian beauty standards... (referring to Neiwai) - ... this one in terms of body type is actually very diverse maybe the brand is like only caters to plus size woman... for what I know about South Korean beauty standards, I also think this is a very progressive... (referring to Jstyle) - ...I know that ASOS has a whole curvy line which is great um yeah, and these are good representations of what they sell I wouldn't say um I think this models are actually yeah great representatives they don't really fit the kind of um standards within curvy standards... they're very diverse like even within like plus size people...I love that they actually include lingerie in those types of representations...(referring to ASOS) - ...I noticed the most so there's diversity in racial representation, but also in body type representation yeah and again like they're not afraid to kind of show lingerie on plus size people the women that I can see on the last page also is different from the kind of ideal curvy standard which yeah I think this this brand is very present or representative... (referring to universal standard) - ...for the Western brands, the plus size, women are more plus size then in the Asian brands, I also mentioned the first brand because to me like the I guess the the people they chose to be plus size are not plus size... - ... I like that brands are also kind of realizing this um that their customers, need to be represented and need to be made the face of the brand... - The moment there's enough diversity... I think this should still be represented as they are, and then also show more women so not necessarily less of something, but just a more equal type of situation because that's just the world, I see like that's the world, I see every day, where there's both very skinny women, naturally, who fits the model type that there's also women who do not fit that model that type of model... (referring to seeing more models of diverse body types = representative?) - ... I think that's what all brands should do, like all advertisement should be just a representation of reality... - ...I think there is like um a line, maybe that people shouldn't cross for me, like, I think the body positivity movement like mainly promotes self-love and like anti-discrimination because I know that over overweight and obese people kind of always seen through their weight... people are like assume that you can only be like overweight if you like don't take care of yourself, or like to food basically to be binge eating when there's actually like a lot of other factors that come into play, like in my case um, for example, genetically predisposed to be an overweight and I actually like eat eat a lot better, I think that a lot of people who are genetically thinner...
Valorie (Finnish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... I see a lot of different uh different types of uh woman and body types and the second one has a very yeah, in my opinion, very normal body type

	<p>for a woman the third one yeah that looks a little bit more um it's not a variety a lot of it within the models... (referring to Neiwai)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... Jstyle is using more bigger bodies than what, for example, the first first photos that I saw... (referring to Jstyle compared to Neiwai) - ...yeah ASOS okay yeah they're also using different types of woman... also using curvy woman, which is definitely a body positivity... (referring to ASOS) - ...universal standard they're using different types of body types, I see with with a photo where they have four people four women... (referring to universal standard) - Body ideal: ... I think it's a the beauty standard at the moment is a normal body... coming a little bit more normal it's not necessarily that you were very, very, very skinny or very athletic but just having normal curves... they're more present in the social media and it's more accepted within the society... of course, not yet um yeah fully accepted uh in in every culture (referring to general ideal) - Yeah, um yeah in Finland, I think the ideal body type uh is quite athletic there's a lot of people who, like the athletic side of that you look a little bit like you have abs, and that you have muscles... - Body positivity: ...those websites are trying to bring a little bit more body positivity and that every size is beautiful and so they are using a lot more variety of woman so they're not only using skinny woman...using yeah every type uh from a little bit uh petite, to a large size and I think that really helps to bring that okay everybody is different, everyone has a different kind of body and everybody should be accepted... - Body diversity/ Body positivity: ...I still don't think it's 100% uh enough, because what you also see that it either goes only skinny models, or only larger people or both of them, so you kind of missed the middle part so like more of the of the curvy... - ...it's good that they're also doing that the larger, the larger models are also part of the social media campaigns um and it's really good that people are seeing that but I think they should still add a little bit more diversity like completely use different types of body types... - ...a good way of starting this whole body positivity stuff and that people work at get more exposed to different body types and the young people will think yeah hey everybody is beautiful every it doesn't matter if you're skinny or a little bit bigger or curvy doesn't matter you're still uh still normal and it's normalized in our society... (referring to the Dove campaign) - ...I really think that's the best way to get the representative of the whole population or for example, in Europe, in now, I think it depends also about the country itself, but I think they should just go to the street and look for people different kinds of people with different body types... it's never possible to to represent everybody in the world that's is that just that's not possible but I think it is better to just go to the streets to find people rather than working through the model agency, because that that's not
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	<p>representative that's just a very small proportion of the of the population... (referring to having a criteria when looking for diverse body models)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... sometimes it goes to the extremes like I understand that's body positivity is also you know when you're if you're skinny that's what it positivity if you're very large that's also body positivity but...the middle part is missing it's always the two extremes so I feel like the middle part is also missing from social media... it's kind of missing that core 90% of the of the population... - ... if you are obese, you can also be healthy that's possible... but yeah you also have those people that they cannot move because they're so obese um yeah but yeah um but okay that's not really presented as healthy... or as a body positivity it's that is then a different story yeah it's there's just so different well yeah the lines are shown... - ...in America it's considered that's fine you know they have the fast food and obviously, is is fine and, but I think in Asia that like you said unhealthy unhealthy behavior they're just being not taking care of themselves... - Body diversity: ...so I think that's also very visible outside of social media is just the stores, like the physical stores but I think also just in the daily life when you walk around you see yeah different types of bodies walking around around the city... (referring to visibility of body diversity and positivity) - ... normal stores, they do most of the time use just that one type for the type of mannequins and then yeah I think people who are a little bit bigger don't really appreciate that and... like it doesn't show the reality of different body types... - ... yeah there's a fine line between plus size and obesity and what is healthy and what is not healthy... - ... they are focusing on using plus size people or woman I'm not saying that it's bad, but now again they're using the extreme...they're using either the models or the extremes... (referring to Jstyle) - Neiwai: ... if I go to the Neiwai yeah here again there is a lot of body types... but again they're missing, then the extreme on this side they have and they're missing the middle like they have some of them body types, but they don't go all the way... second picture I actually think that's quite good because it is the normal middle size body, so I think most yeah quite a lot of people can relate to the this type of body... - ... if you say embrace embrace different body types, this is not really diverse in the body types... - ...embrace the true body yeah I do think they have done in the sense have done a really good job because it is that they look like they're they're enjoying their bodies, they have different body types one has a little bigger boobs one has little smaller and you see that they have yeah they a little bit curvy like they have skin on there, like you know and so, in that sense the comment matches... - ... they're also using just the extreme extreme size... (referring to ASOS)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...I like the last photo because it shows that okay, with you top of different types of bodies you'd be used to same outfit... (referring to universal standard) - ... gives the image that hey, we care about everybody we care about every single body type we want everybody to wear our clothes it doesn't matter what your sizes, we have sizes from zero to 40 can you have a size 00... (referring to perceiving brands that feature body diverse models, using universal standard as example) - ...have very a variety of sizes where from people can then choose their own size and feel beautiful wearing their clothes no matter their body type and that's yeah I think this photo from the photos for the universal standard that one is the best one... (referring to universal standard)
Cathy (Dutch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... I see like not just one size um so it starts off with like I wouldn't necessarily say models it's more like your average person um not all like super thin or plus size it's just in between normal bodies... (referring to Neiwai) - Body ideals: ... it's like more about being diverse and body positive... thin is like the standard... (referring to general ideal) - ...I think we're more accepting of you know everyone should be you know confident in their own body... (referring to Dutch ideal) - Body positivity: I think it's a it's a good thing, as long as it's genuine like not you have some accounts, I feel like they do more for the likes or because it's a trend and they start posting about it because it's a trend... - Body diversity: ... a good thing you should see as many different types of bodies... maybe we don't see enough of it already because it's always like all like the model body like what we see is a standard... maybe like what's in between is kind of left out sometimes... - ... if there will be more diverse with them models on their you know their apps, for example, now and then I also think that would make the customers feel better about themselves... (referring to brands demanding for more diversity) - I think they just tried to be as inclusive as possible just try to get whoever they want... for example, clothes or shoes it doesn't really need a specific type of person, so you can just know everyone is interested interested, you can let them join basically so, but then it's hard to tell when they're genuinely doing it because they stand for it, or just because it's the trends... - ...it shouldn't be noticeable right, it should be like that it should be diverse and that should be what it's like... (referring to seeing brands featuring body diversity) - Neiwai: ... you just see all different kinds of women and they haven't focus on but included like a plus size model so it could be like that then not trying to be you know, inclusive... (first picture) - ... second one is still more like the ideal type but it's not like very slim, for example, it's just more like a normal body... - ... three women in both of the posts, they still seem diverse to me, even though they may be all slimmer side um again, in line with what I said it

	<p>doesn't have to include you know, one of every kinds if it can be also diverse like this...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... more like all of the plus size so then um then it's harder to say you know they want to include them, but think you exclude like other body types again but at the same time, is also like you know it's also their time to shine because we've seen like the ideal bodies for so long... (referring to Jstyle) - ... it's nice just to see it like this, you know, to see how also clothes, you know they look different on different body types... (referring to ASOS) - ... on different body types it's easy to see what it will look like it gives you more than realistic idea or what it's going to be like... - ...I think like that the Asians, like the first couple ones still lean more towards the ideal body still slimmer there's no plus size included really... the first two pages, then I um did just lean more towards the ideal body... (referring to Neiwai) - ...it doesn't all have to be you know plus size it doesn't all have to be the model just a good variety of everything yeah it's way nice to see an Instagram feed like that you know but normal people than that, rather than just models um catches normal bodies, but you see like in everyday life... (referring to seeing brands featuring body diversity) - ... not everyone choose still be that way to look that way you know, it can be caused by lots of factors... (referring to brands that include body diversity being criticized for promoting obesity)
Riley (Dutch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... I think at the core people still want women to be thin to be honest, but now they want them to be thin and also also curvy... (referring to general ideal) - ...as long as you're not too extreme in any direction like super like they just want you to look healthy... (respective culture) - Body diversity: ...advertising should be accurate, or at least mostly accurate reflection of the world that we actually live in (referring to representation) - ... if you look at the four images that it's not you would say that the overarching narrative is still thin.... (referring to Neiwai) - ... I think they're doing a much better attempt at diversity then um Neiwai. (referring to Jstyle)

Thematic Analysis (Phase 2)

Stimulus Materials Overview:

Brands	Description
Neiwai (Chinese lingerie brands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... they also have like skinny all models and also a more bigger body... - ...the Chinese one probably fall short on doing body positivity campaigns if it in terms of body diversity... - ..., I don't think it's a very diverse body type compared to the photos in below the American then and then the English brand... - ...if you look at the kind of the belly area and kind of look at the thickness of her arms and such so you can see...that there is a diversity

	<p>there but it's just one of those things where the stereotypically normal sizes, they don't differ so much that is very obvious...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...they tried to make it more diverse but not really I do see model that is a little bit curvier than the rest, but it's still not really I would say the Western type of curvy that is currently represented... they're kind of trying to be more diverse but it's still very much yeah within the Asian beauty standards... - ...second picture I actually think that's quite good because it is the normal middle size body, so I think most yeah quite a lot of people can relate to the this type of body... - ... I see like not just one size um so it starts off with like I wouldn't necessarily say models it's more like your average person um not all like super thin or plus size it's just in between normal bodies... - ...I think like that the Asians, like the first couple ones still lean more towards the ideal body still slimmer there's no plus size included really... just lean more towards the ideal body... - ... if you look at the four images that it's not you would say that the overarching narrative is still thin....
<p>J Style (Korean clothing brand)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...not typical plus size...like covering up the body but also showing off their curves - ...they use a lot of different body types like they don't use the ideal body type, I think, from what I can see in the advertisements, so no like really slim bodies, but kind of normal or like I don't want to say attainable bodies, because every single body should be attainable and achievable, but kind of what you would see out on the street like just actual normal like body types... - ... they're using kind of the same model, but they're also showcasing different bodies and like normalizing being quote unquote plus size... - ... this one in terms of body type is actually very diverse maybe the brand is like only caters to plus size woman... for what I know about South Korean beauty standards, I also think this is a very progressive... - ... they are focusing on using plus size people or woman I'm not saying that it's bad, but now again they're using the extreme...they're using either the models or the extremes...
<p>ASOS (British clothing/ fashion retailer)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...we have like an underwear picture she looks like directly into the camera she looks very badass very confident...so it's also like empowering different body shapes... - ...they're doing like a whole range of plus size clothing, which is really needed I guess in this society, and normalizing the body shape... - ...I think this models are actually yeah great representatives they don't really fit the kind of um standards within curvy standards... they're very diverse like even within like plus size people...I love that they actually include lingerie in those types of representations... - ... they're also using just the extreme extreme size... - ... it's nice just to see it like this, you know, to see how also clothes, you know they look different on different body types...
<p>Universal standard (American clothing brand)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...people who have a more more of like a normal body with with skin like mark on their skin... - ... there's a mix of normal and plus size women...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...two girls posing together in like a blue kind of lounge set...they're both like both on the plus size, I don't like to say, like plus size, because they're all like normal size... - ... I'm looking at the universal standard brand. And I see um yeah, it's a very wide range of diversity so I see both skinny and plus size people... - ...there's diversity in racial representation, but also in body type representation yeah and again like they're not afraid to kind of show lingerie on plus size people the women that I can see on the last page also is different from the kind of ideal curvy standard which yeah I think this this brand is very present or representative... - ...I like the last photo because it shows that okay, with you top of different types of bodies you'd be used to same outfit... - ...have very a variety of sizes were from people can then choose their own size and feel beautiful wearing their clothes no matter their body type and that's yeah I think this photo from the photos for the universal standard that one is the best one...
General Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different not mainstream models... not uh common body types as compared to you know skinny models like they are more real life... - ... in the Asian advertisement there are more even though they are different sizes it is still a bit more on the slimmer side like a few of them and then um for Western its really um more like um more people that heavy a bit on the heavier side... - ... one thing I've noticed is that quite a lot of these pictures are of, plus size models, which is quite unusual for lingerie brands... - ... Asian brands, are trying to show inclusive of it but the majority of the models are mid-sized and not plus sized... - ... but I guess the Western ASOS brand and the universal standard they have a lot more heavier girls, but I don't know if that has something to do with like the Western genetics, that we are much fatter in the West... - ... maybe in the Asian countries it's not like normal to showcase like a really obese woman guess that would be considered unhealthy...

Initial Coding (Phase 2)

Initial Coding Categories	Description
<p>Normal: seeing models of diverse body types, not the standard thin but all types/ different body shapes/sizes are 'normal', no specific definition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...more people are demanding for a normal body... - ... embracing to not have the perfect body and to kind of normalize it more in the media... - ... we call them plus size but they are actually normal size... - ...this just show quite casing like different bodies, which is nice and empowering that it's like the normalizing bodies... - ... they're using kind of the same model, but they're also showcasing different bodies and like normalizing being quote unquote plus size... - ...they're both like both on the plus size, I don't like to say, like plus size, because they're all like normal size...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it doesn't matter if you're skinny or a little bit bigger or curvy doesn't matter you're still uh still normal and it's normalized in our society...
<p>Normalization: all body types are normal it should not be of a surprise to seeing diverse body types in ads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...normal that when you look at it, you should not certainly be taken aback. - I mean when I look at it...that's what the normal people are so so it doesn't shock me, neither does it disgusts me is just you know there's no specific special feelings... - ... we call them plus size but they are actually normal size... - ...it shouldn't be noticeable right, it should be like that it should be diverse and that should be what it's like... (referring to seeing body diversity)
<p>Relatable: seeing models of diverse body types and being able to relate to that body shape/size. (fall under representation?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... if I see someone who has fat arms or or you know, has tummy rolls and I see some cloth on it on on that person I will generally you know uh relate more to that product... - ... you feel confident, but if you see those models, with different body shapes... makes you feel that you could be part of them as well, so you're close to the model - ... people can connect to the to the image that you know they're perceiving as like like having someone who looks similar to them...in terms of like not normal beauty standard someone who looks different in some way... - ... I couldn't really relate to the photos of the western brands, because I don't really see people of these type of body types in Japan... - ... on different body types it's easy to see what it will look like it gives you more than realistic idea or what it's going to be like... -
<p>Represented/Representation: seeing different body shapes and sizes that can represent the population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... represented in in media as a positive body or like being seen as appealing... - ... more representative of like the just the population...different kind of wide shapes and kind of you know a good representative of how um it is for the everyday person like body shape... - ... if you see the diversity now, then that really helps me and and that you'll see you know you've got plus size and you've got kind of maybe on the slimer side and you've got a wide range... you kind of feel like you're being represented... - ...I feel represented...seeing a diverse like as diversity of models for like this specific brand like shows me that they actually do like care and that if I were to like go to their store or to their web shop, whatever they use to sell their products if I go to that with my friends, then we could all potentially like fit in their clothes, or like I wouldn't have to worry that oh I won't fit in... - ... brands, who do that actually care about their customers and yeah they want to to represent their customers, as they are, or maybe their product and they want to show what the product would would actually look like on their customers... - ... I would just feel that it's more represents to a reality... (seeing more body diversity)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...I will just feel that okay these advertisements, I really like represented their customers... there's going to become less pressure I guess for people to fit within certain standards... - ... I like that brands are also kind of realizing this um that their customers, need to be represented and need to be made the face of the brand... - ... I think that's what all brands should do, like all advertisement should be just a representation of reality... - ...advertising should be accurate, or at least mostly accurate reflection of the world that we actually live in
Confident/ Confidence (fall under acceptance?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...to be confident to show off your body... - ... they all look confident and somewhat proud of their themselves... - you feel confident, but if you see those models, with different body shapes... you could be part of them as well, so you're close to the model... - ...looking confident in in the product you just feel like oh okay, then It feels like you know, I have a chance to yeah.
Empower/ Empowering (fall under normal?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...trend of empowering...to love different kind of different size or different every type of body right... - ...we have like an underwear picture she looks like directly into the camera she looks very badass very confident...so it's also like empowering different body shapes... - ...empowering just because you see those are what products can also look like on on everyday people...
Acceptance: people feeling that different body types are accepted when seeing diverse body types featured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you can tell someone that their body is beautiful, even if it's not the ideal body type, however, when they don't see anyone like with a body type as like being praised or actually don't see anyone else with our bodies, it makes it a lot more difficult to I don't know feel like your body type is accepted... - ... if we have more as like that it will be a more accepted society around body types and ideals and not be so hard on women... (seeing body diversity in ads.) - ... if there will be more diverse with them models on their you know their apps, for example, now and then I also think that would make the customers feel better about themselves...
Realistic: more of bodies that we see in our daily life (fall under normal/ representative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different not mainstream models... not uh common body types as compared to you know skinny models like they are more real life... - ... more realistic of how people are...
Inclusive: include not only skinny or plus type, but all types of body shapes/ sizes Positive and negative	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...happy to shop for a brand you know if they are more inclusive...good to see people being able to wear clothes that they want and also... available in their size as well... - ... more inclusive like body size especially... - ... it says a lot about the brand...that they are um choosing these models...modelling for their clothes um it shows that the brand is trying to be more inclusive and um also giving the option of like um like including different sizes as well for their clothes so that more people can wear it... - ...I think this should still be represented as they are, and then also show more women so not necessarily less of something,

	<p>but just a more equal type of situation because that's just the world, I see like that's the world, I see every day, where there's both very skinny women, naturally, who fits the model type that there's also women who do not fit that model that type of model...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they are using a lot more variety of woman so they're not only using skinny woman...using yeah every type uh from a little bit uh petite, to a large size and I think that really helps to bring that okay everybody is different, everyone has a different kind of body and everybody should be accepted... - ...it doesn't all have to be you know plus size it doesn't all have to be the model just a good variety of everything yeah it's way nice to see an Instagram feed like that you know but normal people than that, rather than just models um catches normal bodies, but you see like in everyday life...
	<p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... there needs to be more diversity, because, even if I mentioned brands that do have a lot of diversity there's still like the minority, like the majority of brands cater to the skinner types or if they're cater to like plus size models it's only plus size models... there definitely needs to be more diversity, even though it already exists, but it's still very much at a small-scale... - ...I still don't think it's 100% uh enough, because what you also see that it either goes only skinny models, or only larger people or both of them, so you kind of missed the middle part so like more of the of the curvy... - ...it's good that they're also doing that the larger, the larger models are also part of the social media campaigns um and it's really good that people are seeing that but I think they should still add a little bit more diversity like completely use different types of body types... - ... maybe we don't see enough of it already because it's always like all like the model body like what we see is a standard... maybe like what's in between is kind of left out sometimes...

Thematic Analysis (Phase 3, 4 & 5)

Potential Themes & Refining

Main category	Sub-category	Description
Normalization	Realistic	Seeing all types of body shapes and sizes that appears around our daily life.
Representation	Relatable	Featuring diverse body shapes and sizes that reflect the general population.
	Confidence	People feel more assured when wearing the product after seeing a diverse range of body types modelling the product.
	Inclusivity	Seeing diverse body types featured gives people a sense of acceptance by society.

Appendix E: Researcher's notes

Content analysis on Instagram comments

Writing keywords:

Jeans:

- Body standards
- models => not typical plus-size cover up, but showing curves => Jstyle
- ASOS & Jstyle => promoting the similar styles
- plus-sized models => "normal body" => imperfections on skin.
 - ↳ unideal standards
- ~~Instagram~~
- size 0 & curvy thin model body.
 - ↳ look more appealing
- criteria => body shapes "normal body"
- reliable? => people can relate body size or not models?

Blouse:

- not enough of body diversity => skinny or plus-size
 - ↳ in between (Liffers)
- difference between Asian & Western brands of advertising diversity.
- realistic idea of how the clothing looks like
- why do you think other people are laughing that way?
 - ↳ negative

Huron:

- trend / genuine => including body diversity / positively?
 - ↳ shouldn't be a trend
- 'represented' => brands own
- risk for brands?

Future improvement

Critique should include participants' own knowledge of the topic of research

16 - culturally & economical status

- are brands promoting ~~by~~ by featuring them?
- making it "normal" => shouldn't be surprise.
- are we still brand incorporating diversity?
- which brands display more diversity?

Rina [13:07] => 13:52

- Body types differ! => Asian & Western
- confident, girl power vib.
- able to relate to the models?

Jany [14:10] => 14:59

- "real life models" - Korean & Western influence
- plus size = normal size / people
- Do you think brands are genuine! hoping on trends of unideal!
- marketing => listening to consumers? => demand!

16 Selma S.: [10:52]

- body wear of different styles => Jstyle
- representing different body shapes
- normal size
- influence from the west
- changing bodies into 'ideal'
- recognize in them => strong ones => criticism
- obese girl
- ↳ "normal"

20 Selma A.: [14:03]

- celebrate influence. Western influence?
 - ↳ fall, strong => influenced Asian culture
- Plastic surgery (looking)
- expose to criticism => brass women
- risky?
- is there enough body diversity? size zero or plus size
 - ↳ evaluate to ask question!
- criteria to selecting models? in between!
- ↳ division (laugh) => clothes to stand out
- striking difference between Asian & Western?
- why do you think people find this negative?

Wanzi: [16:34] => 18:19

- diversity (rac.) => Asian (age)
- ignore health => relate to criticism question
- normal body!
- thinner more attractive.
- "average" => in between zero & plus
 - ↳ not objectively diff.

- Health risks => nobody obese => universal standard [10:5]
 - ↳ encouraging unhealthy => crossing the line of the movement
- underweight models? => missing!
 - ↳ would they be criticized similar to plus-size?
- differences in (clothing size.)

[10:09] => 10:54 Huron

- "normal body" => elaborate: normal curves
- activities bringing more diversity & positivity on social media.
- skinny / plus-size => or both, [middle part missing!]
- negativity => don't represent the world (Dove campaign)
 - ↳ should there be a criterion?
- thin line between lines. => healthy & unhealthy
- striking difference?
- prefer to see models of diverse bodies together in a picture? *

Ruby [10:36] => 11:21

- "Kardashian" => thin & ~~curvy~~ curvy. not too comfortable
- accurate on 10 society.
- striking difference between Asian & Western? friends of friends
- Hage => ASOS => genuine / following trend?
 - ↳ would you

Jackson [14:42] => [15:27]

- "stereotypical" & "upcoming trend" => comfortable
- 60% 45%
- Sun, petite, heavier skin
- Western influence => "plus-size"