

Lingerie and Body Positivity on Instagram

A Qualitative Content Analysis of Social Media Users' Expressions

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has played a transformative role in the body positivity movement, providing platforms for challenging prevailing beauty norms and advocating for the acceptance of different body types. This thesis examined how social media users responded to body positivity campaigns on Instagram, with a specific focus on lingerie brand Hunkemöller. The research was guided by the central question: How did social media users express and articulate their perceptions of body positivity on Instagram in the context of the lingerie brand Hunkemöller?

The study employed a qualitative content analysis approach, examining user comments on Hunkemöller's Instagram posts featuring body positivity influencers Joann van den Herik, Camilla Lorentzen, Emily McMillan, and May Ridts. This method allowed for an in-depth examination of the range of responses to body positivity content and the dynamics of user interactions. Data collection involved gathering responses from different posts to identify recurring themes and patterns.

The analysis revealed a broad spectrum of perceptions among social media users. Positive reactions included complimenting the attractiveness of influencers, admiration, inspiration, confidence boosts, appreciation of different body types, and healing from eating disorders. Conversely, negative reactions encompassed criticism in the form of hate comments, viewing plus-size models as unhealthy, body shaming, and expressions of shame.

Another key finding was the feedback that social media users provided to the brand itself. A prevalent theme in the negative feedback was the perception that Hunkemöller, despite promoting inclusivity through body positivity campaigns, fell short in offering plus-size options in its store and online. Critics argued that the brand might have been leveraging body positivity primarily as a marketing tactic rather than a genuine commitment to inclusivity. Additionally, there were observations about the inconsistent expectations for plus-size models compared to their thin counterparts, suggesting discrepancies in the brand's portrayal of body positivity.

Interactions between social media users also played a significant role, particularly in response to negative comments. Many users engaged in comment threads, either correcting

the initial negative remarks or retaliating against the commenters, highlighting the dynamic and often contentious nature of online discussions surrounding body positivity.

In conclusion, this thesis underscored the significant role of social media in shaping societal attitudes towards body diversity and acceptance. It advocated for continuous adaptation and responsiveness to evolving societal norms, enabling brands to promote body positivity and inclusivity genuinely and effectively.

KEYWORDS: *Body Positivity, Social Media, Instagram, Social Media Expressions, Inclusivity*

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1. INTRODUCTION

“You are so stunning”, “You are an inspiration”, “You have taught me how to love my body”, “Really disgusting that this can and is allowed”, and “Don't normalize extra sizes”. These diverse comments were posted in response to an Instagram post by Hunkemöller featuring a curvy woman in lingerie. Reactions such as these highlight the multifaceted perceptions that social media users have regarding the body positivity movement. The body positivity movement challenges unrealistic beauty standards portrayed in the media by promoting the acceptance of a diverse range of body types and appearances (Lazuka et al., 2020, p. 85). The movement aims to confront restrictive beauty norms by encouraging the acceptance of bodies of different sizes, shapes, ages, races, and abilities, thereby normalizing diversity as a beauty standard (Brathwaite & DeAndrea, 2021, p. 1). Social media have significantly influenced the body positivity movement by offering crucial platforms for social justice, challenging the dominant narrative of the obesity epidemic that stigmatizes fat individuals as inferior or as a problem to be managed (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 2). Social media have enabled individuals to challenge societal norms by sharing their own stories and experiences. Body positivity content emerged from the collective efforts of numerous individuals who utilized online platforms to share their personal stories (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 5).

As social media remain a powerful platform for self-expression and brand communication, it is crucial to understand how social media users respond to body positivity campaigns. Social media platforms like Instagram provide a unique space where users can both consume and create content, allowing for a diverse array of voices and perspectives to be heard (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 241). This digital interaction creates a dynamic environment where perceptions and attitudes towards body positivity can be expressed and influenced. Therefore, analyzing these interactions is essential for comprehending the broader societal impact of body positivity campaigns.

This thesis examines the dynamics of social media users' interactions with body positivity, focusing specifically on the lingerie brand Hunkemöller. Hunkemöller has positioned itself as a brand committed to inclusivity and diversity, making it an ideal case study for understanding how body positivity is received and interpreted by its audience (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). The brand's use of diverse models and inclusive marketing messages provides a rich source of data for analyzing consumer reactions and engagement. The research is guided by the following question: How do social media users express and articulate their perceptions of body positivity on Instagram in the context of the

lingerie brand Hunkemöller? This central question seeks to unravel the complex ways users react to, interpret, and engage with body positivity content on social media. It aims to identify patterns in user comments, sentiments, and behaviors that reflect their attitudes towards body positivity.

While several studies about body positivity on social media have examined the effect of exposure to body positivity content, finding associations with positive mood, body satisfaction, body appreciation, and improvements in mental health (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 13; Lazuka et al., 2020, p. 85; Rousseau, 2023, p. 1), some research has focused on consumer behavior regarding purchase intent and reactions to plus-size models on magazine covers (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019, pp. 1363-1371; Tsawaab, 2023, pp. 2775-2781). However, there is a gap in research concerning how social media users respond to body positivity content on Instagram. This thesis contributes to the academic understanding of social media users' behavior in the context of body positivity campaigns, particularly on Instagram. This makes the thesis academically relevant by focusing on the specific context of social media, where much of the body positivity discourse takes place.

To achieve this, the study employs qualitative content analysis to examine how social media users interpret and interact with body positivity posts. This was done by analyzing comments posted below various body positivity posts on the Instagram account of the lingerie brand Hunkemöller. In the era of body positivity advocacy, understanding social media users' reactions to such content is essential for promoting a more inclusive and informed marketing landscape. This thesis also investigates the potential boomerang effect, where strategically crafted messages can inadvertently produce results opposite to the intended impact (Hart & Nisbet, 2011, p. 704). While Hunkemöller's body positivity content aims to foster a more inclusive society, the negative reactions this content could be generating greater rejection of inclusivity and diversity.

This research is also socially relevant, particularly in the context of fashion and beauty, as it addresses the ongoing societal discourse on body image and acceptance. By understanding the diverse perceptions and reactions to body positivity content, this study provides practical insights for brands like Hunkemöller. These insights enable brands to tailor their strategies effectively and responsibly in line with evolving societal attitudes, thereby fostering a more inclusive marketing landscape. Moreover, exploring the various perceptions of body positivity is crucial for several reasons. First, it helps to dismantle harmful stereotypes and stigmas associated with different body types. By highlighting positive representations and celebrating body diversity, brands can contribute to reducing the

prevalence of body dissatisfaction and its associated mental health issues, such as eating disorders and low self-esteem. Second, this research supports the ongoing movement towards social justice and equality (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 2). The body positivity movement intersects with issues of race, gender, and disability, advocating for a more inclusive society that values all bodies (Brathwaite & DeAndrea, 2021, p. 1). By understanding how different groups perceive body positivity, we can better address the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities and ensure that the movement is truly inclusive. Third, analyzing social media users' perceptions of body positivity can inform public health campaigns. As public health messages increasingly utilize social media to reach wider audiences (Moorhead et al., 2013, p. 11), understanding the nuances of how body positivity is received can help design more effective campaigns that promote healthy behaviors without reinforcing negative body images or exclusionary ideals. Furthermore, this research is timely as it reflects the evolving nature of consumer culture. Today's consumers are more socially conscious and expect brands to reflect their values (Craddock et al., 2019, p. 94). By aligning marketing strategies with the principles of body positivity, brands can build stronger relationships with their audiences, fostering loyalty and trust.

The remainder of this thesis is organized to provide a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. Chapter Two delves into the existing literature on body positivity, focusing on its representation on social media. This chapter examines how body positivity is portrayed and discussed online, emphasizing the role of social media in shaping public perceptions. It also explores how brands communicate their commitment to body positivity as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Additionally, this chapter analyzes how individuals express their views and opinions about body positivity online, highlighting the diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives that emerge in digital spaces. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology employed in this study. It details the use of content analysis as the primary research method, explaining the research design and the rationale behind choosing this approach. This chapter covers the sampling techniques and data collection procedures used to gather relevant data from Instagram posts. Furthermore, it provides an in-depth explanation of the operationalization, defining key concepts that are used in the analysis. The chapter also describes the data analysis and coding phase, offering a step-by-step guide on how the data was systematically examined to identify themes and patterns. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and highlights key themes and patterns that emerged from the analysis of social media users' reactions to body positivity posts. This chapter details the different ways in which users responded to body positivity posts from Hunkemöller. The

findings are discussed for each analyzed influencer based on the main categories found in the comments. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the study by synthesizing the insights gained from the research. This chapter links the findings to existing theories, providing a cohesive understanding of the study's contributions to the academic discourse on body positivity and social media. It also discusses the social implications of the findings and implications for communication professionals, considering how they might influence future marketing strategies. The chapter addresses the limitations of the study, acknowledging factors that may have affected the results and suggesting areas for future research. By providing recommendations for further investigation, this chapter aims to inspire continued exploration of body positivity and digital media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Body positivity on Instagram

In recent years, there has been a rise in body positivity messages on social media platforms (Lazuka et al., 2020, p. 85). The body positivity movement disrupts unrealistic beauty standards perpetuated by the media through the advocacy and embracement of a variety of body sizes and appearances (Lazuka et al., 2020, p. 85). Social media has played a transformative role in shaping the body positivity movement by providing vital platforms for social justice in combating the prevailing narrative of the so-called obesity epidemic in which overweighted people are seen as lesser members of society or a problem to be controlled (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 2). This is partly because, unlike traditional media, which often perpetuated norms that favored thinness, social media empowered individuals to challenge these norms by sharing their own stories and experiences (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 5). The body positivity movement did not arise from one individual or website but through the collective efforts of individuals who used these new online platforms to share their personal stories (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 5).

In particular, the body positivity movement aims to confront prevailing narrow standards of beauty, discourage comparing oneself based on appearance, and promote the acceptance and celebration of bodies irrespective of their shape, size, or appearance (Tiggemann et al., 2020, p. 130). The acceptance of these attributes within the body positivity movement is reflected in the portrayal of so-called "flaws", including attributes that do not conform to societal ideals of beauty such as cellulite, stretch marks, acne, body hair and rolls of fat on the belly (Cohen, Irwin, et al., 2019, p. 50). However, besides acceptance of flaws, body appreciation goes beyond the physical aspects or visual appeal of the body and includes admiration for its functionality, such as strength and power (Williamson & Karazsia, 2018, p. 96). One possible approach to promoting positive body image is to encourage women to prioritize the functionality of their bodies over appearance (Williamson & Karazsia, 2018, p.96). To encompass the body positivity movement, six key facets have been outlined by Cohen, Fardouly, et al. (2019), namely "body appreciation, body acceptance and love, a broad conception of beauty, body care, inner positivity and information filtering" (p. 48). Collectively, these components emphasize the importance of embracing and celebrating different body shapes, sizes and appearances, promoting a culture of self-love and acceptance that embraces both inner and outer beauty standards.

The body positivity movement owes its popularity partially to the social media platform Instagram, as it is a photo-based platform that has seen an increase in body-positive

accounts (Cohen, Irwin, et al., 2019, p. 3). As one of the most dominant and influential social networking sites, Instagram has emerged as a powerful medium for cultivating awareness, building online communities, and driving social change on a global scale (Cohen, Irwin, et al., 2019, p. 4). The platform's unique blend, in comparison to other social media platforms, of visual content and interactive features makes it an ideal space for comprehensively exploring the multifaceted expressions of body positivity (Cohen, Irwin, et al., 2019, p. 4).

Tiggemann et al (2020) found that body positive content on Instagram includes a variety of images, such as photos of diverse women, often with larger sizes, in swimwear or stylish clothing (p. 130). These images show natural, unaltered images of women proudly displaying their body features, such as tummy rolls, which are often seen as flaws. In addition, inspiring memes or quotes are shared to reinforce the message of body positivity. Accompanying captions provide context and enhance the message with phrases such as "love your curves" or "all bodies are beautiful". Hashtags such as #bodypositive, #loveyourbody and #loveyourself are often used to make searching for such content easier (Tiggemann et al., 2020, p. 130).

The study conducted by Cohen, Fardouly, et al. (2019) investigated the impact of viewing body-positive Instagram posts on the mood and body image of young women. The study used an experiment as the methodology in which women were randomly assigned to view either body-positive, slim-ideal or appearance-neutral Instagram posts (p. 5). Their findings revealed that brief exposure to body-positive content on Instagram led to enhancements in positive mood and body satisfaction among young women. Conversely, viewing thin-ideal posts was associated with declines in positive mood and body satisfaction. Furthermore, participants who were exposed to body-positive content reported greater body appreciation compared to those who viewed thin-ideal content (Cohen, Fardouly, et al., 2019, p. 13).

Building upon the discoveries of Cohen, Fardouly, et al. (2019), the study of Cowles et al. (2023) delved deeper into exploring the connection between Instagram usage and women's body image. Their study found an association between Instagram use and increased body image concerns in female users. Specifically, increased Instagram use was linked to increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction. However, the presence of body-positive content on the platform appeared to mitigate these negative effects, leading to a reduction in negative mood (Cowles et al., 2023, p. 120).

Nelson et al. (2022) contribute an additional perspective to the discourse surrounding the impact of body positivity content on women. While previously mentioned studies mainly

focused on young adult women, Nelson et al. (2022) extended the scope to adult women across a broader age spectrum, ranging from 18 to 76 years old (p. 338). In their experimental design study, participants were randomly assigned to view body-positive, thin-ideal, or appearance-neutral content on Instagram. The findings showed that exposure to body-positive Instagram content led to greater body appreciation and satisfaction compared to exposure to thin-ideal and neutral content. The study highlights that body-focused content positively influences women's perception of body image across different age groups, emphasizing its relevance and effectiveness in promoting body acceptance and satisfaction among adult women on Instagram (Nelson et al., 2022, p. 338-346).

In short, the influence of body positivity on Instagram extends to different age groups and therefore Instagram provides a platform to promote positive perceptions of body image. From improving mood and satisfaction among women to reducing negative body image concerns among female users, these studies highlight the transformative influence of body-positive content. The next section will take a closer look at how brands communicate about body positivity and the role of body acceptance and inclusivity in marketing practices.

2.2 Brand communication and body positivity

Companies are increasingly expressing their stance on social and political issues as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Craddock et al., 2019, p. 94). According to (Craddock et al., 2019), body-positive content is a part of corporate social responsibility and with it, companies extend their impact beyond making profits and actively contribute to reducing societal harm (p. 94). The concept of fostering a positive body image has gained notable traction in corporate communication by embracing a diverse array of body shapes and appearances (Johansson, 2020, p. 113; Lazuka et al., 2020, p. 90).

The research conducted by Swastika et al. (2022) sheds light on the Nipplets lingerie brand's "Real People Real Body" (RPRB) campaign on Instagram and its impact on promoting body positivity. The study concluded that the RPRB campaign effectively raised awareness about body positivity. The key findings of the study, highlight several important aspects. Initially, the campaign exhibited inconsistencies in writing captions and embedding relevant hashtags. However, over time, Nipplets' regular posting gained recognition and improved consistency. Engagement was another crucial element; the brand's active interaction with consumers helped maintain strong relationships, as evidenced by consumer posts tagging the @nipplets_official Instagram account. Additionally, the alignment of the RPRB campaign with product marketing emphasized positive body messages and effectively countered body

shaming. These insights underscore the importance of consistent, engaging, and collaborative campaigns in social media marketing (pp. 137-141).

In exploring body positivity strategies within the lingerie industry, the insights of Janine Kaatee, Global PR & Communication Manager at Hunkemöller, provide valuable perspectives (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). Hunkemöller's body positivity strategy revolves around the use of influencer marketing and user-generated content to promote authenticity, inclusivity, and real connections with its audience. By collaborating with a diverse range of influencers, including celebrities, macro influencers, ambassadors, and micro influencers, Hunkemöller ensures that its message reaches various segments of its target audience (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). The brand's influencer marketing strategy is structured like a pyramid, with celebrities and macro influencers at the top, followed by peer influencers, ambassadors, micro influencers, and finally, loyal customers who contribute user-generated content (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). This multi-tiered approach allows Hunkemöller to maintain visibility among its target demographics and leverage the credibility and relatability of influencers at different levels. Hunkemöller prioritizes inclusivity and authenticity in its collaborations by selecting influencers who align with the brand's values and core messages of female empowerment (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). The brand also values diversity in its influencers, ensuring representation across different body types, backgrounds, and demographics, which is consistent with the findings of Swastika et al. (2022) on the effectiveness of the "real people real body" strategy. The use of influencers, such as curvy model Daniëlle van Grondelle, reflects the commitment to inclusivity and has played a crucial role in reshaping the lingerie brand's image and connecting with diverse consumer segments (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1).

In the lingerie industry, brands are embracing body positivity through innovative communication strategies, such as Nipplets' "real people real body" approach and Hunkemöller's influencer-driven campaigns, which demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and celebrating diverse body images (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023; Swastika et al., 2022). Yet embracing body positivity as a business can also be seen as adopting feminist values and capitalizing on a societal trend of being 'confident' and 'loving your body' (Craddock et al., 2019, p. 95). Craddock et al. (2019) investigated the opportunities and challenges of encouraging body positivity in corporate communications, by interviewing 45 individual business leaders. This revealed several themes as motivations for promoting body positivity, including the use of body positivity as a CSR strategy (p. 98-102). Particularly within the fashion, advertising, and beauty industries, actions to promote positive body image

can engage various stakeholders and give businesses a competitive advantage (Craddock et al., 2019, p. 102). While profitability is a possible outcome, business leaders warn against symbolic approaches and emphasize the need for genuine engagement and thoughtful strategies (Craddock et al., 2019, p. 102).

Walters (2021) further examined the use of CSR as gender washing. Gender washing is defined by Walters (2021) as “a range of communications with the intent to mislead people into adopting overly positive beliefs about the impact of an organization’s practices, policies, or products on girls and women” (p. 1584). One way gender washing in CSR could happen is by exploiting partnerships between corporations and nongovernmental organizations to promote body positivity (Walters, 2021, p. 1588). For example, Dove's partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The partnership between the WAGGGS and Dove to develop a source of self-confidence for girls reflects a joint effort to address appearance anxiety. While Dove's involvement highlights increasing women's self-confidence, it also raises concerns. Previous initiatives by Dove, particularly the 'Campaign for Real Beauty', have been criticized for mixing marketing strategies and philanthropic efforts. This mixing of motives was seen as a sales booster and an attempt to increase brand loyalty while promoting body positivity (Walters, 2021, pp. 1588, 1589). The controversy surrounding CSR aligns with the distinction between CSR communication and CSR action. The study by Ginder et al (2019) examines consumer reactions to different views on CSR and sheds light on the nuanced relationship between CSR actions and consumer perceptions. Besides employing CSR communication to create a favorable impression, the practice of CSR-washing has heightened consumer skepticism towards CSR publicity. This involves companies portraying themselves as more socially responsible than they truly are (Ginder et al., 2019, p. 1). Companies that engage in CSR-washing, which lacks internal CSR actions, are at risk of negative consumer evaluations due to perceived misleading motives. These findings emphasize the complexity of consumer attributions and highlight the importance of internal-external CSR congruence for ethical judgments (Ginder et al., 2019, p. 11). In summary, integrating body positivity into brand communication strategies highlights a shift towards authenticity, inclusivity, and genuine engagement as essential elements for impactful CSR initiatives. As companies strive to maintain integrity and authenticity in their CSR initiatives, their engagement with consumers on social media platforms becomes a critical factor in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors, therefore the next section will dive deeper into consumer expressions on social media.

2.3 Self-expression on Social Media

In exploring social media user responses within the digital landscape, this paragraph will discuss theories and empirical research on social media as platforms for self-expression, with a particular focus on their reactions to various aspects of digital advertisements.

The Online Disinhibition Theory, as proposed by Suler (2004), highlights self-expression on the Internet. According to this theory, individuals exhibit behavior online that differs from their behavior in the real world. Two different forms of disinhibition emerge in online self-expression, with contrasting directions (Suler, 2004, p. 321). Benign disinhibition manifests when individuals exhibit unusually friendly behavior online, openly sharing personal emotions, fears and desires. Toxic disinhibition, on the other hand, takes a negative turn and includes expressions of foul language, harsh criticism, anger, hatred, and even threats (Suler, 2004, p. 321).

The positive and negative in online and offline behaviors, as described above, can be explained by Walther's (1992) Social Information Processing Theory. This theory emphasizes the complex nature of online communication, influenced by factors such as timing, personal connections, future interactions, and interpretation (Sumner & Ramirez, 2017, p. 4). The concept of increased personal involvement in online interactions compared to face-to-face communication is described as hyperpersonal communication by Walther (1992). This phenomenon is fueled by the asynchronous nature, editability, and anonymity of communication inherent in online platforms (Sumner & Ramirez, 2017, p. 5). Consequently, communicators can take advantage of this time difference and the availability of a delete button to carefully draft and refine their messages to convey the desired impression and personal involvement. For instance, people may have trouble controlling their nonverbal cues in face-to-face interactions and often react impulsively before fully processing a situation (Sumner & Ramirez, 2017, p. 5). The slower pace of computer-mediated communication gives people more time to think about the possible interpretations of their messages and experiment with different wording before sending them (Sumner & Ramirez, 2017, p. 5). This can happen in the acceptance of body positivity content causing social media users to post extra carefully crafted positive comments, whereas in a face-to-face situation, they would not respond as carefully. This makes it possible that the interactions are more hyperpersonal on social media than they would be in a face-to-face situation.

According to Hirschman and Thompson's (1997) empirical research on the relationship between consumers and media, there are three strategies for how a person can respond to media communication. First, the striving and inspiring strategy, in which media

images are seen as valuable goals and motivating examples. Second, deconstructing and rejecting, reflects a more critical relationship between consumers and media. Last, identifying and individualizing the empathic relationship, aimed at affirming self-concept and current consumption patterns (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997, p. 56). For instance, it might occur that body positivity content is perceived by social media users as inspiring content that motivates body acceptance, or the social media users reject the body positivity content by responding with negative comments, or lastly, social media users might identify themselves with the body positivity content in an emphatic relationship.

User generated content about consumer experiences will increasingly influence companies' reputations (Vollenbroek et al., 2014, p. 280). On social media platforms, influential users have the power to spread both positive and negative comments about products, services, brands, or companies among their online networks. The consequences of such dissemination can be significant as negative information and opinions can reach a large audience and significantly affect the image and reputation of organisations (Vollenbroek et al., 2014, pp. 284, 285).

Lee and Chun (2016) researched the application of Social Judgment Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory to understand how individuals respond to the opinions expressed by others on social media (pp. 479, 480, 484). Social Judgment Theory states that people judge new information based on their existing attitudes and beliefs. In the context of social media, this theory suggests that users' pre-existing opinions determine their reactions to the opinions of others (Lee & Chun, 2016, p. 479, 484). The Spiral of Silence Theory emphasizes the role of social norms in shaping individuals' willingness to express their opinions in a public setting. In the context of social media, users may be more inclined to express opinions consistent with the perceived majority for fear of isolation or resistance to dissent (Lee & Chun, 2016, p. 479, 480, 484). In relation to the online discussions about body image, users may feel pressured to conform to popular views to avoid social isolation. This may prevent them from challenging traditional beauty standards or expressing dissenting opinions.

According to Volkova and Bachrach (2015), people express their thoughts, emotions, and preferences in different ways, and the ideas and emotions expressed depend not only on what we experience but also on our environment (p. 726). Social media users express emotions such as joy, sadness, and opinions based on their relationships, income, education and other factors, which can reveal deep insights about themselves (Volkova & Bachrach, 2015, p. 731). Based on insights from Volkova and Bachrach's (2015) research, users with higher income levels tend to express fewer negative emotions, compared to users with lower

income levels, while female users tend to be more emotional and opinionated compared to men. Moreover, age plays a role, with older users expressing more joy and less sadness than younger users. Interestingly, optimism and life satisfaction are positively correlated with expressing positive emotions. Moreover, people in relationships or with children tend to express more positive emotions (p. 734). This may be interesting for the underlying reasons why one social media user responds more positively to body positivity content than another social media user. Regarding body positivity responses on social media, these insights can be taken into account while analyzing the responders social media account.

Another side of consumer expression is the effect of receiving responses from others on social media. Stsiampkouskaya et al. (2021) found that Instagram users' emotions and posting habits are particularly affected by received social media engagement. Positive engagement, such as enthusiasm, leads to more frequent postings. While lack of expected engagement causes longer breaks from posting and feelings of sadness (pp. 10, 11).

Building upon the dynamics of online discourse and the potential influence of social media opinions, it is essential to consider the boomerang effect as explored by Hart and Nisbet (2011). The boomerang effect occurs when strategic communication messages are backfired (Byrne & Hart, 2009, p. 3). This occurs when a persuasive message, intended to shift attitudes in a certain direction, produces an unintended outcome, causing attitudes to move in the opposite direction (Hart & Nisbet, 2011, pp. 704). The strategic communication messages may reach a group where the message does not apply and therefore may be ineffective or result in a greater negative impact (Hart & Nisbet, 2011, pp. 704, 705). An example of this is the communication message of diabetes prevention programs that led to a boomerang effect which resulted in greater ideological polarization between Republicans and Democrats (Hart & Nisbet, 2011, pp. 705). Strategic communication includes commercial advertisements that attempt to persuade people to buy a particular product, as well as social marketing campaigns that attempt to change unhealthy attitudes and behaviors (Byrne & Hart, 2009, p. 3). The body positivity movement on social media is a social marketing campaign that seeks to change attitudes and behaviors toward fat-shaming (Zavattaro, 2020, p. 2). It could also happen, according to the boomerang effect theory, that attitudes about the body positivity movement move in the opposite direction, thereby widening the gap between body positivity supporters and thin ideal supporters.

Exploring the diverse theories underlying social media expression provides valuable insight into the motivations behind individuals' online behaviors. To bridge these theoretical

frameworks with attitudes toward body positivity in practice, the upcoming section will delve into the multifaceted perceptions surrounding body positivity content.

2.4 Opinions Towards Body Positivity

The constant stream of body positivity images on social media is associated with an impact on mental and physical well-being. According to Andrew et al. (2016), body positivity images have a positive effect on body acceptance and body appreciation and reduces social comparison and self-objectification (pp. 468, 469). The study by Guest et al. (2022) adds that the body positivity movement contributes to increased self-esteem and gratitude for body functionality (p.58). The study by Stevens & Griffiths (2020) states that observing social media content depicting authentic bodies, such as those featuring stretch marks, curves, fat rolls, and cellulite, has the potential to positively impact body image and emotional well-being (p. 187). Hendrickse et al. (2020) demonstrated that women who were exposed to advertisements featuring plus-size models on Instagram, irrespective of the type of slogan used, exhibited higher levels of body satisfaction compared to those who were exposed to advertisements featuring thin models on Instagram (p. 6). These findings are connected to the social comparison theory as the primary explanatory factor behind this phenomenon. In essence, women tend to evaluate their own bodies more positively when comparing downwards to individuals with larger bodies, which are typically perceived as less desirable, rather than upwards to individuals with thinner bodies (Hendrickse et al., 2020, p. 6).

Despite the increasing popularity of the body positivity movement, not all responses are favorable (Cohen et al., 2020; Rodgers et al., 2023; Vendemia et al., 2021). The study by Vendemia et al. (2021) investigated how female viewers respond to varying levels of sexualization and indications of photo modification in body-positive imagery on social media. These authors used an experimental study design in which body-positive images of women with larger bodies were shown in every condition except the control group (p. 139). Sexualization was manipulated by presenting separate images of the same women in sexually suggestive poses or non-sexual poses. Indications of photo modification were also manipulated, with some images labeled as edited in Photoshop and others as unmodified. The control group consisted of landscape photographs without people (p. 139). Their findings suggest that when viewers perceive women in photos as sexualized, they tend to sexually objectify themselves more, believe the images were shared for self-serving reasons, and endorse traditional beauty ideals (p. 143). Employing the lens of objectification theory, which posits that women are socialized to view themselves as objects valued primarily for their

physical appearance, the authors contextualize their findings (p. 138). They suggest that despite challenging traditional beauty ideals, body-positive imagery on social media, when sexualized, can still contribute to objectification and dehumanization (p. 143). These insights have practical implications for both viewers and producers of body-positive content on social media, emphasizing the negative effects of sexualized portrayals and appearance commentary in the Instagram comment section (Vendemia et al., 2021, p. 143).

Cohen et al. (2020) highlight the concerns of several critics, including newspapers and online blogs. These critics argue that body positivity, despite its positive message, could put new pressure on women to love their bodies, potentially exacerbating negative feelings for those who do not meet the thin ideal norm (p. 3). Another criticism suggests that the movement continues to focus on appearance, thus perpetuating the underlying issues it seeks to address (Cohen et al., 2020, p. 3). An additional critical aspect lies in that promoting body positivity could unintentionally normalize unhealthy lifestyles, especially in the context of obesity (Gaze & Kibel, 2021, 87). Critics argue that emphasizing the acceptance of larger body sizes could undermine efforts to address health problems related to obesity, and possibly overlook the importance of encouraging healthy habits (Gaze & Kibel, 2021, 88).

Harvey (2023) examines how internalized weight stigma is an obstacle to breakthrough anti-fat beliefs and social structures (p. 29). Harvey's (2023) research found that the body positivity movement faces significant challenges due to internalized weight stigma and the influence of neoliberal ideologies. These neoliberal ideologies frame fatness as a personal choice and pathologize non-conforming bodies. As a result, some people internalize these narratives as stigmas, leading to self-blame, grief, and mourning when attempts to conform to societal norms fail. This internalized stigma can hinder fat activism by preventing fat bodies from challenging oppressive societal structures (Harvey, 2023, p. 33). Negative reactions to body positivity content may originate from the internalized weight stigma one has, linking body positivity content to being unhealthy and as such having a fat phobia (Gaze & Kibel, 2021, 86, 67).

Pounders & Mabry-Flynn's (2019) research encompassed the various reactions to body positivity content in mainstream magazines. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), consumer-generated content from news article websites was examined in response to three events featuring plus-size models in venues typically associated with thin-ideal models (p. 1361). These events included plus-size models on the cover of popular magazines. These events gained significant media coverage due to the novelty of plus-size models occupying such roles, and the study focused on consumer comments in media stories reporting on these

events (p. 1361). The results are reported into themes where a distinction can be made between positive, negative, or confused reactions (p. 1363). For example, one of the news websites covers a broad spectrum of topics featuring columns and blogs on which consumers can respond (p.1361) . One of the responses of a consumer is for instance “So this is the USAs answer to rising obesity and childhood obesity rate? Glamorize and normalize it because this is how we are all gonna look like in 50 years” (p. 1366). The first theme that is discussed in the findings, is Puzzlement which focuses on confusion and frustration about what plus size is. In this theme, the debate arises over whether certain models truly represent diverse body types (p. 1363). The second theme is the negative side and consists of anger and disgust. Within this theme, there is a recurring subject that being overweight should not be normalized. The shame and disgust that people express towards plus size models is associated with the stigma surrounding large sizes that plus size equals being fat or obese (p. 1367). Another perspective within the negative side is genuine health concerns, in which plus size raises concerns among people about it being unhealthy. In this, they emphasize that they support the body positivity movement and appreciate the diverse representation of bodies, but that the plus size models are too big to be healthy (p. 1368). The positive responses consisted of appreciation for body inclusiveness, which revolved around embracing diversity. This was expressed by showing enthusiasm and joy for plus-size models. Comments were focused on expressing how beautiful women of all sizes are and an appreciation to the industry that it is becoming more inclusive. (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019, p. 1369).

In conclusion, the topic of body positivity encompasses a wide range of perspectives and opinions. From the perspective that body positivity content has a positive impact on mental and physical health to aversion to seeing plus size models in the media by linking it to unhealthy due to internalized stigmas.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research design

The study employed a qualitative approach as it aimed to explore the meanings and underlying patterns inherent in words, concepts, and ideas (B. S. Brennen, 2017, p. 21). Within the realm of media products, qualitative research facilitates an understanding of everyday practices, issues, and concerns, thereby uncovering the intricate relationship between media and society (B. S. Brennen, 2017, p. 28). This choice was deemed suitable for the study's objectives, as it sought to explore how consumers express and articulate their perceptions of body positivity on Instagram.

The study used content analysis because this method allows to focus on the topic and context. Another advantage of content analysis is that the method can deal with both manifest and latent content, with the categories often formed by the manifest content and the underlying meaning and interpretations of the text being formed by the latent content (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 105). Content analysis involves subjectively interpreting content by employing a systematic classification process that encompasses coding and the development of themes. Through coding, a large corpus of texts can be condensed into more manageable categories (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 6). This method was well suited to the goals of the study because it allowed for streamlining the extensive data collected from Instagram comments by coding and uncovering the types of responses consumers give to body-oriented content on Hunkemöller's Instagram posts.

This research employed an inductive approach to analyze user comments on body positivity images on social media, particularly on Instagram. The choice of an inductive approach was motivated by the absence of an established codebook. However, to provide initial guidance, the study drew on the work of Pounders and Mabry-Flynn (2019), who classified responses into overarching themes of negative, positive, and confusion (p. 1355). While these themes served as deductive points of reference, the coding process itself aligned with the inductive method proposed by Flick (2014). The coding method by Flick (2014) ensures a systematic and comprehensive analysis, allowing for the emergence of new categories and subcategories (pp. 170-181).

3.2 Sampling & data collection

The data collected for this study consisted of comments posted in response to body positivity-related Instagram posts. The sampling frame was Hunkemöller's international Instagram account, @hunkemoller. The sample consisted of selected photos and videos of

four body positivity influencers along with all posted comments. The study used a non-probability purposive sampling technique. This technique is used because there had to be certain characteristics about the Instagram posts to be considered as body positivity content. The purpose of the analysis was to obtain qualitative and specific insights and therefore not to generalize across all media expressions of body positivity content. The time frame that was used is one year, from March 1, 2023, to March 1, 2024. This time frame was chosen because Janine Kaatee, Global PR & Communication Manager at Hunkemöller, indicated in an interview that Hunkemöller has been using influencers as campaign carriers for the past 2.5 years (Sviridova & Brandpulse, 2023, p. 1). Before that, influencers were not used a lot. Using a period of 2.5 years would be too much data for this study so it was decided to narrow the time frame down to one year. The time frame is up to March 1, 2024, so that the material to be studied was of the most recent date possible., but still could provide an overall picture by analyzing a full calendar year.

The criteria for the sample were as follows: (1) photo or video posted by or with @hunkemoller, (2) shows a woman influencer with more than 100 thousand followers (3) with a plus size body, these are sizes above size M, (4) has more than 30 individual comments, this does not include responses to a comment, (5) post and comment posted between Jan. 1, 2023 and Jan. 1, 2024. The data collection process took place in April 2024 and the data was stored in a separate folder on the researcher's iCloud.

Measures were taken to increase the reliability of the study. The reliability of this research was enhanced by the consistency of the researcher so that another researcher could, in principle, do the same research with the same results. Because the study was conducted primarily by a single researcher, an inductively designed codebook was used, aimed at reducing subjective judgments were limited (Олейник et al., 2013, p. 9). The codebook was presented to an independent colleague of the master program, who has no benefit from the research and evaluated whether the analysis would generate results corresponding to the subject matter that is being studied. According to this independent colleague, the codebook showed a true picture of consumer responses to content related to body positivity (Bengtsson, 2016).

To assess the validity of qualitative research, in the literature a variety of terms are used, including measuring rigor, validity, reliability, trustworthiness (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). Yet the most commonly used term is measuring trustworthiness in which the goal of the research is to be worthy of attention. This is especially important in inductive content analysis because that is where new categories are created (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). The main

trustworthiness concerns during the preparatory stages are centered on the trustworthiness of the data collection method, the sampling strategy, and the selection of an appropriate unit of analysis (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). To ensure trustworthiness in the preparation phase, the data collection was conducted systematically, by identifying the top four influencers of Hunkemöller's body positivity content. This identification was based on which influencers, meeting the sampling criteria, were most frequently featured by Hunkemöller. As these four influencers are prominently represented in Hunkemöller's Instagram content on body positivity, they are worth attention, ensuring the trustworthiness of data collection. These four influencers are curvy models for Hunkemöller named Joann van den Herik, Camilla Lorentzen, Emily McMillan and May Ridts.

The validity, and thus trustworthiness, of the sampling strategy was ensured by including all comments below the posts that were deemed worthwhile. The differentiation of being worthy of attention was made by assessing the content and sender of each comment. For instance, comments that appeared erroneous were excluded, as well as those posted by Hunkemöller themselves as filler responses. For example, Hunkemöller replying with a heart emoji or "Our girl is truly glowing" to a positive comment, was seen as a filler response. These comments were not included in the analysis, because they do not say anything about social media user's perspectives on body positivity. This process continued until a minimum of 500 comments per influencer were reviewed, resulting in over 2000 comments deemed relevant. With this sizable unit of analysis, both the sampling strategy and the choice of unit of analysis could be considered trustworthy for analysis.

Although the validity in the preparation phase was conducted as thoroughly as possible, there was an obstacle in the organization phase. The organization phase consists of the categorization, interpretation, and representativeness of the data (Elo et al., 2014, p. 3). The validity of the categorization was ensured because the categories were clearly delineated, and there was no overlap between the main categories. However, interpretation and representativeness might cause ambiguity. One of the requirements of interpretation is the accuracy of the information provided by the participants (Elo et al., 2014, p. 3). During the data analysis, it was found that offensive comments were sometimes removed by Hunkemöller because the brand aims to maintain the comment section as a safe and respectful space. This means that not all information provided by the participants as comments is presented on the Instagram account. Due to the absence of specific comments, the data is not complete, and therefore, to some extent, less representativeness of all comments posted. This was an unexpected finding that reduced the trustworthiness of the validity that had to be dealt

with. However, it was also an important finding that provided new insights, which will be shared in the results section.

In the interest of ethical sensitivity, the data being studied will be used only for academic purposes. The identities of the Instagram users within the research unit were not incorporated into the research in any manner, ensuring complete anonymity for the individuals behind the comments (Babbie, 2016).

3.3 Operationalization

This research aimed to delve into the ways in which consumers express and articulate their perceptions of body positivity. To ensure clarity and consistency in the analysis, this study was focused on plus-size bodies, defined by the researcher as those above size M. The analysis primarily involved examining user comments on Instagram, a platform widely used for sharing visual content and engaging in discussions. To guide the categorization of these comments, the study draws inspiration from the framework developed by Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019), which delineates distinct reactions to body positivity content (p. 1355, 1367-1369). These reactions are categorized into four main themes.

(1) **Puzzlement**, this theme encompasses comments reflecting confusion or frustration regarding the concept of plus size. Such comments may indicate a lack of clarity or understanding about the movement and its objectives.

(2) **Negative Reactions**, comments falling under this category express feelings of anger, disgust, or disdain towards body positivity content. These reactions may stem from ingrained societal biases or personal insecurities.

(3) **Genuine Health Concerns**, this theme captures comments expressing genuine concerns about health, particularly in relation to obesity. While these concerns may be valid, they contribute to a perspective that leans towards the negative aspects of body positivity.

(4) **Appreciation for Body Inclusivity**, comments categorized under this theme reflect an appreciation for the diversity portrayed in body positivity content. These comments embrace and celebrate the representation of various body sizes and appearances, aligning with the core principles of the body positivity movement.

By systematically categorizing user comments into these themes, and developing refinements of these themes, this research aims to gain deeper insights into the multifaceted nature of consumer perceptions towards body positivity and gain more insights into how consumer perceptions can reinforce or subvert the body positivity message through social media. With this operationalization, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of

the discourse surrounding body image and acceptance on social media platforms like Instagram.

3.4 Data analysis & coding

This section centers on the data analysis procedure, which followed the qualitative steps for content analysis described in Flick's (2014) qualitative data analysis handbook. The choice of this method was motivated by its ability to reduce the material in a systematic and flexible manner by using a codebook. In addition, the method was suitable for assigning latent meanings to the data. Given the lack of an established codebook for social media perceptions related to body positivity, a pre-established version was further developed based on the themes as described in the operationalization (See Appendix A for draft codebook).

The code framework was constructed by preparing questions to guide the analysis of the data. Although the data itself does not respond, these questions facilitated the identification of subcategories by the researcher. These questions were based on the pre-established draft codebook derived from existing literature. For instance, one category in the draft codebook, termed Negative Reactions, prompted the question "what kind of negative comments are posted?" This process of formulating questions and coding continued until saturation was reached, meaning no new subcategories emerged. This method was applied to all main categories outlined in the pre-established codebook.

However, new questions arose during the analysis, such as "What kind of feedback do people give on the brand?" and "How do people individually respond (public reflect) to others?" This led to the emergence of new main categories, Feedback Brand and Public Reflection. Besides the individual comments of people, there emerged a new aspect of perspectives on body positivity, namely the comment threads. Within these comment threads there was an examination on how people were responding on each other and what the nature of the comments threads was. Furthermore, descriptions of the types of people commenting and notable trends in the comment section were documented.

Beyond the creation of new categories, there is also a category that had been formulated from the literature in the pre-established codebook but was not found in the analysis of the comments posted to the selected Instagram posts from Hunkemöller. The category in question is Genuine Health Concerns, the comments that are about health could not be categorized under this label as comments did not seem to indicate genuine concerns or that it was only stated as not healthy. Therefore, this category was removed after the initial

code phase. Comments that were about being unhealthy were placed in the Negative Reactions category under the Unhealthy subcategory.

This initial round of analysis was conducted with on the comments posted to the Instagram posts of four influencers during the selecting material phase (Flick, 2014) (see Appendix B for phase 1 analysis). Saturation was achieved after analyzing the third influencer, indicating a representative depiction of various comment types. No new categories emerged with the remaining influencers, indicating a comprehensive analysis ready for transformation into a code framework. Therefore, the next step was to define the categories in the code frame with name, description, and example (Flick's, 2014) (See Appendix C for code framework).

After formulating the code framework, a pilot phase was conducted to validate the framework. During this pilot phase, a second post from the same four influencers, along with their comments, was analyzed. However, an unexpected observation was made during this phase, which limited the representativeness of the analysis. The researcher noticed a relatively high frequency of positive comments. While this aligns with the objectives of the Hunkemöller body positivity movement, the literature suggests that alongside positive reactions, also many negative or confused responses could be expected. This discrepancy raised some worry about the completeness of the analysis. After all, it would be more plausible if there were more negative reactions to body positivity content than there were observed.

In the comments posted to the Instagram posts of the second influencer, a statement from Hunkemöller further confirmed the researcher's skepticism. Hunkemöller expressed disappointment with the comment section, emphasizing that judgment of someone's body or defining it as an unhealthy lifestyle contradicts the brand's values of women empowerment. Offensive comments were stated to have no place in their community, and they would be deleted to maintain a respectful and safe space. These statements complicated the task of accurately portraying the comparison between positive and negative attitudes toward body positivity. This is because some of the data is missing to conduct a full analysis on it.

Despite these challenges, the researcher proceeded with the main coding phase. In this phase, more than 500 comments per influencer were categorized, this provided a total of more than 2,000 comments assigned to categories. The results of this coding process are described in the following chapter.

4. RESULTS

This chapter elaborates on the results of the analysis and provides a comprehensive overview of the findings. To provide clarity and enable effective comparison, several topics are covered. First, general statistics are provided, with a comprehensive overview of the total number of comments and breakdowns in percentages. Next, quantitative statistics are named per influencer, highlighting salient themes and trends for each influencer. In addition, this section sheds light on the demographics of the commenters associated with each influencer. The third section focuses on comparisons between influencers, providing a brief overview of key similarities and differences. This is followed by highlighting the results of the analysis of comment threads, which examines the dynamics of interactions between individuals. Finally, it demonstrates the feedback received by Hunkemöller as a brand, looking at reactions to the use of body positivity content.

4.1 General Statistics

In total, 2235 comments were analyzed and categorized into subcategories, an overview of the facts and figures of all categories can be found in Table 1. The number of comments displaying puzzlement amounted to 27 in total. No distinction was made regarding the nature of puzzlement. Generally, these comments expressed confusion about the portrayal of bodies in this manner. Examples include comments such as “I just don't understand” and “Why are people enthusiastic about a woman who just has curves? You don't compliment every friend who has curves as well, do you?” and "How can people call these perfect bodies?". This suggests a lack of understanding of the body positivity movement among some social media users.

Table 1

Overview of the General Statistics of All Analyzed Comments

Main Category	Number	Percentage of total	Subcategory	Number	Percentage within category
Puzzlement	27	1	Confusion	27	100
Negative Reactions	137	6	Hate	68	50
			Shame	12	9

			Body shaming	14	10
			Unhealthy	21	15
			Sarcasm	21	15
Positive Reactions	1558	69	Compliment attractiveness	1129	72
			Admiring / Inspiration	236	15
			Confidence boost	61	4
			Appreciating different body type	23	1
			Healing of eating disorders	9	1
Feedback	205	9	Negative product feedback	49	24
			Positive product feedback	119	58
			Constructive critique	17	8
			Negative feedback on model	2	1
			Positive feedback on model	18	9
Public Reflections	39	2	Negative on other people	12	31
			Focus on positive	20	51
			Imply to ignore others	7	18
Negative comment threads	195	9	Questioning	26	13
			Offending back	39	20
			Correcting	60	31

			Defending	36	18
			Agreement	34	17
Positive comment threads	39	2	Agreement	36	92
			Product question	3	8
Initial commenter in thread	35	2	Defending negative to positive	3	9
			Clarifying statement	23	66
			Angry	5	14
			Sarcasm	4	11
2235				2235	

Note. Table 1 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed of the four influencers Joann van den Herik, Camilla Lorentzen, Emily McMillan and May Ridts. All percentages were rounded to whole numbers

Negative comments were more challenging to trace. As indicated in Chapter 3, negative comments were, to some extent, removed by Hunkemöller themselves actively. The frequency of removal is unclear, resulting in a less representative depiction of the number of negative comments. Nonetheless, negative comments were found in various subcategories, which can also be found in Table 1. In total, 137 negative comments were identified, accounting for 6% of the total number of comments. The most common subcategory of negative comments is the Hate category, with 68 comments, representing about half of the total main category of Negative Comments. These predominantly consist of short and hateful reactions such as “Looks terrible” and “Awful that this is allowed”, as well as various negative reactions such as angry, vomiting, and crying emoticons. Subsequently, the subcategories Unhealthy and Sarcasm share a place with 21 comments each, both accounting for 15% of the total number of negative comments. The Unhealthy subcategory mainly concerns how plus-size models are perceived as unhealthy, often referring to obesity with comments like “Obesity is a disease and unhealthy”. In the Sarcasm subcategory, negativity is

combined with humor, as seen in reactions such as laughing emoticons or comments like “A sausage in lingerie haha”. Additionally, 14 social media users, comprising a tenth of the total negative comments, responded with negative remarks specifically targeting body size, categorized under the Bodyshaming category. Examples include comments like “When it is too fat or too slim, it is not aesthetic anymore”. Finally, the subcategory Shame was identified with 12 responses, representing around 9% of the total negative responses. Here, individuals negatively comment on the influencer, suggesting she should be ashamed, for instance, with comments like “Shame on you” or “Shame yourself”.

Positive comments overwhelmingly constituted the majority of comments posted. In total, 1558 positive comments were posted by social media users, accounting for almost 70% of the total number of comments (See Table 1 for an overview of figures). Despite the challenge of comparing negative comments to positive comments, this number demonstrates a significant amount of social media users who express positive perceptions towards the body positivity movement. Most positive comments compliment the attractiveness of the influencer in a concise manner. These responses were categorized under the Compliment Attractiveness subcategory, comprising 1129 comments, which is more than 70% of the total number of positive comments. Examples of comments from this subcategory include “You are so beautiful” and “Stunning”, as well as loving emoticons such as hearts or heart-eyes. The next subcategory, Admiring & Inspiring, totals 236 comments, accounting for 15% of the total positive comments. Here, social media users’ express appreciation towards the influencer, highlighting her courage in sharing body positivity content and serving as an inspiration for themselves and other young women. The admiration is linked to the confidence the influencer exudes, which social media users commented on in this category. Examples include “I wish I had this confidence”, “You are a true inspiration for all women”, “Thank you, Camilla, for teaching young ladies to love themselves”, and “I love you and I love your confidence”. The next subcategory is Confidence Boost, where social media users comment on how the influencer has helped them accept and love themselves. This subcategory comprises a total of 61 comments. While this may seem relatively low, it is nonetheless a significant category as it demonstrates the positive impact of body positivity content on the mental health of social media users. Comments in this subcategory include, for example, “You helped me in my journey to love myself, and I will watch this video so many times”, “You made me accept my body” and “You make me feel happier about my exterior”. The final two subcategories found under the main category of Positive Reactions are Appreciating Different Body Types, with 23 comments, and Healing of Eating Disorders with 9 comments. Appreciating a different

body type was mentioned with comments like “Thank you for putting yourself out there and showing a body goes beyond aesthetic”. A few comments also addressed how body positivity content helped in recovering from eating disorders. These social media users expressed that the content served as a reminder to maintain a healthy relationship with food. From the context provided in these comments, it was inferred that this pertained more to anorexia than obesity. Comments included statements such as “Healing from ED, and your message is needed” and “You are my reminder to eat before 10 a.m. because of my ED”. Overall, these positive comments demonstrate the positive influence of body positivity content on social media users.

Finally, the analysis examined how individual social media users reflect on humanity in general or how they address others without targeting a specific individual. This main category is labeled as Public Reflections and occurred 39 times, accounting for less than 2% of the total number of analyzed comments. This main category could be subdivided into three subcategories. The most common subcategory was Focus on Positive, with 20 responses, representing around half of the total Public Reflections. Social media users predominantly responded in the Focus on Positive subcategory, expressing that everyone is beautiful and should be accepted. An example of this is the comment “I wish everyone is loving their body”. The second subcategory received 12 responses. This subcategory is Negative on Others, where individuals criticize others in general, often referring to everyone and criticizing their actions. Comments in this subcategory include “All these narrow-minded people” and “People need to see a specialist for their problems”. Finally, the subcategory Imply to Ignore Others encouraged individuals to ignore other people, occurring 7 times. Comments such as “Ignore the haters” were posted, suggesting that there were other individuals who responded negatively and hatefully to the body positivity content. However, relatively few negative comments were visible in these comment sections. This further confirms that Hunkemöller removes negative comments. The categories Feedback and Treads from Table 1 are discussed in separate sections at the end of the findings chapter.

4.2 Joann vd Herik

The next section will summarize the results of the analysis of influencer Joann vd Herik. First, the specific numbers of the main and subcategories will be presented and then the themes and trends that can be applied specifically to Joann will be discussed in more detail. As one of the most prominent body positivity influencers in the Netherlands, Joann vd Herik is a leading figure on Hunkemöller's Instagram content. As of April 30, 2024, Joann has

364K followers and describes herself as “The best thing you can ever be is yourself”. Her primary goal is to promote self-love, which she has also written a book about. The content she posts mainly features her in lingerie or bikini, and this is consistent with the content Hunkemöller posts featuring Joann. Her content always portrays a bit of sexiness and emphasizes on her curves. In total, 624 comments were categorized under five different posts of Hunkemöller featuring Joann. Table 2 provides an overview of the statistics specific to Joann.

Table 2

Overview of the General Statistics of Comments for Joann van den Herik

Main Category	Number	Percentage of total	Subcategory	Number	Percentage within category
Puzzlement	9	1	Confusion	9	100
Negative Reactions	72	12	Hate	26	36
			Shame	4	6
			Body shaming	10	14
			Unhealthy	14	19
			Sarcasm	18	25
Positive Reactions	349	57	Compliment attractiveness	337	97
			Admiring / Inspiration	8	2
			Confidence boost	0	0
			Appreciating different body type	4	1
			Healing of eating disorders	0	0
Feedback	59	9	Negative product feedback	33	56

			Positive product feedback	15	26
			Constructive critique	7	12
			Negative feedback on model	1	2
			Positive feedback on model	3	5
Public Reflections	11	2	Negative on other people	4	36
			Focus on positive	6	55
			Imply to ignore others	1	9
Negative comment threads	96	15	Questioning	19	20
			Offending back	14	15
			Correcting	27	28
			Defending	25	26
			Agreement	11	11
Positive comment threads	15	2	Agreement	15	100
			Product question	0	0
Initial commenter in thread	13	2	Defending negative to positive	2	15
			Clarifying statement	6	46
			Angry	2	15
			Sarcasm	3	23
	624	100		624	

Note. Table 2 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed for Joann van den Herik. All percentages were rounded to whole numbers. The percentage column after the main category is the percentage of the total comments analyzed. The percentage column after the subcategory is the percentage of the total main category, with the percentage indicating the ratio between subcategories within one main category.

The most prevalent main category is the Positive Reactions category. In total, 349 positive comments were posted, accounting for around half of the total number of comments on Joann's posts. Nearly all comments in this main category fall into the subcategory of Compliment Attractiveness. Specifically, 337 comments, which is 97% of the total number of positive comments, were categorized in the Compliment Attractiveness subcategory. Examples of comments in this subcategory include primarily heart emojis or short reactions like “Beautiful” and “Gorgeous”. It is noteworthy that other subcategories such as Admiring / Inspiring (2.29%) and Appreciating Different Body Types (1.15%) are almost nonexistent. The remaining subcategories, Confidence Boost and Healing of Eating Disorders, are absent from Joann's comment section. This reveals that the responses Joann receives are not very comprehensive or substantively supported, the responses remain, in comparison to the other influencers, more superficial.

The main category Negative Reactions follows positive reactions as the second most common main category, with a total of 72 negative comments. See Table 2, for a more detailed overview of the numbers per category. Negative comments are more spread across different subcategories compared to the positive comments. The most common subcategory among negative reactions is the Hate category, where 26 social media users concisely responded with hate. These were comments like “Awful that this is allowed”, “Looks terrible” and “We don't want to see this”, accompanied by emojis expressing anger or sadness. The next subcategory had 18 responses, accounting for a fourth of the total number of negative responses. This is the subcategory Sarcasm. Many sarcastic comments were conveyed by laughing emojis. Since the video was not meant to be humorous, these comments were recorded as negative. About 20% of the negative comments focused on the unhealthy aspect and fell under the Unhealthy subcategory. Examples of comments in the Unhealthy subcategory included comments such as “Don't recommend this as a role model, it's unhealthy” and “It's not OK to be so young and fat”. The Bodyshaming subcategory was also relatively common in Joann's comment section, comprising 10 comments. These comments focused on Joann's body and its size, examples being “Fatty”, “I can't see the underwear” and

“It's nonsense that fat women are beautiful”. The least common subcategory was Shame, mentioned in only 4 comments.

It's important to note that every negative comment on Joann's posts elicited responses from other users, resulting in a total of 96 interactions through comment threads. Essentially, this means that for every negative comment posted, there was a subsequent reply from another user. An overview of the comment threads can be found in Table 2. In Joann's case, these comment thread responses primarily involved correction or defense of the initial negative comment. Correction was a common response, counting 27 of the interactions. Users would offer corrections by stating things like “You are offending women, don't talk like that” or “You clearly didn't understand the message”. In addition, some respondents advised negative commenters not to comment at all, with remarks such as “Nobody is asking for your opinion, shut up” and “There is no need to react like this”. About 20% of the negative comment thread responses fell into the subcategory of Questioning. Here, users would pose questions back to the initial negative commenter, seeking clarification or understanding. Questions such as “What is your issue?” or “Are you a doctor?” were common in this category. Approximately 15% of responses were attacking in nature, with users responding to the initial negative comment with further negativity. These responses often took the form of personal attacks, such as “Look at your profile, how dare you say something”. Lastly, about 11 of the responses agreed with the initial negative comment, effectively endorsing the insult made by the initial commenter.

Overall, the initial negative commenters engaged in 13 follow-up interactions within negative comment threads. Among these interactions, the most prevalent response involved clarifying the initial negative comment by offering additional context. Some individuals clarified their negative remarks by expressing concerns about obesity, while others asserted their right to hold differing opinions.

A noteworthy observation regarding Joann is the notable prevalence of negativity across various subcategories. While Joann's comments appear to contain a higher proportion of positive sentiments quantitatively, these expressions primarily remain superficial. There is a striking absence of compliments directed toward how Joann positively impacts others' mental or physical well-being. Consequently, the qualitative richness of the positive section is less elaborated compared to the negative categories. In contrast, the negative section elicits a broader range of responses, indicating more controversy surrounding negative comments than positive ones. Joann stands out as the only influencer where a post garnered more negative comments than positive ones. Additionally, Hunkemöller stated below one of Joann's posts,

that hate and bullying have no place in the comment section. This suggests that possibly a significant number of negative comments were posted and have been removed by the brand.

In Joann's comment section, predominantly women responded, with no specific type of woman standing out. The gender identification of the comment senders was based on profile picture and profile name. Women also led discussions in comment threads, with occasional brief responses from men affirming the beauty of all women. During discussions, women often brought in various aspects of their everyday live surroundings, such as their profession, their education, and family.

4.3 Camilla Lorentzen

The following section will outline the findings from the examination of influencer Camilla Lorentzen. Initially, the figures for both the primary and secondary categories will be provided, followed by a detailed discussion of the themes and patterns that are particularly relevant to Camilla. With 1.2 million followers, Camilla Lorentzen (@camillalor) stands as the most prominent influencer among the analyzed lineup of plus-size models for Hunkemöller. Camilla is from Norway and describes herself as “here to help you love yourself”. Her content consists mainly of lingerie or sportswear, with a sweet and humorous look. A total of 4 posts featuring Camilla were analyzed, resulting in 554 categorized responses. A detailed overview of the facts and figures of Camilla can be found in Table 3.

Table 3
Overview of the General Statistics of Comments for Camilla Lorentzen

Main Category	Number	Percentage of total	Subcategory	Number	Percentage within category
Puzzlement	1	0	Confusion	1	100
Negative Reactions	0	0	Hate	0	0
			Shame	0	0
			Body shaming	0	0
			Unhealthy	0	0

			Sarcasm	0	0
Positive Reactions	448	81	Compliment attractiveness	235	52
			Admiring / Inspiration	138	31
			Confidence boost	53	12
			Appreciating different body type	13	3
			Healing of eating disorders	9	2
Feedback	93	17	Negative product feedback	2	2
			Positive product feedback	84	90
			Constructive critique	6	7
			Negative feedback on model	0	0
			Positive feedback on model	1	1
Public Reflections	0	0	Negative on other people	0	0
			Focus on positive	0	0
			Imply to ignore others	0	0
Negative comment threads	8	1	Questioning	1	13
			Offending back	0	0
			Correcting	4	50
			Defending	0	0
			Agreement	3	38

Positive comment threads	4	1	Agreement	2	50
			Product question	2	50
Initial commenter in thread	0	0	Defending negative to positive	0	0
			Clarifying statement	0	0
			Angry	0	0
			Sarcasm	0	0
	554	100		554	

Note. Table 3 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed for Camilla Lorentzen. All percentages were rounded to whole numbers. The percentage column after the main category is the percentage of the total comments analyzed. The percentage column after the subcategory is the percentage of the total main category, with the percentage indicating the ratio between subcategories within one main category.

The predominant main category within the analysis of comments on Camilla's posts garnered 448 comments, representing more than 80% of the total. This main category is Positive Reactions, encompassing various forms of positive feedback. Most of the comments fell under the Compliment Attractiveness subcategory, accounting for 235 comments, or rather, about half of the total number of positive comments. These comments mainly comprised short remarks praising Camilla's appearance, such as "You look amazing" and "You are a gorgeous queen". Notably, a significant number of social media users expressed admiration for Camilla, with 138 comments categorized under the Admiring/Inspiring subcategory, constituting 30% of all positive comments. In the Admiring/ Inspiring subcategory, social media users took the time to be able to comment under the body positivity content. An example is "My body type is really just like yours and I feel so seen and less alone when I see you showing off your body and showing so much love to it, I don't know many people who are built like me so you are really a comforting inspiration to me". People also respond that they love and adore Camilla, for example, "As a plus size person, you are

my idol” and “You are who I aspire to be”. These comments reflected users' appreciation and adoration for Camilla, acknowledging her as an inspirational figure.

Another important subcategory in which social media users expressed more of their personal situation is the Confidence Boost subcategory. This category contained 53 responses. The comments in this subcategory were mostly about embracing their own bodies and how Camilla has helped them with mental and physical wellbeing. An example in this category is “You help me tremendously to embrace my body after a year without workout of basically anything other than fetal position and no sleep at all (pain related). Thank you so much for all you share. I love you so much thanks for being such an example for all of us”. Comments such as “You have taught me how to love my body” and “You helped me with appreciating my body” were also common in this subcategory. The next subcategory is the Appreciating Different Body Type category. This category received 13 comments in which social media users showed their appreciation for displaying a body image other than the idealized body. An example is “This needs to be normalized, every damn body is beautiful”.

An exclusive subcategory that emerged solely in Camilla's content compared to other influencers is the Healing of Eating Disorders category, appearing 9 times. Some social media users shared how watching Camilla's content helped them develop a healthier relationship with food and recover from eating disorders. An example of this is “I just wanted to tell you that I very much appreciate the contact that you put out. I’ve always struggled with binge eating to feel better emotionally and last year it started developing in ED, watching your videos and the way that you love yourself is something I am now working really hard to do it, because of you!”.

The number of positive comments at Camilla indicate that there was no place for negative comments. As a result, no comments were categorized into the main category Negative Reactions. There was only 1 comment in the main Puzzles category, in which someone asked the question “If no form of exercise feels good, where should I start?” The post contained five tips from Camilla to feel better about herself, one of the tips was to exercise. So this comment indicated that someone was confused by Camilla's content. The only negative responses posted relate to the Hunkemöller brand and the absence of plus size sizes in their stores and website. This feedback will be further explained under the Feedback Brand section. Negative Comment Threads are also barely present due to the lack of negative comments.

An intriguing theme surrounding comments on posts featuring Camilla is that users tend to disclose more personal information and take more time to respond. Instead of one-word or one-sentence comments, users often craft longer narratives in the comment section.

It's notable that commenters, predominantly women, share their insecurities with Camilla as if confiding in a friend. Camilla serves as an inspiration for many women, contributing positively to the overall well-being of social media users.

4.4 Emily McMillan

The following section presents the results of Emily McMillan analysis. First, statistics for both the main category and the subcategory are presented, followed by an extensive discussion of the themes and trends of particular interest to Emily. An overview of the numbers for each category can be found in Table 4. Emily stands out as one of the most outspoken body positivity influencers, focusing on showcasing that a body jiggles and shakes. Her content emphasizes on body flaws. She describes herself as a curvy model and your insta bestie, with her bio statement being “love the skin you’re in”. Emily boasts 108K followers and hails from Australia. She is the influencer around whom there has been the most controversy about the body positivity movement compared to the other influencers that were analyzed. Four different posts with comments were analyzed, resulting in a total of 541 categorized comments.

Table 4

Overview of the General Statistics of Comments for Emily McMillan

Main Category	Number	Percentage of total	Subcategory	Number	Percentage within category
Puzzlement	17	3	Confusion	17	100
Negative Reactions	64	12	Hate	42	66
			Shame	2	3
			Body shaming	8	13
			Unhealthy	8	13
			Sarcasm	4	6
Positive Reactions	290	53	Compliment attractiveness	250	86

			Admiring / Inspiration	28	10
			Confidence boost	6	2
			Appreciating different body type	6	2
			Healing of eating disorders	0	0
Feedback	31	6	Negative product feedback	10	32
			Positive product feedback	4	13
			Constructive critique	4	13
			Negative feedback on model	1	3
			Positive feedback on model	12	39
Public Reflections	27	5	Negative on other people	8	30
			Focus on positive	13	48
			Imply to ignore others	6	22
Negative comment threads	89	17	Questioning	6	7
			Offending back	25	28
			Correcting	29	33
			Defending	8	9
			Agreement	21	24
Positive comment threads	1	0	Agreement	1	100
			Product question	0	0

Initial commenter in thread	22	4	Defending negative to positive	1	5
			Clarifying statement	17	77
			Angry	3	14
			Sarcasm	1	5
	541	100		541	

Note. Table 4 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed for Emily McMillan. All percentages were rounded to whole numbers. The percentage column after the main category is the percentage of the total comments analyzed. The percentage column after the subcategory is the percentage of the total main category, with the percentage indicating the ratio between subcategories within one main category.

Similar to other influencers, the main category with the highest number of comments is the Positive Reactions category. A total of 290 out of 541 comments were positive, accounting for slightly more than half of the total comments. The vast majority of positive comments came from the Compliment Attractiveness subcategory, with 250 comments, constituting more than 80% of all positive comments. These comments mostly comprised short remarks such as “Beautiful woman” and “You’re an angel”, alongside fire emojis and heart emojis. Additionally, some social media users expressed admiration for Emily, falling under the Admiring/Inspiring subcategory, occurring 28 times. These comments were often lengthier and consisted of a few sentences such as “I love how much self love you have!! I want that!!! I’m struggling to find it but you’re such an inspiration!! Thank you for sharing yourself!”. Furthermore, both the Confidence Boost and Appreciating Different Body Type subcategories received 6 comments each. Although this is a relatively low number, especially for the Confidence Boost subcategory, it indicates that fewer people experience a change in self-image due to Emily. Most positive reactions compliment her self-confidence or appearance, but relatively few users indicate personal growth as a result of following Emily.

Emily receives the highest percentage of negative comments among all analyzed influencers. The main category Negative Reactions accounted for 12% of the total comments. Below one of Emily's analyzed posts, Hunkemöller issued the following statement: “We are extremely saddened by looking at the comment section. We believe that it's nobody's right to

judge someone's body, nor define it as an unhealthy lifestyle, health looks different for all. This is in no way women empowerment, which is what we stand for as a brand. Offensive comments such as these have no place in our community. We want to focus on supporting each other and lifting each other up, and we encourage everyone to do the same, love HKM". This was followed by another statement: "We will delete offensive comments since we want to keep our community respectful and a safe space". The initiative on behalf of Hunkemöller to post this statement might indicate an exceptionally high number of negative comments made by social media users. Despite Hunkemöller's efforts to remove many of the comments, there were still 64 comments in the main Negative Reactions category. The majority of comments, counting 42 comments, were brief hateful reactions and fell under the Hate subcategory. Examples include comments like "Please put some clothes on", alongside negative emojis such as angry and sad faces. In addition to these short negative comments, the remaining visible comments mainly focused on critiquing Emily's appearance and lifestyle as unhealthy or commenting on her body shaking excessively. These negative reactions were categorized under the Unhealthy and Body Shaming subcategories, each occurring 8 times. While this may seem low, these comments stood out due to the significant controversy they sparked among different social media users.

One of the negative comments falling under the Unhealthy subcategory reads: "Why does it have to go from extreme to extreme... an unhealthy body weight just because of bad habits is just bad. Don't teach people to be okay with an absolutely unhealthy lifestyle. I see this from my experience as an assistant in the hospital; this is just an unnecessary burden for the body, heart, blood vessels, kidney, liver... As she gets older, she has pretty prerequisites for secondary health problems caused by obesity". This comment garnered 446 likes and received more than 20 counter-responses. The number of likes suggests agreement with the statement that it is unhealthy. Many people also corrected the response or personally attacked the person who initially wrote the negative comment. Due to the considerable commotion in the comments on Emily's photos, Emily herself has also responded multiple times. For instance, she responded to negative comments falling under the Unhealthy subcategory by explaining that she leads a healthy lifestyle, goes to the gym 3-5 times a week, but is naturally heavier set. As long as she is comfortable and happy, that is all that matters.

Within the Body Shaming subcategory, a comment was posted stating: "When it is too fat, it is not aesthetic anymore" and "Why do I need to see this? It is not something sexy or nice or even something anyone would think is sexy in any way. What happened to the world". This comment generated a lot of commotion, with nearly 40 people responding. The comment

received 195 likes, indicating agreement with the negative sentiment. However, further down the comment thread, most people either corrected or insulted back. Corrections included statements like “Nobody is perfect”, and Emily herself provided an explanation, stating that she is there “to show everyone that they are beautiful no matter what this horrible society and frankly, a ton of people commenting on this video says”. The insults often constituted personal attacks, such as “How arrogant; your big mouth suits your big nose” and “Why do I need to see your shit face in the comments”.

Remarkably, in Emily's comment section, there is a prevalent use of negativity and a significant amount of commotion and interaction stemming from negative comments. The fact that both Hunkemöller and Emily herself have intervened in the comment section multiple times indicates that a large number of negative comments were posted. It is also notable that in negative comment threads, there is regularly a response involving information from the commenter's environment, such as their work in the hospital or having a family member suffering from obesity. In addition to negative reactions targeting obesity, another noteworthy theme was identified. Some social media users pointed out that only larger models are constantly expected to showcase body movement and emphasize body love, while thinner models only display lingerie. Thus, a distinction is perceived between the emphasis placed on the body for plus-size models and the emphasis solely on lingerie for thin models.

4.5 May Ridts

The upcoming section will detail the discoveries made during the analysis of the last influencer May Ridts. It will commence by presenting the statistics for both the main and sub categories, followed by an in-depth exploration of the themes and patterns that hold specific significance for May. May is an influencer from the UK with 413K followers. Her statement is “The only beauty standards you should follow are your own”. She also has “planet earth” and “be kind” in her bio. May's content mainly consists of cute, sweet, and aesthetic content, which is determined by her use of pink emojis that emphasize sweetness. A total of 5 posts with comments were analyzed, resulting in a total of 516 categorized comments. A more comprehensive overview of the numbers by category can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Overview of the General Statistics of Comments for May Ridts

Main Category	Number	Percentage of total	Subcategory	Number	Percentage within category
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Puzzlement	1	0	Confusion	1	100
Negative Reactions	0	0	Hate	0	0
			Shame	0	0
			Body shaming	0	0
			Unhealthy	0	0
			Sarcasm	0	0
Positive Reactions	447	91	Compliment attractiveness	407	86
			Admiring / Inspiration	62	13
			Confidence boost	2	0
			Appreciating different body type	0	0
			Healing of eating disorders	0	0
Feedback	22	4	Negative product feedback	4	18
			Positive product feedback	16	73
			Constructive critique	0	0
			Negative feedback on model	0	0
			Positive feedback on model	2	2
Public Reflections	1	0	Negative on other people	0	0
			Focus on positive	1	100
			Imply to ignore others	0	0

Negative comment threads	3	1	Questioning	0	0
			Offending back	0	0
			Correcting	0	0
			Defending	3	100
			Agreement	0	0
Positive comment threads	18	4	Agreement	18	100
			Product question	0	0
Initial commenter in thread	0	0	Defending negative to positive	0	0
			Clarifying statement	0	0
			Angry	0	0
			Sarcasm	0	0
			516	100	516

Note. Table 5 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed for May Rids. All percentages were rounded to whole numbers. The percentage column after the main category is the percentage of the total comments analyzed. The percentage column after the subcategory is the percentage of the total main category, with the percentage indicating the ratio between subcategories within one main category.

Remarkable is the number of positive reactions May receives on her photos. Therefore, the most common main category is Positive Reactions, accounting for 91% of the total number of comments with 471 comments. In comparison with other influencers, May thus receives the highest percentage of positive comments. The most common subcategory is the Compliment Attractiveness category with 407 comments, comprising 86% of the total number of positive comments. These comments mainly consisted of short reactions such as "Stunning," "Beautiful," and "Gorgeous babe." 62 of the positive comments expressed

admiration for May or viewed her as an inspiration, falling under the Admiring/Inspiring subcategory. Again, these comments were quite brief, such as "I admire you," "I love you," and "Inspiration." This indicates that the responses to May's content are, in comparison to the other influencers, more superficial and less emotional involved.

Throughout the analysis, only 1 negative reaction was given. It also does not seem that there were any negative reactions that might have been removed by Hunkemöller. This can be confirmed because only 1 Public Reflection related to May Ridts' posts was made, stating that the focus should be on the positive. Hunkemöller did not provide any statements in response to May's content. The only negative reactions given were feedback on the product being too small. This therefore relates more to brand feedback, which can be found in paragraph 4.8, than comments on May.

A prominent theme emerges in May's comments section, namely the remarkably short comments that are posted below posts. These can be understood as superficial responses that are missing depth. Despite the overflow of positive responses, their superficial nature suggests a lack of substantive engagement with the content beyond its aesthetic appeal. Unlike the other influencers analyzed, May's content is not primarily focused on the body positivity movement. In fact, she does not emphasize her body and its flaws such as fat rolls or cellulite. Rather, her content is seen in a way typical of any model. Despite being a plus-size model, her carefully crafted photos exude a sense of perfection. The difference in level of negativity might have been caused by showing perfectly aesthetic content may be related to the fact that other plus-size influencers get more negative comments due to the type of content they show, rather than their body size.

4.6 Comparisons between influencers

The four influencers analyzed all produce content centered around body positivity. However, there are differences in how their content is perceived and interacted with by social media users. Notably, while all influencers receive more positive than negative reactions, the negative feedback is spread across various subcategories, indicating diverse expressions of negativity among users. Table 6 summarizes the numbers and percentages found with each influencer by main category.

Table 6

Overview of Comment Statistics by Influencer

Main Category	Joann vd Herik	Camilla Lorentzen	Emily McMillan	May Ridts
Puzzlement	9 1%	1 0%	17 3%	0 0%
Negative Reactions	72 12%	0 0%	64 12%	1 0%
Positive Reactions	349 56%	448 81%	290 54%	471 91%
Feedback	59 9%	93 17%	31 6%	22 4%
Public Reflections	11 2%	0 0%	27 5%	1 0%
Negative comment threads	96 15%	8 1%	89 16%	3 1%
Positive comment threads	15 2%	4 1%	1 0%	18 3%
Initial commenter in thread	13 2%	0 0%	22 4%	0 0%
Total amount of comments	624	554	541	516

Note. Table 6 demonstrates the total amount of comments analyzed for each influencer to compare the main categories. The percentages indicate the number of comments per main category of the influencer's total comments. This percentage is a rounded number.

Of the four influencers, Emily McMillan receives relatively the highest proportion of negative reactions. Her content stands out for its bold portrayal of body positivity, often showcasing her body jiggling and shaking, which challenges societal norms regarding flaws. Following Emily, Joann vd Herik receives the next highest percentage of negative reactions. Her content also focuses on larger sizes, but with a more provocative, sexy approach.

On the positive side, May Ridts received the highest proportion of positive reactions, mainly consisting of superficial compliments about her beauty. May's content has a more adorable tone, characterized by the use of hearts and other pink emojis, making it less likely to provoke negative responses. Following May, Camilla Lorentzen received the most positive

comments. Responses to her content are more extensive and profound, with many users expressing how she inspires them and boosts their confidence, thereby contributing to the improvement of their mental and physical well-being. These responses demonstrate that Camilla genuinely helps social media users by embracing body positivity. In summary, if being influential in the body positivity movement is defined as helping people feel better about themselves mentally and physically, then Camilla Lorentzen is the most influential influencer of the influencers that were analyzed.

4.7 Comment threads

Comment threads occur when one person makes a comment, and others respond to it. In Hunkemöller's Instagram posts that were analyzed, comment threads usually arose when a negative comment was posted. This falls under the main category of Negative comment threads. The nature of the comment thread was then analyzed, examining how social media users responded to the initial negative comment. There was a total of 195 responses to the initial negative comment thread. See Table 1 for a more detailed overview of the facts and figures of the comment threads. The most common response by social media users to such initial comments was to correct the negativity, categorized in the Correction subcategory, accounting for 31% of all negative comment threads. Many of these responses suggested that the initial commenter should mind his own business and refrain from making negative comments, for example, "No one is asking for your opinion" and "Mind your own business". After this, social media users sometimes responded to an initial negative comment in the subcategory Offending Back which occurred in 20% of negative comment threads. Examples include "I looked at your profile and how dare you say something" and "You don't seem intelligent or nice". Some users also defended the influencer by highlighting their beauty, categorized in the subcategory Defending, which accounted for 18% of all negative comment threads. In addition, some social media users agreed with the initial commenter, categorized in the Agree subcategory, accounting for 17% of all negative comment threads. Finally, 14% belonged to the Questioning subcategory, where users asked a question of the initial commenter, such as "Are you a doctor?" and "Would you say that if she were fit?".

In addition to negative comment threads, there were also positive comment threads, categorized under the Positive Comment Threads with 39 comments, where most social media users agreed with the initial commenter by posting a response like "Just like that".

In negative comments, more extensive interactions and discussions sometimes occurred when the original commenter responded to comments from other social media users. This happened a total of 35 times. Most often, the initial commenter responded by providing a more detailed explanation of the initial negative comment he or she had posted, which occurred 23 of the times and was categorized in the Clarify Explanation subcategory. An example of this is when someone made a negative comment about the influencer being obese. Other social media users then responded, resulting in the initial commenter of the obese comment going on to explain why being overweight can lead to obesity and why this is unhealthy for the body. Often the initial commenter brought in personal background information, such as mentioning that they work in a hospital and thus associate obesity with being unhealthy. Sometimes the initial commenters also became angry, which occurred 5 times, with responses such as “I have a brain unlike you”. Another way the initial commenters responded was sarcastically, which occurred 4 times. Yet another way was to try to turn the negative into a positive comment, such as saying they didn't mean the negative comment to be negative. This occurred 3 times.

In conclusion, while the corrective and defensive responses in the comment threads enhance the influencers’ effectiveness in promoting body positivity by fostering a supportive community, the existence of offending and agreeing responses to negative comments indicates a continued challenge in completely neutralizing negative discourse. This dynamic interaction reflects both the support for and resistance to body positivity initiatives, impacting how influential these campaigns and influencers can be in promoting their message.

4.8 Brand feedback

During the analysis of the comments, various forms of feedback on Hunkemöller as a brand emerged. Across the 18 analyzed posts, a total of 205 comments were posted, offering insights for Hunkemöller. Among these comments, 67% expressed positive feedback towards either the products or the models, reflecting satisfaction or appreciation. Conversely, the remaining 33% conveyed negative sentiments about the products, the models, or provided constructive criticism. The numbers can be found in Table 1.

One prevalent theme in the comments was the perception that while Hunkemöller portrays itself as an inclusive brand by embracing the body positivity movement, it falls short in offering plus-size sizes in its store and webshop. Criticism centered around the notion that Hunkemöller might be leveraging body positivity content primarily as a marketing tactic. Moreover, there were observations that certain products, particularly bikinis or lingerie, were

perceived as too small for the influencers, raising questions about the brand's commitment to inclusivity in sizes.

Another noteworthy critique arose from comments suggesting that plus-size models are expected to behave differently than thin models, a stance contradicting the principle of inclusivity. One individual reacted, “Why do skinny models not have to present themselves in such dumb manners by showing every part of their body. The whole context wasn’t necessary. I support every woman to what end but this video makes u look like a joke”. Additionally, questions were raised regarding why plus-size models are often depicted as shaking their bodies, while thin models typically remain static and focus solely on showcasing lingerie, rather than their bodies.

In summary, the analysis of feedback on Hunkemöller's brand revealed a mix of positive and negative sentiments. While many comments praised the brand's products and models, there were notable concerns regarding its commitment to inclusivity, particularly regarding plus-size sizes and the portrayal of plus-size models. Additionally, criticisms highlighted discrepancies in expectations between plus-size and thin models, raising questions about true inclusivity within the brand's messaging and representation. Concerns about the authenticity of the brand's messages could also affect the perceived trustworthiness of the influencers, as they embody and represent the brand's values through their appearance.

CONCLUSION

The final chapter provides a conclusion to be able to answer the research question, including a discussion with theoretical implications, which discusses the connection between the theory of chapter two and the results of chapter four. Societal and practical implications of the research findings will also be provided in this chapter. Besides that, the limitations of the study will be demonstrated and suggestions for future research will be made.

5.1 General conclusion

To address the research question of how social media users express their perceptions of body positivity on Instagram in the context of the lingerie brand Hunkemöller, this study analyzed over two thousand Instagram comments across eighteen posts featuring four plus-size influencers. This analysis resulted in five main categories illustrating how social media users responded to body positivity content. The five main categories that have been identified in how social media users in Hunkemöller's Instagram comment sections respond to body positivity content are, Puzzlement, Negative Reactions, Positive Reactions, Feedback, and Public Reflections.

The majority of responses were positive, consisting of brief compliments on the attractiveness of the influencers. In addition, social media users expressed admiration for the influencers and considered them as inspirational figures. This admiration was mainly focused on the self-confidence the influencers exuded. They were seen as an inspiration because of the influencers' positive attitude toward their bodies. Furthermore, positive perceptions were conveyed as users expressed gaining confidence through the body positivity content, sharing comments indicating their newfound comfort in embracing and showcasing their bodies to the world.

Negative perceptions were, to a certain extent, removed by Hunkemöller, making their frequency less representative. Still, negative perceptions were expressed in a variety of ways. The most common form was through short, hateful remarks often accompanied by negative emojis. Additionally, many negative comments linked body positivity content to being unhealthy, viewing the influencers as obese. Sarcasm was also a way of expression in the negative perceptions. This was usually articulated with laughter when the content was not meant to be humorous. Body shaming and general shame were also prevalent methods of articulating negative perceptions.

A small amount of the social media users that were analyzed expressed confusion. Some social media users posted a comment that did not directly address the influencers but articulated to society by naming everyone or all of those people in a comment.

Furthermore, comment sections served as a platform for providing feedback to the brand Hunkemöller. Feedback primarily addressed the presentation of body positivity content without corresponding inclusivity in the availability of plus-size options in stores and online. Another common feedback theme was the expectation for plus-size models to behave differently from thin models, often emphasizing their "flaws." Social media users highlighted this disparity within the comment section.

Negative comments often resulted in a comment thread where other social media users started responding to a negative comment. This was mainly done by correcting the negative comment, offending back, or defending the influencer.

5.2 Discussion

This discussion section will focus on linking the results to the theory discussed in Chapter 2. All four influencers that have been analyzed have their own contribution to the body positivity movement as they each share their own stories and experiences on social media with the goal of achieving body acceptance among everyone. This is in line with Zavattaro's (2020) findings that the body positivity movement was not created by an individual but through collective initiatives of multiple people sharing their personal stories on social media (p. 5). The influencers did this by appearing as plus-size models for Hunkemöller in lingerie or bikini, showing that not only the thin ideal image exists, but that bodies are all different and that so-called flaws are also part of the body and are allowed to be there. The influencers often combined this with inspirational captions that centered on embracing your body, self-love and self-acceptance. Confronting the prevailing narrow standards of beauty by promoting body acceptance and celebrating the body regardless of size, shape or appearance is in line with Tiggemann et al.'s (2020) understanding of the purpose of the body positivity movement (p. 130). For example, Emily McMillan did this by jiggling and shaking her body so that her cellulite and stretch marks were clearly visible, which are normally seen as flaws, with the accompanying caption "You are PERFECT just too way you are". This way of showing body positivity content aligns with the way Cohen, Irwin, et al. (2019) see the flaws that do not align with the societal ideals of beauty such as thus cellulite, stretch marks, body hair and fat rolls (p. 50).

Social media users display a diverse spectrum of reactions to body positivity content, reflecting varying perspectives. Predominantly, users express positivity towards such content, admiring influencers and finding them inspiring. These responses are consistent with the findings of Stevens & Griffiths (2020), indicating that exposure to diverse body types on social media positively impacts emotional well-being by normalizing attributes like stretch marks, curves, fat rolls, and cellulite (p. 187). Similarly, reactions suggesting a confidence boost among users resonate with the research of Hendrickse et al. (2020), who found that women viewing plus-size models on Instagram reported higher levels of body satisfaction (p. 6). This correlation also aligns with the social comparison theory proposed by Hendrickse et al. (2020), suggesting that exposure to individuals with larger bodies fosters positive self-perception among women (p. 6). Notably, expressions of gaining confidence from Hunkemöller's content underscore the platform's role in promoting body positivity, as users feel empowered by comparing themselves to the influencers. Such disclosures of confidence-boosting experiences may not typically occur in face-to-face interactions but are commonplace in online environments, highlighting the freedom and openness facilitated by social media platforms. The observed contrast in online and offline behavior can be attributed to the principles of the Online Disinhibition Theory, particularly benign disinhibition, where individuals exhibit unusually friendly behavior online and openly share personal emotions (Suler, 2004, p. 321).

The positive responses to influencers serving as inspiration and providing a confidence boost align with Pounders & Mabry-Flynn's (2019) positive theme Appreciation for Body Inclusiveness, which guided this study by emphasizing the celebration of body diversity. However, the findings of this research using Hunkemöller's Instagram content reveal an additional category within the positive spectrum, namely brief compliments on attractiveness. A notable distinction lies in the manner of positive reactions to body positivity content. While the Instagram comment section often featured short responses like "Beautiful" or "Stunning", the study by Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019) observed more elaborate expressions of appreciation for plus-size models. These nuanced responses contrast with the relatively superficial reactions elicited by Hunkemöller's content. The difference in the comprehensiveness of responses may be explained by the fact that Pounders and Mabry-Flynn (2019) analyzed material from online news sites, whereas this study focused on social media responses. This suggests that the medium of communication plays a role in shaping the nature and depth of audience engagement and feedback.

The negative aspect of social media users' perceptions in response to Hunkemöller's body positivity content primarily centered around the unhealthy aspect of plus size. Social media users responded with comments stating that obesity is unhealthy and a disease. This perspective aligns with critics who argue that promoting body positivity unintentionally normalizes unhealthy lifestyles (Gaze & Kibel, 2021, p. 88). Additionally, other subcategories identified in social media users' negative perceptions included instances of body shaming and general feelings of shame. These reactions may stem from internalized weight stigma, where negative attitudes towards larger bodies are perpetuated by societal ideologies and weight stigma's that depict fatness as a choice and pathologize non-conforming bodies (Harvey, 2023, p. 33). Expressions of shame towards bodies that diverge from the thin ideal may be symptomatic of these internalized weight stigmas. These findings are consistent with Pounders & Mabry-Flynn's (2019) findings, where the negative aspect consisted of anger and disgust due to the stigma associating larger bodies with being unhealthy (p. 1367).

Feedback directed towards Hunkemöller in the comment section predominantly centered around the sizes of the lingerie worn by the influencers. Many commenters noted that the influencers often wore sizes that appeared too small. However, more prominently, there was consistent feedback expressing concerns about Hunkemöller's marketing campaigns promoting inclusivity despite a noticeable lack of inclusive sizes in both their physical stores and online platform. This disparity between the communication of inclusivity and the actual availability of inclusive sizes raises the issue of CSR-washing, a practice where companies portray themselves as more socially responsible than they truly are (Ginder et al., 2019, p. 1). Such discrepancies can breed consumer skepticism, as individuals may feel misled by the brand's messaging (Ginder et al., 2019, p. 11). Addressing this feedback promptly could prove invaluable for Hunkemöller in maintaining consumer trust and loyalty.

Beyond concerns about product sizes, feedback also extended to the representation of plus-size models. Social media users pointed out perceived differences in how thin and plus-size models present themselves, suggesting that the emphasis on such differences may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes. This observation aligns with Vendemia et al.'s (2021) critique, indicating that despite efforts to promote body positivity, imagery on social media platforms may still contribute to the objectification and dehumanization of individuals with non-conforming body types (p. 143). The backlash Hunkemöller received in the form of negative reactions to their body positivity messages can be linked to the boomerang effect, in which strategic messages unintentionally produce opposite results than intended (Hart &

Nisbet, 2011, p. 704). At Hunkemöller, the well-intentioned messages caused stereotypes to be highlighted and increased resistance to inclusivity.

Overall, the discussion section highlights the complex dynamics surrounding body positivity content on social media platforms, highlighting both the potential positive impact on body image and emotional well-being, and the challenges and criticisms in promoting true inclusivity and representation. The effectiveness of using Instagram campaigns with influencers and public commentary to promote body positivity depends on several factors. On the positive side, such campaigns can significantly increase users' body acceptance and self-confidence by making different body types visible and encouraging self-love and acceptance. Influencers who share their personal stories and engage with their followers can create a supportive community and normalize features that deviate from societal beauty norms. However, the public nature of social media also exposes campaigns to negative feedback, such as body shaming and criticism for promoting unhealthy lifestyles. These negative interactions can diminish the positive message and highlight societal stigmas. Moreover, discrepancies between a brand's inclusive messaging and its actual product offerings can lead to accusations of CSR washing, reducing consumer trust. In short, while Instagram campaigns with influencers and public commentary have the potential to advance the body positivity message, their success largely depends on genuine engagement, consistency between messaging and actions, and effective management of both positive and negative feedback. Brands must carefully manage these dynamics to maintain their authenticity and truly contribute to the body positivity movement.

5.3 Theoretical and practical implications

The findings of this research contribute to the areas of body positivity, social media content, self-expression on social media, and brand communication by illustrating the multifaceted perceptions that social media users have in the context of Hunkemöller's body positivity content. This study extends the knowledge established by Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019) on the various reactions to body positivity content. The research by Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019) analyzed online consumer reactions to media articles about body positivity magazine covers, where consumers could not directly respond to the women featured on the covers, due to the secondary nature of the media articles. This research expands on their findings by analyzing direct comments posted in Hunkemöller's Instagram comment section on body positivity content. The existing themes from Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019) have been supplemented with new categories such as brand feedback, public

reflections, and comment threads, which were not applicable in the previous study. The difference in categories and themes may be attributed to the nature of the material. This research also contributes to future studies on perceptions of body positivity content by providing a clear coding framework that other researchers can utilize to investigate opinions on body positivity in various industries, such as sportswear or beauty products.

The study also has practical implications, especially for brands in the fashion and beauty industries considering the adoption of body positivity content in their brand communications. Understanding the different perceptions that social media users have about body positivity can guide brands to create content that is more positively received. The brand feedback is particularly valuable for Hunkemöller, as it directly pertains to them. Hunkemöller could benefit from aligning their CSR communications with their CSR actions, such as offering more inclusive sizes. This brand feedback is also valuable for other brands in the industry. It is crucial that when inclusivity is communicated, the products are available to support that inclusivity for consumers.

Additionally, this research has social implications concerning the acceptance and embrace of body positivity content due to the positive reactions found in this study. The perception of social media users that body positivity content is seen as inspiring and confidence-boosting suggests that such content positively influences women's mental and physical health. The majority of positive reactions in this research could be interpreted as enhancing the representativeness of inclusivity and diversity in women's bodies. Highlighting so-called flaws can positively impact societal views, potentially diminishing the thin ideal image. Addressing the boomerang effect (Hart & Nisbet, 2011, p. 704), the danger of negative reactions does present significant challenges. While the positive feedback indicates a beneficial impact on self-esteem and body acceptance, the negative reactions focusing on health concerns and body shaming highlight the complexity of promoting body positivity through social media. The negative responses, rooted in societal stigmas and misconceptions about health and body size, can sometimes overshadow the positive messages, leading to increased resistance to inclusivity efforts. However, the overall positive influence on self-perception and the growing representation of diverse body types suggest that the positives can outweigh the negatives. To mitigate the boomerang effect, brands must address criticisms transparently and continue to emphasize the diverse and inclusive nature of body positivity, ensuring that their campaigns are aligned with genuine efforts to promote health and acceptance for all body types.

In conclusion, this research has made contributions in various areas, including theoretical and practical aspects. Researchers can benefit from the coding framework, brands can utilize the feedback gathered, and society can gain from the positive perceptions of the evolving ideal of beauty.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Given that this research relied exclusively on data obtained from Hunkemöller's Instagram comment sections, the analysis and discussion of the data were inherently influenced by the researcher's interpretations. One limitation of this study is the absence of insights from Hunkemöller itself, particularly regarding their motives for removing certain negative comments. Understanding the criteria used to delete comments and the total number of comments removed would have provided valuable context, especially since some negative comments remain visible. Despite attempts to reach out to Hunkemöller via phone, email, and Instagram message, the researcher did not receive any response.

As a result, the validity and reliability of this study's findings cannot be entirely assured due to potential researcher bias during the data analysis process. However, the researcher has aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the results by transparently detailing the steps of the content analysis. Another potential limitation is that the researcher is a woman who wears size Small, which might have influenced her perception of what constitutes plus-size. Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, the researcher's personal appearance may have introduced some bias in terms of preferences regarding fashion and appearance.

Future research could explore several key areas to build upon the findings of this study. Firstly, qualitative research investigating Hunkemöller's motives for leaving certain negative comments visible while deleting others would provide deeper insights into the brand's moderation policies. Understanding the criteria for comment removal and the decision-making process behind it would add valuable context to the analysis of consumer feedback.

Additionally, further research could examine the discrepancies between Hunkemöller's CSR communication and their actual CSR actions, such as the availability of inclusive lingerie sizes. This line of inquiry could extend beyond Hunkemöller to other industries, utilizing the coding framework developed in this study to investigate perceptions of body positivity content across different sectors, such as sportswear or beauty products.

Another promising avenue for future research is to investigate consumer perceptions on different social media platforms where comment threads are more prevalent, such as Twitter and Instagram Threads. This approach could help uncover the dynamics between social media users and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how body positivity content is received and discussed.

Future research may also focus on the potential risks of public commentary on the effectiveness of influencer-supported communication for the body positivity movement. By examining how negative and positive comments affect the perceived authenticity and impact of influencers, a better understanding of the balance between the benefits and challenges of public engagement on social media can be gained. This would help determine whether the overall impact of influencers from such campaigns supports or undermines the body positivity movement.

By addressing these areas, future studies can enhance our understanding of the impact of body positivity movements and the role of social media in shaping public perceptions.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A Draft Codebook

Code	Category	Definition	Examples
1	Puzzlement	Comments reflecting confusion or frustration related to the concept of plus size, indicative of a lack of clarity.	"I don't get what plus size really means," "Feeling a bit lost with this concept."
2	Negative Reactions	Encompasses comments expressing anger and disgust in response to body positivity content.	"This is ridiculous! Why promote unhealthy lifestyles?" "Disgusting, I can't stand these images."
3	Genuine Health Concerns	Comments reflecting genuine health-related concerns, particularly regarding obesity, contributing to a perspective on the negative side.	"I worry about the health implications of promoting larger body sizes," "Isn't this encouraging obesity?"
4	Appreciation for Body Inclusivity	Positive reactions, including comments that embrace and appreciate the diversity portrayed in body positivity content.	"Love seeing different body types represented," "This is fantastic, promoting body positivity for all shapes and sizes."

Appendix B Phase 1 analysis

B1. Format

QUESTION	ANSWER
Who is the influencer? How many followers on Instagram? What kind of influencer? What is the nationality of the influencer? What size is the influencer wearing?	
Dominated kind of content? (lingerie or pyjama's)	

TYPES OF COMMENTS QUESTIONS	MAIN CATEGORY	NUMBER	SUBCATEGORY	NUMBER	EXAMPLE
What kind of comments reflect confusion or frustration?	Puzzlement				
What kind of negative comments are posted?	Negative Reactions				
What kind of genuine health concerns are there?	Concerns				
What kind of positive comments are posted?	Positive reactions				

TYPES OF COMMENT THREADS	ANSWER
What is the nature of the comment thread?	Comment threads
How are people responding on each other?	

TYPES OF PEOPLE	ANSWER
What kind of people are replying?	
What do they say about themselves?	
What do they say about their environment?	


B2. Influencer 1 – Joann vd Herik

QUESTION	ANSWER				
Who is the influencer? How many followers on Instagram? What kind of influencer? What is the nationality of the influencer? What size is the influencer wearing? Dominated kind of content? (lingerie or pyjama's) What kind of content? What is the caption?	Joann vd Herik 348K Softlife Netherlands		Lingerie The Stella set will have you looking good & feeling better. Discover our new Glam collection! In image: Stella Bra Stella Thong	410	
How many comments?					
TYPES OF COMMENTS QUESTIONS	MAIN CATEGORY	NUMBER	SUBCATEGORY	NUMBER	EXAMPLE
What kind of comments reflect confusion?	Puzzlement	1	Confusion	1	Why
What kind of negative comments are posted?	Negative Reactions	24	Hate Shame Body shaming Unhealthy	11	Awful that this is aloud, looks terrible, we don't want to see this, oh hell no, sad smiley, 1 Shame yourself! 4 Fatty, No dates bc she is curvy, I don't see the underwear, Don't normalise extra sizes 8 Do not recommend this as rolemodel it is unhealthy, because of this normalisation my cholesterol went to high, It is not ok to be so young and fat, This is not healthy, More sporting is better
What kind of genuine health concerns are there?	Concerns				
What kind of positive comments are posted?	Positive reactions	96	Compliment attractiveness Admiring Confidence boost Appreciating different body type	90	Positive emoji (heart, fire, smiley), positive words (beautiful, gorgeous, in love) 2 I admire her, you are so inspiring 4 It helps to see different types of body, Finally body diversity came to you, Finally different body types, Amazing, not the bone bodies
What kind of feedback is given to the brand?	Feedback	21	Negative product feedback Positive product feedback	8	Bra sizes too small, Thong doesnt look nice on me, Too less support, Hope for bigger sizes, The bra is too small for her 5 Bikini + emoji heart eyes, love this lingerie brand, Black is my favorite Im not a fan of how the product looks on you but glad you enjoy it(heart smiley), is this how you wear your underwear, is this a new trend? , you look great , but het bra doesn't fit, glad that people are happy with their body but i dont want this in my ads, Nice but 7 not my thing to raise the underwear, Lovely girl, wrong lingerie 1 Better take a different model, not too thin, not too big
How do people individually reply on others?	Naming others	8	Negative on other people Focus on positive Imply to ignore others	4	All these narrow minded people + (confused smiley), People need to see a specialist for their problems, Everybody is bodyshaming her, Don't judge her she is beautiful 3 So sad how people think... Keep focussing on love and positivity, Done with the hate comments Live and let live, Everyone should feel pretty 1 Ignore the fuckers
TYPES OF COMMENT THREADS					
What is the nature of the comment thread? A-B	Negative comment threads	34	Questioning Offending back Correcting Defending Agreement	8	Are you a doctor? How do you know that? Why are you saying this 5 I smell jealousy, you are insecure, stupid girl, body shaming back (bone girl), you are awful!, Looked at your profile and how dare you say anything 5 Mind your own business, Nobody asks for your opinion, shut up, This can be the impact of genes, if you don't have anything nice to say, Don't say anything. 15 No, Not necessary to reply like this, oh hell yes, You don't need to wear it, Don't normalise. these comments. fake profiles... Don't follow her, Everybody is beautiful 1 Finally someone is saying it, 6 Heart emoji, just like that, She is glowing, Yeaah gurl is slaying
	Positive comment threads	6	Agreement		
How are people replying back on a comment? A-B-A		5	Defending negative to positive Clarifying statement Angry Sarcasm	1	I am not saying that 2 long text about how she is not hyping people unnecessary, I can say what I want and this is causing obesity for young people 1 You need IQ, you are insecure 1 I am so sweet
	TOTAL COMMENTS	195			
TYPES OF PEOPLE					
What kind of people are replying?	Most of them are woman, all kind of woman				
What do they say about themselves?	Only in discussions they tell that they are schooled or what their profession is.				
What do they say about their environment?	They don't tell things about their life such as what they did today				
NOTES	Almost every negative comment got a comment thread				

B3. Influencer 2 – Emily McMillan

QUESTION	ANSWER
Who is the influencer? How many followers on Instagram? What kind of influencer? What is the nationality of the influencer? What size is the influencer wearing? Dominated kind of content? (lingerie or pyjama's) What kind of content? What is the caption?	<p>Heyyems - Emily McMillan 108K Curvy model and your insta bestie Australia</p> <p>In lingerie emphasizing on fat rolls lingerie fat rolls shake Sexy is and always will be the energy & presence you decide to bring to the table - has nothing to do with how you look or what you weigh, but how you FEEL and the power you possess. Say hallo to your inner goddess as I'm sure she has been in there all along and is begging to be shown!!</p>
How many comments?	114
TYPES OF COMMENTS QUESTIONS	MAIN CATEGORY NUMBER SUBCATEGORY NUMBER EXAMPLE
What kind of comments reflect confusion?	Puzzlement 2 Confusion 2 Great that you accept yourself but why do you need to look like a monkey as wanting to be sexy, confused smiley
What kind of negative comments are posted?	Negative Reactions 6 Hate Shame Body shaming Unhealthy Sarcasm 2 no no no, oh boy 1 If I would do this I wouldnt laugh I would disgust myself 1 Just lose some weight, nobody thinks your hot 1 It is a problem to see fat people as normal, it is unhealthy 1 many laugh emoji
What kind of genuine health concerns are there?	Concerns
What kind of positive comments are posted?	Positive reactions 77 Compliment attractiveness Admiring Confidence boost Appreciating different body type 62 So beautiful, you are an angel 10 I wish I had this confidence, Good job on the confidence, you are a true inspiration for all woman, I love how much self love you have and you are an inspiration 3 Sometimes a video can lift your body image, Thankyou it makes me feel better about myself, Inspired when I look at the mirror bc of you 2 Love the message of the influencer, luckily we are all different with different bodies
What kind of feedback is given to the brand?	Feedback 3 Negative product feedback Positive product feedback Constructive critique Negative feedback on model Positive feedback on model 2 Love lingerie look, lingerie link pls
How do people individually reply on others?	Naming others 0 Negative on other people Focus on positive Imply to ignore others 1 Thank you HK for showing real woman
TYPES OF COMMENT THREADS	
What is the nature of the comment thread? A-B	Negative comment threads 3 Questioning Offending back Correcting Defending Agreement 1 hahah stop it 1 It is discusting 1 I second this
	Positive comment threads Agreement 1 I second this
How are people replying back on a comment? A-B-A	2 Defending negative to positive Clarifying statement Angry Sarcasm 1 You don't need to respond that it is discusting 1 It is not stimulating when you want to lose weight
	TOTAL COMMENTS 93
TYPES OF PEOPLE	
What kind of people are replying? What do they say about themselves? What do they say about their environment?	Most of them are middle aged women that are more plus sized than average Not that much, only short comments Not that much, only short comments
NOTES	Lot of captions about confidence of the model and how much people admire / appreciate it

B4. Influencer 3 – Camilla Lorentzen

QUESTION	ANSWER		
Who is the influencer?	Camilla Lorentzen (Camilake)		
How many followers on Instagram?	1.2 mil		
What kind of influencer?	Here to help you love yourself		
What is the nationality of the influencer?	Norwegian		
What size is the influencer wearing?	Lingerie		
Dominant kind of content? (lingerie or pyjama's)	Bikini / Lingerie You can't hate yourself into loving who you are! But you can take action, change the way you treat yourself and gain that self-confidence and self-worth you want and you want to know something? You are worth that effort!		
What is the caption?			
How many comments?	409		
TYPES OF COMMENTS QUESTIONS			
What kind of comments reflect confidence?	Praise/ment	1 Confusion 1 If no form of movement feels good, where do I start?	
What kind of negative comments are posted?	Negative Reactions	0 Hate Shame Body shaming Unhealthy Sarcastic	
What kind of genuine health concerns are there?	Concerns	0	
What kind of positive comments are posted?	Positive reactions	153 Compliment attractiveness Admiring / Inspiration Confidence boost Appreciating different body type Healing of eating disorders NEW	80 You look amazing. You are a gorgeous queen 30 You are such an inspiration, (story about herself) thank you Camilla for teaching young ladies to love themselves. As a plus size person you are my idol, I wish I had your confidence 26 Thank you for giving me permission to buy pants that fit my body. This healed my inner child. You have taught me how to love my body. You helped me with appreciating my body. Thank you for the reminders they were helpful for me today 8 Thank you for putting yourself out there and showing a body gone beyond outline. You have a perfect woman body. This needs to be normalized Every damn body is beautiful. 9 You are a reminder when my eating disorder comes back, Camilla is out there. Healing from ED and your message is needed. Reminder to eat before 10 be of eating disorder, I have always struggled with binge eating ED and you made my mindset change Thank you,
What kind of feedback is given to the brand?	Feedback	67 Negative product feedback Positive product feedback Constructive critique Negative feedback on model Positive feedback on model	65 That green set, I need that green set, Those fits are stunning. I know everyone is saying it but that green set is needed. The green looks stunning on you 1 Love hunkemoller gorg stuff but which they hat items for fuller busted girls 1 Thank you for continuing to make posts like this
How do people individually reply on others?	Naming others	0 Negative on other people Focus on positive Imply to ignore others	
TYPES OF COMMENT THREADS			
What is the nature of the comment thread? A-B	Negative comment threads	0 Questioning Offending back Correcting Defending Agreement	
	Positive comment threads	4 Agreement Product question	2 Feeling the same blessed to find an inspiration as Camilla 2 It is from hunkemoller since it is their ad, The set is called Su
How are people replying back on a comment? A-B-A		Defending negative to positive Clarifying statement Angry Sarcastic	
	TOTAL COMMENTS	225	
TYPES OF PEOPLE			
What kind of people are replying?	Most of them are women		
What do they say about themselves?	See below		
What do they say about their environment?	See below		
NOTES			
<p>More people are telling stories about their eating disorders or dating/happy single life. People give personal information Lots of people are telling that this helped them / reminded them to love themselves! Hunkemoller is only responding to positive comments with short agreement statements People are telling stories about themselves and environment (today I went to the spa and felt confident in bikini and I normally wear a corset) (losing up was difficult for me but it made me feel 100% more confident wearing clothes that fit</p>			

B5. Influencer 4 – May Ridts

QUESTION	ANSWER
Who is the influencer? How many followers on Instagram?	May Ridts (@mayridts) 399K The only beauty standards you should follow are your own
What kind of influencer? What is the nationality of the influencer? What size is the influencer wearing? Dominated kind of content? (lingerie or pyjama's) What kind of content? What is the caption?	Confident reel in lingerie Body positivity bikini lingerie Just the way you are is beautiful and you need the perfect lingerie to show it off! We will always support you to unleash your best self
How many comments?	96



TYPES OF COMMENTS QUESTIONS	MAIN CATEGORY	NUMBER	SUBCATEGORY	NUMBER	EXAMPLE
What kind of comments reflect confusion?	Puzzlement	0	Confusion		
What kind of negative comments are posted?	Negative Reactions	0	Hate Shame Body shaming Unhealthy Sarcasm	1	A sausage in lingerie
What kind of genuine health concerns are there?	Concerns	0			
What kind of positive comments are posted?	Positive reactions	57	Compliment attractiveness Admiring / Inspiration Confidence boost Appreciating different body type Healing of eating disorders	55	Stunning, Beauty, Wow, Babe 2 I love you
What kind of feedback is given to the brand?	Feedback	11	Negative product feedback Positive product feedback Constructive critique Negative feedback on model Positive feedback on model	11	Lovely colour, this set is so pretty, Curvy collection has a really good color theme
How do people individually reply to others?	Naming others	0	Negative on other people Focus on positive Imply to ignore others		
TYPES OF COMMENT THREADS					
What is the nature of the comment thread? A-B	Negative comment threads	18	Questioning Offending back Correcting Defending Agreement Product question	18	All by Hunkemoller
	Positive comment threads		Defending negative to positive Clarifying statement Angry Sarcasm		
How are people replying back on a comment? A-B-A					
	TOTAL COMMENTS	86			
TYPES OF PEOPLE					
What kind of people are replying?	Most of them are young adult women and not specifically plus size				
What do they say about themselves?	Not much				
What do they say about their environment?	Not much				

NOTES

Appendix C Code Framework

Main Category	Subcategory	Definition	Example
Puzzlement	Confusion	Comments reflecting confusion or frustration related to the concept of plus size, indicative of a lack of clarity.	"Why is this portrayed as plus size when it doesn't look like it?"
Negative Reactions	Hate	Comments expressing strong dislike or aversion towards body positivity content.	"Awful that this is allowed", "Looks terrible", "We don't want to see this", "Oh hell no", "Sad smiley"
	Shame	Comments reflecting a sense of disgrace or embarrassment towards the portrayed influencer.	"Shame yourself!"
	Body Shaming	Comments that criticize or mock the portrayed body, often focusing on its size or appearance.	"Fatty", "No dates because she is curvy", "Don't normalize extra sizes"
	Unhealthy	Comments expressing concern about the portrayed body's health or promoting unhealthy behaviors.	"Do not recommend this as a role model; it is unhealthy", "Because of this normalization, my cholesterol went too high", "This is unhealthy"
Positive Reactions	Compliment Attractiveness	Comments complimenting the attractiveness or beauty of the portrayed influencer. Decision rule: These comments are focused on short and general compliments	"You look beautiful", "Gorgeous", "Stunning", "Heart (eyes) emoji"
	Admiring	Comments expressing admiration or inspiration towards the portrayed influencer. Decision rule: These comments are focused on admiring how the influencer is showing her confidence in her body.	"I admire her", "You are so inspiring", "Good job on the confidence, you are a true inspiration for all woman"

	Confidence Boost	<p>Comments expressing how the portrayed influencer helped boost the commenter's confidence or self-esteem.</p> <p>Decision rule: These comments are focused on how the influencer helped the commenter.</p>	"You have taught me how to love my body", "You helped me with appreciating my body", "Thank you for the reminders they were helpful for me today"
	Appreciating Body Diversity	<p>Comments appreciating the representation of diverse body types in the content.</p>	"It helps to see different types of bodies", "Finally, body diversity came to you", "Amazing, not the bone bodies"
	Healing of Eating Disorders	<p>Comments acknowledging the positive impact of body positivity on individuals recovering from eating disorders.</p>	"You are a reminder when my eating disorder comes back", "Healing from ED and your message is needed"
Brand Feedback	Negative Product Feedback	<p>Comments expressing dissatisfaction or criticism towards the product featured in the content.</p>	"Bra sizes too small", "Thong doesn't look nice on me", "Too less support"
	Positive Product Feedback	<p>Comments expressing satisfaction or praise towards the product featured in the content.</p>	"Love this lingerie brand", "Black is my favorite", "Amazing set"
	Constructive Critique	<p>Comments offering constructive criticism aimed at improving the portrayed body or the content.</p>	"Nice but not my thing to raise the underwear", "Is this how you wear your underwear, is this a new trend?"
	Negative Feedback on Model	<p>Comments criticizing or disapproving of the model featured in the content.</p> <p>Decision rule: These comments are directed towards the brand, rather than towards the individual</p>	"Better take a different model", "@hunkemoller take a model that is not too thin, not too big"
	Positive Feedback on Model	<p>Comments expressing appreciation or gratitude towards the (plus size) model featured in the content.</p> <p>Decision rule: These comments are directed</p>	"Thank you Hunkemöller for showing real woman"

		towards the brand, rather than towards the individual	
Public Reflections	Negative on Others	Comments expressing negativity towards other individuals or groups. Decision rule: These comments are directed towards humanity	"All these narrow-minded people", "People need to see a specialist for their problems"
	Focus on Positive	Comments advocating for positivity and love amidst negative comments.	"So sad how people think... Keep focusing on love and positivity", "Done with the hate comments; Live and let live"
	Imply to Ignore Others	Comments suggesting ignoring or disregard negative comments or individuals.	"Ignore the haters"
Negative Comment Threads	Questioning	Comments questioning the validity or credibility of statements made by other users.	"Are you a doctor?", "How do you know that?"
	Offending Back	Comments retaliating with offensive remarks towards users who made negative comments.	"I smell jealousy", "You are insecure", "Stupid girl"
	Correcting	Comments correcting misinformation or false claims made by other users.	"Mind your own business", "Nobody asks for your opinion"
	Defending	Comments defending the portrayed body or content against negative comments or criticism.	"No, it's not necessary to reply like this", "Everybody is beautiful"
	Agreement	Comments expressing agreement or alignment with statements made by other users.	"Finally, someone is saying it"
Positive Comment Threads	Agreement	Comments expressing agreement or alignment with positive statements made by other users.	"Just like that", "She is glowing", "Yea gurl is slaying"
	Defending Negative to Positive	Comments defending negative perceptions and	"I am not saying that", "You don't need to

	turning them into positive ones.	respond that it is discusting”
Clarifying Statement	Comments providing clarification or elaboration on statements made in the thread.	"I can say what I want and this is causing obesity for young people because..."
Angry	Comments expressing anger or frustration towards other users their feedback on them.	"You need IQ", "You are insecure"
Sarcasm	Comments intended to mock or convey irony through exaggerated or insincere remarks against previously given comments	"I am so sweet"
