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The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Consumers' Self-Image Response to Gender Portrayal in Advertising Images

by

Rebecca Delaney

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in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of
Rebecca Delaney presented on November 18, 2011.

Jonathan Schroeder, Ph.D.
William A. Kern Professor in Communications
Department of Communication
Thesis Advisor

Ki-Young Lee, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Communication
Department of Communication
Thesis Advisor

Laurie Dwyer, MBA
Lecturer, Communications Director
E. Philip Saunders College of Business
Thesis Advisor

Rudy Pugliese, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication
Director, Communication & Media
Technologies Graduate Degree Program
Department of Communication

Patrick Scanlon, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication and Chairman
Department of Communication

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Barb and Steve, for their endless support, guidance, encouragement, and love.

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CONSUMERS' SELF-IMAGE RESPONSE TO GENDER PORTRAYAL IN ADVERTISING
IMAGES

Name: Rebecca Delaney

Department: Communication

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Abstract

Previous empirical research has examined the effect of advertising image idealization on self-image issues, but many of these studies neglect to take into account the effects on men. By developing an experiment to include key components from previous methods of research, the present study investigates the effects of gender portrayal in advertising images. The purpose of this study is to examine consumers' responses to the advertising stimulus, or the advertising images of gender. Inconsistent with past research, findings suggest there is less disparity between men and women's reactions after viewing gender portrayals in advertising images. It is suggested that there is a slight increase in negative self-image attitude and anxiety for both genders after viewing advertising images of their gender.

Keywords: gender portrayals, advertising images, advertising, body image, self-image

Consumers' Self-Image Response to Gender Portrayal in Advertising Images

Images of beautiful people in advertising images bombard us daily. Everyday we are exposed to an average of 5,000 advertisements (Story, 2007). Research suggests that a common tool advertisers use is idealized images of physical attractiveness to target and persuade their customers. The idealized images represent the “ideal” standard of beauty and level of attractiveness for each gender. The effect that exposure to idealized images has on consumers has been a prominent topic in advertising research for several decades. Richins (1991) stated that the misrepresentations of gender in advertisements raise the standards for attractiveness and lower the self-perception of the viewer. Schroeder and Zwick (2004) state “most ad campaigns invoke gender identity, drawing their imagery primarily from the stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity” (p.1). In other words, most advertisers use images, or models, that represent what is deemed masculine and feminine for each gender.

Advertisers use idealization as a strategic communication tool to persuade consumers to purchase products. Lafky and Duffy (1996) state that advertisers often present certain social ideals rather than life as it is and that advertising messages are created through presentations of idealized, stereotypical portrayals of gender. Body dissatisfaction and self-image concerns have reached extreme levels in America today and research suggests that advertising is among the causes for the dissatisfaction. “One thing is for certain – images do have powerful emotional effects on people” (Berger, 2008, p. 63). The models appearing in advertisements can be a referent for social comparison between the self and the image presented (Wood, Solomon & Englis, 2003). Exposure to advertisements in the United States that depict body image ideals of both genders can lead to negative body image concerns in either gender.

Advertisers need to understand how consumers respond to the power of advertising imagery based on their gender. Elliott and Elliott (2005) state that there is little known about men's emotional reaction (i.e., self-image reaction) to the portrayal of male bodies in advertising. The power of imagery appeals and their persuasiveness in advertising, along with a brief snapshot into consumer response, will be conveyed in the present research. Research suggests that overall women's self-images are adversely affected from viewing gender portrayals of their gender. In other words, women feel less attractive or beautiful about themselves after viewing advertising images of women. Because there is less research conducted to date on men's reactions to the advertising images, the present research will ask the following research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1: How is a woman's self-image affected by viewing gender portrayals in advertisements of the same gender?

RQ2: How is a man's self-image affected by viewing gender portrayals in advertisements of the same gender?

Rationale

The depictions of both males and females in advertisements can lead to an effect on self-image in both genders. "To the extent that 'seeing is believing', we must make sure that the images we create in advertisements do not generate beliefs that are individually or socially destructive" (Berger, 2008, p.5). In other words, we must be sure that the images we use for advertisements, including how each gender is portrayed, must not set an ideal standard or level of attractiveness that may be destructive for the self or on society. According to advertising

researchers, we learn whether someone is attractive or unattractive from the depictions of gender in the media today and the ideal body images displayed in advertisements within the United States (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). The distortion of real beauty today has become a real-life issue for the consumers of today's advertisements. Few efforts have been made to attempt to change societal norms on "beauty" and "attractiveness" and what they consist of today. A campaign advocating the awareness of body image issues in men has yet to be launched successfully in the United States, and would have a profound social impact if conducted.

The effects from the advertising images of gender on an individual's self-image will help advance the prior research on advertising persuasion and its effects on consumers. Advertising research would benefit from the present research in that the advertisers would ideally have more effective and successful campaigns if the research showed that consumers did not have a negative response to the idealized images used in the ads. Substantial evidence from research studies is needed to uncover and support associations between persuasive advertising images of idealization and the consumers' self-perception. In particular to men's reactions, this study will discuss the implications from an under-researched area in the field. The study of this relationship, to include men's reactions, which have been left out of the equation too often, can serve as a significant contribution to the field of advertising research.

Review of Literature

Advertising is a way for marketers to sell their products, and advertisements affect everyone as consumers because we run across them everyday. Misrepresentations of gender in advertisements have become a negative effect of advertising. For example, Lafky and Duffy state that "some estimates place advertising expenditures at more than \$400 per person annually

in the United States, compared with an estimated per person spending of \$17 annually in other industrialized nations such as Canada and Great Britain" (p.380). The public generally depends greatly upon the media as a means for communicating societal norms and to be the basis for what is "normal" or "attractive." The way that media, and advertisements subsequently, depict gender is therefore the way that some individuals believe that gender should "look." The idealized images seen in models for advertisements therefore is what each individual feels that he/she must look like in order to be considered attractive in today's society. Lafky and Duffy (1996) state that stereotypes are the foundation of what have been called the "ideals" in advertising, including the "beauty ideal" providing normative guidelines for portrayals and roles of women, and men too. Research to date suggests that marketers represent men and women differently in order to increase their product sales. The negative self-image effect for both men and women has been detrimental, according to prior research.

Representations of Gender

According to Schroeder & Zwick (2004) most advertisers chose images, or models, in their advertisements based on the stereotypes for each gender. The stereotypes of "strong" for males and "thin" for females are assumed to be the ideal beauty standard for each gender. The public generally depends greatly upon the media as a means for communicating societal norms and to be the basis for what is "normal" or "attractive," and also for what is "female" and what is "male" in regards to gender. Brand attitudes can be conditioned using both attractive images and descriptive images of males and females that promote belief formation (Kim, Allen, & Kardes, 1996).

Women in advertising are depicted differently from men because the “ideal” spectator is often assumed to be male and the women portrayed in ads are designed to flatter him, as images of sexuality (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). Feminine representations that are typical in advertising are a woman driving a minivan, cooking, doing laundry, cleaning the house, or applying cosmetic products. Women are objectified in many ways, “reinforcing the idea that women should be possessed and fantasized about” (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p.168). Many advertisements depict women as inferior to men, as a sexual object, or as a product. Advertising influences women in a variety of ways - including portraying women as linked with fashion and style. Advertising also reinforces the stereotypical negative notion of women as subordinate, non-intellectual, and child-like (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 578).

Examples of representation of men in advertisements include a man driving a sports car, shaving, eating, smoking cigars, or drinking alcohol. Male bodies in advertisements depict masculinity represented through material success, professional skill, and economic power (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Masculine identity in advertising is often depicted as men being portrayed as a "man's man," or the consistent inclusion of women or beer within the ads. This is reinforced through the images in male magazines such as *Maxim* and *Men's Health*. “The Male Pin-up” is seen in contemporary media, a form of portrait that has evolved where men are represented as heartthrobs or hunks, with strong, athletic, and too-perfect bodies (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Males are portrayed often with the “strong” ideal in mind, and are seen in contemporary advertising images for the male gender.

The Gender Ideals

The “thin ideal” has become a component for advertisements because advertisers believe that portraying thin models over average size models is more attractive. Therefore, extremely thin models as product endorsers are used in order to sell products and positively influence consumers' attitudes toward the advertisements and the company's overall brand image. Since the 1980s, male bodies have appeared much more frequently in advertisements and offer the same idealization (Elliott & Elliott, 2005). Similarly, the “strong ideal” has become very prominent in advertisements directed toward a male target market since the marketers and advertisers believe that the strong, masculine male models provide the attractiveness factor that helps create favorable attitudes.

In today's advertisements, sometimes the product or service being sold is not even represented within the advertisement. The focus of many advertising campaigns are primarily on what some marketers believe to be the only factor contributing to selling a brand, product or service—the models themselves. The product drops into the background, while models and the brand create highly abstract connections (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Viewers then transfer meaning from the look of the models in the ads, their image and physical appearance, onto the product itself (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

Why Use the Ideals? Sex Appeal

Research suggests that the main reason advertisers use beauty ideals for appearance is because they believe these images and representations of gender will help to sell their products (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994; Liu, Cheng and Li, 2009). Sex appeal uses sexual attractiveness, and since the mid-to-late 1960s has been used in Western countries to break through advertising

clutter and to help generate recall of a brand or the message within the advertisement (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994). Sex appeals, in terms of nudity or sexual explicitness, are more common in advertisements today than in the past, along with gender stereotypes. According to Liu, Cheng and Li (2009) sex appeal has been widely used in consumer advertising in most countries within the media: prime time television, movies, music videos, etc.

A tactic that is often used in advertising is to use explicit images of sex even when the sexual depictions have nothing to do with the advertised product (Sengupta, Dahl & Vohs, 2009). Many studies (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994; Sengupta, Dahl & Vohs, 2009) have demonstrated that “men and women react differently to diverse forms of sex appeal due to their own implicit sexual and personal motivations and desires” (Liu, Cheng & Li, 2009, p. 502). In other words, men and women react to sex appeal in advertisements based on internal beliefs and desires. This also suggests that men and women react differently, but does not tell us if they react differently as an entire gender, or on an individual basis.

Research suggests that each gender's attitude toward idealized images in advertisements varies greatly. Men and women differ on their responses to sexual appeal because of their biological and psychological needs (Grazer & Keesling, 1995). According to Sengupta, Dahl & Vohs (2009), “women on average exhibited a negative reaction to explicit sexual content in advertising” (p. 215). This suggests that when women view sexual appeals in ads, they react negatively compared to men. Putrevu's (2008) study showed that men are more favorable to a sexual advertisement whether or not the sex appeal coincides with the product or service. Putrevu (2008) also found that women have dissatisfaction with advertisements that portray sexual appeal in no relation to the product which is being sold to the consumer. Zimmerman &

Dahlberg (2008) conducted a study of young women and their views on sexually objectified advertisements, which showed that women as a whole have unfavorable reactions to advertisements where women are seen as sex objects. The findings suggest “college females agreed that advertisements treat them mainly as sex objects” (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008, p. 75). The prior research suggests that women had a negative reaction to sex appeals in advertisements. Research also looks at what negative reactions occur for both genders, including the effects on male and female self-image.

Effects on Self-Image

Body dissatisfaction results in eating disorders and body image concerns. Factors that have been debated as playing a contributing role are advertising and advertising images of gender. Some studies have produced results stating that individuals, both male and female, compare their physical attractiveness with the models in advertisements (Richins, 1991; Tsai & Chang, 2007). The ideal “attractive” standard is high and much more unrealistic for both genders across all mediums today. Derenne and Beresin (2006) state that “throughout history, the ideal of beauty has been difficult to achieve and has been shaped by social context” (p. 257).

There is convincing empirical evidence of the detrimental effect of the ideal media image, or the thin ideal, on women’s body image (Dittmar, Halliwell & Stirling, 2009; Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). But the majority of the research to date has been conducted on women. The socially destructive idealized images from the advertisements’ portrayals of gender lead to socially destructive beliefs in today’s society. Western women are subject to a great deal of pressure to conform to the thin ideal, and many experience body image issues such as weight concern (Harper & Tiggeman, 2008).

Fashion magazine advertisements have been displaying the thin ideal, and a content analysis of 69 women's magazines revealed that 94% had a thin model on the cover (Malkin et al, 1999). Among the negative reactions reported are appearance anxiety, body shame, disordered eating, and self-image (Harper & Tiggeman, 2008). Similar to the present research, Harper & Tiggeman (2008) researched 90 Australian undergraduate students, who viewed magazine advertisements featuring thin women as models and the participants reported "greater state self-objectification, weight-related appearance anxiety, negative mood and body dissatisfaction" (p. 649).

The idealization, or attractive images, seen in today's ads are most commonly used because it is believed that what is attractive is what will sell a product or service. The "thin ideal" has become an almost necessary component to an ad because advertisers believe that portraying thin models over average size models is more attractive. Therefore, extremely thin models as product endorsers are used in order to sell products and positively influence consumers' attitudes toward the advertisements and the company's overall brand image. The "thin-ideal" seen in almost every advertisement targeted to young women today has been linked to negative body image issues in women (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). The "thin-ideal" has also been attributed as a main factor in eating disorders among women in Western countries. A survey was used to show that media consumption is a positive predictor to eating disorders and body dissatisfaction (Prendergast, Kwok & West, 2009).

Dittmar et al. (2009) explained that the typical female model seen in advertising today is as much as 20% underweight, while 15% underweight is one of the criteria used to diagnose anorexia (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Less than 5% of women can be as thin as media models, and the internalization of the ultra-thin ideal has been correlated with body

dissatisfaction (Grogan, 2008). A study conducted by Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) showed that exposure to thin models made the viewers have greater body-focused anxiety than those who were exposed to average size models. The unique aspect to the Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) study was that it took into account the advertisements' effectiveness, with results showing that advertisements were equally effective. The implication from this was that advertisers could successfully use more average-sized models in their advertisements to sell a product.

Similar to the idealization that prior research shows is taking place with women in advertisements, the "strong ideal" has become very prominent in advertisements directed toward a male target market. The marketers and advertisers believe that the strong, masculine male models create the attractiveness factor that helps create favorable attitudes. In an early study conducted by Mishkind et al. (1986) on male body image, it was found that 95% of college-age men were dissatisfied with some part of their bodies. Elliott & Elliott (2005) found that men's reactions to the "strong-ideal" male body depictions in advertisements had the same adverse effect on their self-image and esteem when they were addressed. Research conducted by McCray (2004) showed the effects of exposure to images of the male ideal on male body image. Their study determined that men had increased fatigue and increased depression, along with increased drive for muscularity after viewing images of the "male ideal." Tsai & Chang (2007) found that "normally attractive models were significantly more effective than highly attractive models for both males and females" (p. 834).

The selection between real and ideal representations and any subsequent effect on self-concept may vary depending on the strength of the consumer's self-concept prior to exposure to the images, the actual images viewed, the basis for

comparison, the product being advertised, and the degree of knowledge that the images presented are not necessarily a reflection of reality (Wood, Solomon & Englis, 2003, p.386).

Many people may be beginning to recognize that these images are not realistic and that physical attractiveness is an important social cue that significantly impacts consumers of advertising materials. Lemon (1995) stated that there is evidence in the decline of the emotional and physical well being of men as a result of a “crisis of masculinity.” For example, Salzman et al (2005) states that the “2004 suicide rates among US men aged 25 to 34 in 2001 were double those in 1980, and males now account for one in five cases of anorexia nervosa, up from one in ten in 1980” (p. 189). Numerous scholars have also noted that males are struggling with conforming to social expectations on what it is to be male (Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Tuncay and Otnes, 2007). According to Gentry and Harrison (2010), males are predisposed toward a self-focused and autonomy-driven orientation and more recently, men have begun to criticize their portrayals in advertising. Thompson and Fletcher (2005) reported that a survey found that 77% of the US men in the sample said that images of men in advertising were out of touch with reality.

The distortion of real beauty today has become a real-life issue for the consumers of today's advertisements. Few efforts have been made to attempt to change societal norms on “beauty” and “attractiveness” and what they consist of today. One example is The Body Shop and their launch of an advertising campaign in 1997 that aimed to increase the awareness of eating disorders. The theme of the campaign was “Love your body” and the model was a realistic portrayal of the everyday woman in America. Another example was Dove's Campaign for Real

Beauty that was launched in 2007 that depicts seemingly ordinary women in advertisements. Companies like Dove and The Body Shop are attempting to change idealized images in advertisements and “have identified that some women experience negative effects by comparing themselves to highly attractive models in advertising, producing a negative impact on advertising effectiveness (Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009, p.814).

Review of Literature Summary

Overall, prior research makes it evident that men and women are often strategically represented differently in advertising in order to sell a product or service. This strategic communication tool has been successful with sales for products, but detrimental to the self-perception of the consumers. The negative effects from this advertising tactic are apparent in both genders, with slight differences in gender reactions based on certain situations, such as product relevance. It is imperative to consider if the advertising industry should continue to go to all extremes through the use of persuasive images to grab our attention, with no regard for the consequences, in order to sell their product (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Prior research suggests various methods could be used to test the present study. The current study adapts multiple methods and scales from prior research in order to best address the research questions.

Method

An experiment was the chosen method of the present study and utilized a “before and after” survey in a controlled environment over a one-hour period in a classroom on the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) campus (see Appendix A). First the pre-test survey was administered, then images were shown to each gender (used as the manipulation), and finally the post-test survey was administered. This study measured the reactions of men and women to

idealized images of gender seen in advertisements. A convenience sample (a non-probability sample) of male and female undergraduate and graduate students at RIT was used. The variables measured before and after the manipulation was administered include self-image (the dependent variable) and advertising images and gender (the independent variables).

A 5-point Likert response scale was used to measure consumer perceptions of themselves, of products, and of gender-specific beauty norms. The Likert scale used a range from 1 to 5 with 1 being “strongly disagree,” 5 being “strongly agree” and 3 being “neutral”/ “neither disagree or agree.” This type of scale was chosen because Likert scales measure a participant’s level of agreement with statements that express either favorable or unfavorable attitudes. The attitude toward the image is therefore expressed and reflected through the answer provided.

Statements used in the questionnaire were taken from previous research within the field to ensure greater reliability and validity. Some statements used in the questionnaire have been adapted from previous research. The statements composed were based on scales to test self-image from previous research such as Reed et al’s (1991) “Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale” to measure weight anxiety. Statements were provided for participants to indicate if they felt anxious, tense or nervous about their body. These types of statements included the questions “I question if I am beautiful”, “I do not believe I am attractive”, “I am not confident with my appearance”, “I am not happy with my appearance” and “I feel anxious, tense or nervous about my body.”

McCray (2004) used the Body Shape Questionnaire developed in 1987 by Cooper, Taylor, Cooper & Fairburn, among other measures to measure body image. These types of

statements can be used to evaluate fear of putting on weight, feelings of low self-esteem because of appearance, the desire to lose weight, and body dissatisfaction. These were adapted to statements including, "I am worried about my body shape" and "I am worried about being overweight."

Some statements were also used and adapted from the "Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3" (Thompson et al., 1999), which measures one's endorsement of societal appearance ideals. These statements included "Advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and 'being attractive'"; "I compare my bodies to the models I see in advertisements" and "I would like my body to look like the models who appear in advertisements."

The pre-test also included questions that would test the ideal appearance for each gender. The "thin ideal" for females was tested based on my own statements such as "Females are more attractive when wearing makeup", "Females are more attractive when they wear revealing clothes", and "Females are more attractive when they have thin, toned bodies." The "strong ideal" for males was tested based on my own statements such as "Males should be muscular and generally stronger than females", "Males are more attractive when they wear tight clothes", and "Males are more attractive when they are well-groomed."

When the survey was re-administered as the post-test, statements were added in addition to the pre-test survey questions. The additional questions expanded upon the pre-test and asked questions to test the manipulation (the images) themselves and their effectiveness. These questions included "The women/men in the images were attractive" and "The women/men in the images were beautiful." Additional statements were also included in the post-test only from Mills

et al. (2002) "Consumer Response Questionnaire" and were adapted to state "I compare my body to the models I see in advertisements", "I would like my body to look like the men/women in the advertisements", "I would be more confident if I looked like the women/men that I saw in the advertisements", "If I saw images in a magazine that were similar to those I just saw, they would catch my eye", and "Images such as those used in the advertisements you just saw are effective in selling the products."

Overall, the method used in prior research was adapted as the basis for this study. The adaptation of previous scales, adapted questionnaire statements, and the use of the pre-test post-test experiment were used to analyze the research questions in the present research.

Stimulus

The stimulus chosen for the present study were advertising images. Ten images were of females, and ten were of males. These images were chosen based on the level of attractiveness of the individual represented in the advertisement. Since prior research suggested that fashion magazines have been displaying the thin ideal (Malkin et al., 1999), fashion magazine covers and advertisements within these magazines were used. As suggested by Schroeder and Zwick (2004), men's magazines such as *Men's Health* and *Maxim* represented images of men that were strong and athletic. Examples of these images, among others, were found through *Google* images for both genders (see Appendix E). The images were pre-tested with individuals of the same gender (five females, five males). All of the images were rated high on a scale for what is "attractive" and "beautiful" for that gender. They were also rated as the "ideal" for each gender. These images were then used as the manipulation for the present study.

Procedure

Participants for a pilot study were reached out to through RIT's email system at the beginning of the month of August 2011 to the students in the College of Liberal Arts and the E. Philip Saunders College of Business (see Appendix B). A pilot study (a run-through) was held on Saturday, September 17, 2011 and took place in a computer lab at RIT for less than a one-hour time frame with 17 total participants. An incentive of three \$50 VISA gift cards was used to recruit participants for the pilot study. These individuals came to the computer lab and signed a consent form (see Appendix C). They then completed the pre-test survey through RIT's ClipBoard. Upon completion of the pre-test, the participants took a 15-minute break, viewed the manipulation, and finally completed the post-test. The present study experiment date was on October 10, 2011. The same procedure was used for the experiment as was used in the pilot test although the experiment was held in a classroom at RIT and the participants were not sought through RIT's email. There were a total of 32 participants: 10 males, and 22 females.

Results

A codebook was created for inputting data into SPSS. Each participant's responses to the pre-test and post-test were entered into SPSS. The participants ranged from 20 to 37 years old. The average age was 22. The results of this study analyzed if the self-image of a man or woman is affected by viewing gender portrayals in advertisements of the same gender. The results for men and women were analyzed separately, as well as combined to better understand the significance of the results. The means analyzed from the majority of the scales used in the present study did indeed depict that there was an effect after both men and women viewed the advertising images.

The means of each of the pre-test and post-test scales were then compared using a paired sample *t*-test in SPSS. A *t*-test was utilized for data analysis and was chosen because there were two genders (e.g. men and women), and a comparison was needed to analyze the means of their attitude toward gender-specific beauty norms, and also their self-perception. A paired-sample *t*-test compared the values from the same group of participants at different times (the pre and post tests). By employing a paired-sample *t*-test, the test resulted in data depicting if there was a difference between the means. The *t*-test was chosen because this will best determine the statistical significance between the sample distribution mean and the parameters.

The averages were compared between the pre-test and post-test survey questions that asked questions related to the thin ideal and strong ideal for each gender. The male mean for the survey questions that addressed the strong ideal was 2.97 with a range of 1.67 - 4.33. When males were asked questions on their own gender, including if males should be muscular and strong, the mean leaned toward neutral and disagree. The female mean for the survey questions that addressed the thin ideal was 2.91 with a range of 1 - 4.33. When females were asked if females are more attractive when they have thin and toned bodies, the mean leaned toward neutral and disagree (see Table D1).

The averages of the scales were also compared between the pre-test and post-test survey questions that were from Reed's Physical Appearance scale. A paired-sample *t*-test was calculated to compare the male mean pre-test physical appearance score to the male mean post-test physical appearance score. The pre-test mean for men was 2.43 (*SD* = .78). The post-test mean for men was 2.45 (*SD* = .97). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for men was found ($t(11) = -.134, p > .05$). A paired-sample *t*-test was calculated to compare the female

mean pre-test physical appearance score to the female mean post-test physical appearance score. The pre-test mean for female was 2.82 ($SD = .97$). The post-test mean for female was 2.9 ($SD = 1.16$). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for female was found ($t(19) = -.709, p > .05$) (see Table D2).

The averages of the scales were also compared between the pre-test and post-test survey questions that were from McCray's Body Shape scale. A paired-sample t -test was calculated to compare the male mean pre-test body shape score to the male mean post-test body shape score. The pre-test mean for men was 3.96 ($SD = 1.88$). The post-test mean for men was 3.7 ($SD = 1.4$). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for men was found ($t(11) = .702, p > .05$). A paired-sample t -test was calculated to compare the female mean pre-test body shape score to the female mean post-test body shape score. The pre-test mean for female was 4.73 ($SD = 1.9$). The post-test mean for female was 4.7 ($SD = 2.1$). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for female was found ($t(19) = .119, p > .05$) (see Table D3).

The averages of the scales were also compared between the pre-test and post-test survey questions that were from Thompson's Socio-Cultural Appearance scale. A paired-sample t -test was calculated to compare the male mean pre-test socio-cultural appearance score to the male mean post-test socio-cultural appearance score. The pre-test mean for men was 2.69 ($SD = 1.16$). The post-test mean for men was 2.8 ($SD = .95$). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for men was found ($t(11) = -.561, p > .05$). A paired-sample t -test was calculated to compare the female mean pre-test socio-cultural appearance score to the female mean post-test socio-cultural appearance score. The pre-test mean for female was 3.27 ($SD = .98$). The post-test mean

for female was 3.4 ($SD = 1.10$). No significant difference from pre-test to post-test for female was found ($t(19) = -.748, p > .05$) (see Table D4).

The averages of the questions in the post-test that addressed the images were also compared for a manipulation check, to ensure the images used in the present research represented what the study was trying to examine (attractive/beautiful images of each gender). The mean for males was 3.36. The mean for females was 3.59 (see Table D5).

The averages of the scales were also compared from the post-test survey questions that were from Mill's Consumer Response scale. The mean for males was 3.42. The mean for females was 3.75. These numbers show that both men and women thought the images would catch their eye in a magazine and that they would affectively sell products (see Table D6).

In summary, the difference between participants' pre-test and post-test responses leaned toward the predicted outcome of the present research. The post-test responses skewed slightly higher than the pre-test responses suggesting that the advertising images effected the participants' self-image in a negative way. Although there are numerical increases between pre-test and post-test responses, the findings are not significant in this study.

Discussion

The present study examined the effects that advertisements have on body dissatisfaction and self-image concerns among women and men. This study adapts the methods from previous studies in this area, to bring a new angle to the past research on the effects on consumers' self-image to gender portrayals in advertising images. Overall the data showed that gender was not a significant variable and that both the men and women reacted in a similar manner to the manipulation (the advertising images) than previous research suggests. Previous research

suggested that women had a significantly greater negative reaction to self-image concerns than men.

The implications from the thin ideal and strong ideal results could mean that the ideals may not be the same as previous research suggests, or similar to Thompson and Fletcher's (2005) study, that the participants believe the ideals are unattainable or unrealistic to achieve. Also, because the data was analyzed for each gender responding on their own gender, they may not answer as accurately as if they were asked about the gender they were attracted to. For example, a heterosexual male may not believe that "men are more attractive when they have strong bodies" but a female may believe that. Future research could look at reactions across genders, instead of the self-image angle this study took.

Reed's Physical Appearance had results showing that with both men and women, the post-test responses were slightly higher than the pre-test responses showing that their attitude and anxiety toward their self-image and level of attractiveness became higher. Overall these numbers show that both genders felt less beautiful, attractive, confident and happy after viewing the images, although there was not a significant difference found. The overall mean of the scores were low for both genders, meaning the participants may not have had body image anxiety to begin with. The implications from these results show that women had higher physical appearance anxiety than men. Another point is that this generation may not have body image concerns, or may be less likely to express their self-image concerns than previous research suggested. A bigger sample is needed to develop further implications from this data.

This data shows that when asked about body shape, both genders in general did not change their responses to the questions addressing their concern over their body shape and being

overweight after viewing the images. Both genders had high numbers in this category, therefore showing that they expressed high concern for body shape and being overweight. Again, women had higher numbers than men.

The results from the Thompson Socio-Cultural Appearance scale show that when asked about comparing their bodies to models they see in ads, and if they'd like to look more like the models they see in ads, both genders had a slight increase in their response after viewing the advertising images (the manipulation). This is consistent with prior research (Richins, 1991; Tsai & Chang, 2007). In other words, they were more likely to answer toward agree and strongly agree after seeing the images in the present experiment, although the data proved this was not significant. Both genders wanted to look like the images, but not as strongly as previous research suggested. Women's numbers were higher in this category than men.

The manipulation check results show that both males and females believed that the images were indeed attractive, beautiful and represented what they wanted to look like. The images they wanted to look like were shaped by a social context as Derenne and Beresin (2006) suggested. The responses from females were higher than for men. The images used in the present study were not as strong as anticipated with the pre-test for the images. The implications from this data could be that the images need to be stronger in future research. There is also a possibility that images do not matter as much as previous research suggested. The participants could also believe that the images were unrealistic or unattainable.

Mill's Consumer Response scale's results showed that both genders compare themselves to the images and would like to look like the images, with women responding higher than men.

Again, these numbers are only slightly above the neutral response, and future research could test different images that could portray different results.

The findings in the present study suggest that both men and women react similarly, with less of a disparity, when responding to questions on their self-image after viewing gender portrayals in advertising images. The mean for the responses from women were *slightly* higher than for men, versus significantly higher as previous research suggested. Women were more likely to “agree” with the statements on the questionnaire, stating that they were less confident with their appearance, less likely to feel they were beautiful, more likely to feel anxious about their bodies, etc. when compared to the means of the men in this experiment.

The data showed that the increase in the numbers from pre-test to post-test was not statistically significant, but did show a steady increase from pre-test to post-test responses for both genders on multiple scales (Thompson's Socio-Cultural Appearance scale and Reed's Physical Appearance scale). This suggests, on these scales, that there is a slight increase in negative self-image attitude and anxiety for both genders after viewing advertising images of their gender. These findings are consistent with prior research (Dittmar, Halliwell & Stirling, 2009; Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008; Harper & Tiggeman, 2008; McCray, 2004).

The implications of these findings are substantial. When deciding to conduct the current research, it was expected that images mattered. The findings suggest that it is possible that they do not matter and that consumers do not react to what they see in advertisements in a negative way. It's possible that the images seen in advertising are known to be unattainable and unrealistic, therefore no longer having a negative effect on the consumer. The current research is much more complex than anticipated, and implies that further research is necessary to understand

the variables behind consumer response to advertising imagery.

The current study brought a new angle to a well-researched topic in Communication. By looking at men's reactions to advertising images as the stimulus, along with women who have been studied for years, a procedure was developed to include men. The present study facilitates a new enthusiasm for future research.

Conclusion

The present study proved to be less statistically significant than anticipated as the numerical increases from pre-test to post-test responses were not significant with the sample chosen. Inconsistent with early research of college-aged males, the present findings suggest that participants did not have strong physical appearance issues or body image anxiety to begin with (Mishkind et al., 1986). Overall, both genders were less confident in physical appearance after seeing the images and women had a slightly higher concern than men. Although the numerical increases suggest these results, the increase was not large enough to be considered statistically significant in this sample.

One limitation of survey research is the inclusiveness of the survey, and since this survey was a convenience sample future research could be conducted to use a survey that would better depict the entire population, instead of college-aged students. Another is that survey research involves self-reported data. The present study attempted to reduce discrepancies by using a 5-point response scale to make the "gaps" more equal for every respondent, by adding an additional page for comments and reactions. Another limitation of the current procedure in this study is the possibility for pretest sensitization and the lack of analyzing data against a control group to test a control group of "normally attractive models", similar to the study conducted by

Tsai & Chang (2007).

The present procedure may hold a sampling, generational, or institutional bias with the current sample. Future research could also utilize focus groups instead of quantitative research to depict individual differences when responding to the images and to discover the causes of the reactions. Vital to this study was the choice of images that would represent what is beautiful and attractive for each gender. The use of a different amount or type of images could be used to analyze different responses, or could test the effectiveness of the models used in the advertisement to sell the product. The images should be pre-tested for the study to determine if what was once ideal for each gender has indeed changed.

The images, or the manipulation in the present experiment, did not work as strongly as anticipated to document the effects on body image. The images were effective in catching the eye of the audience, and selling the product. The results of the present study suggest that both genders indeed want to look like the models in the images that were shown in the study, but stronger and more effective images would have resulted in better statistical data. Both genders did not agree with the gender ideals that previous research suggested for each gender. The strong ideal and thin ideal were not seen as ideals in the present research with the current sample.

Given that the average person views 5,000 ads per day (Story, 2007), the negative effects of advertising images of gender on women and men remain a cause for concern. The questions and implications brought about from the present study raise further questions that can be researched in the future. Future research should look at the broader population, should not use a convenience sample, and should use more participants to ensure a greater representation of the population. Research could also aim to study different types of media to understand each

medium's use of advertising images and its influence on consumers' self-image. It is important to extend our knowledge of male and female responses to advertising images of gender and to further explore self-image. Understanding consumer responses, for both genders, for example may help marketers to better understand the effectiveness of the images they choose for their advertisements.

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Appendix A

SURVEY 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please answer all statements.

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about yourself. (1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree). Circle one number for each statement's response.

Advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and 'being attractive'	1	2	3	4	5
I question if I am beautiful	1	2	3	4	5
I do not believe I am attractive	1	2	3	4	5
I am not confident with my appearance	1	2	3	4	5
I am not happy with my appearance	1	2	3	4	5
I feel anxious, tense or nervous about my body	1	2	3	4	5
I am worried about my body shape	1	2	3	4	5
I am worried about being overweight	1	2	3	4	5
I compare my bodies to the models I see in advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
I would like my body to look more like the models who appear in advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
Females are more attractive when wearing makeup	1	2	3	4	5
Males should be muscular and generally stronger than females	1	2	3	4	5
Females are more attractive when they wear revealing clothes	1	2	3	4	5
Males are more attractive when they wear tight clothes	1	2	3	4	5
Females are more attractive when they have	1	2	3	4	5

thin, toned bodies

Males are more attractive when they are well groomed 1 2 3 4 5

SURVEY TWO

1. After viewing the images, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= neutral/ neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree). Circle the one number for each statement's response.

Advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and 'being attractive' 1 2 3 4 5

I question if I am beautiful 1 2 3 4 5

I do not believe I am attractive 1 2 3 4 5

I am not confident with my appearance 1 2 3 4 5

I am not happy with my appearance 1 2 3 4 5

I feel anxious, tense or nervous about my body 1 2 3 4 5

I am worried about my body shape 1 2 3 4 5

I am worried about being overweight 1 2 3 4 5

I compare my bodies to the models I see in advertisements 1 2 3 4 5

I would like my body to look more like the models who appear in advertisements 1 2 3 4 5

Females are more attractive when wearing makeup 1 2 3 4 5

Males should be muscular and generally stronger than females 1 2 3 4 5

Females are more attractive when they wear revealing clothes 1 2 3 4 5

Males are more attractive when they wear tight clothes 1 2 3 4 5

Females are more attractive when they have thin, toned bodies 1 2 3 4 5

Males are more attractive when they are well groomed 1 2 3 4 5

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about what you saw in the images (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral/neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5=strongly agree). Circle the one number for each statement's response.

I feel that...

The women/men in the images were attractive 1 2 3 4 5

The women/men in the images were beautiful 1 2 3 4 5

I compare my body to the models I see in the advertisements 1 2 3 4 5

I would like my body to look like the men/women in the advertisements 1 2 3 4 5

I would be more confident if I looked like the women/men that I saw in the advertisements 1 2 3 4 5

If I saw images in a magazine that were similar to those I just saw, they would catch my eye 1 2 3 4 5

Images such as those used in the advertisements you just saw are effective in selling the products. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Please tell me about yourself:

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age: _____

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B**Email to Survey Respondents**

Subject heading: 1/10 chance to win \$50 VISA gift card!

My name is Rebecca Delaney in the CMT graduate program and I am conducting research on people's responses to advertisements. You are one of a small number of college students whose thoughts I would like on such matters, and your responses will help contribute to Communication research in this area.

You will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 VISA gift card that you can use anywhere you want. There will be 3 gift cards given away, so you will have a 1 in 10 chance of winning! What do I need from you? Less than 45 minutes of your time, and it's right on campus in a computer lab. Just press reply to this email to participate! First come, first serve. Up to 30 people.

A bit more about what you'll be asked. First, you will be to report on some statements about yourself and your views on your own body image, as well as your perception of beauty in "Part 1" of a survey in a computer lab at RIT. You will then view images of your gender. There will be a 15-minute break, before you will complete "Part 2" of the survey, which will inquire about your feelings after viewing images of beauty, and your perception of your body image after seeing these images

You are assured complete confidentiality when participating in this study; you will not be required to speak out loud, and will only enter information into the computer survey; your name will never appear on the survey form or in the results, and I as the project director will be the only individual with access to your results.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions posed in the survey and participation in the survey is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any point. Should you experience any discomfort as a result of participating in this study please contact the counseling center at 585-475-2261, located on the second floor of the August Center (Bldg. 23A).

If you wish to find out the results of this study, please simply reply to this email and I will be sure to contact you when the results are analyzed. Should you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them, so please email me rad2305@rit.edu.

Thank you for your time and assistance,

Rebecca Delaney
Project Director
Candidate for M.S. Communication and Media Technology
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, NY 14623

Appendix C**Consent Form**

Experiment Date: Monday, October 10, 2011

Time: 12:00 p.m. (noon) - 12:30 p.m.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research on people's responses to advertisements. You are one of a small number of college students whose thoughts I would like on such matters, and your responses will help contribute to Communication research in this area.

Participation will consist of two parts. "Part 1" will ask you to report on statements about your feelings on your own body image, statements covering beauty and appearance, and your perception of your own beauty. You will use a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree to respond to the questions. After the survey you will view advertising images of your gender.

You will then complete "Part 2" of the survey. Part 2 will inquire about your feelings toward your body image and your perception and responses to the advertising images viewed in Part I. You will also use that same scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Please remember, you are assured complete confidentiality when participating in this study; you will not be required to speak out loud, and will only enter information into the computer survey; your name will never appear on the survey form or in the results, and I as the project director will be the only individual with access to your results.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions posed in the survey and participation in the survey is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any point. Should you experience any discomfort as a result of participating in this study please contact the counseling center at [585-475-2261](tel:585-475-2261), located on the second floor of the August Center (Bldg. 23A).

If you wish to find out the results of this study, please contact me at any time and I will be sure to contact you when the results are analyzed. Should you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them, please email me at rad2305@rit.edu or rdelaney11@gmail.com.

Please sign this consent form and return to me at 12:00 noon on Monday. Should you choose not to complete this form, you will not be able to participate in the study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Appendix D**Tables**

Table D1

Gender Ideals	Male “Strong”	Female “Thin”
Mean	2.97	2.91

Table D2

Reed’s Scale	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
Male	2.43	.78	2.45	.97	(t(19) = -.709, p > .05)
Female	2.82	.97	2.9	1.16	(t(19) = -.709, p > .05)

Table D3

McCray’s Scale	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
Male	3.96	1.88	3.7	1.4	(t(11) = .702, p > .05)
Female	4.73	1.9	4.7	2.1	(t(19) = .119, p > .05)

Table D4

Thompson's Scale	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
Male	2.69	1.16	2.8	.95	(t(11) = -.561, p > .05)
Female	3.27	.98	3.4	1.10	(t(19) = -.748, p > .05)

Table D5

Manipulation Check	Male	Female
Mean	3.36	3.59

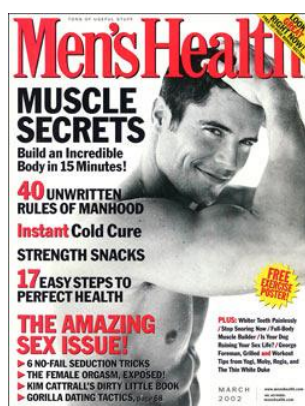
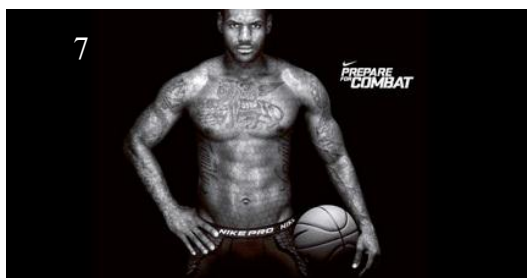
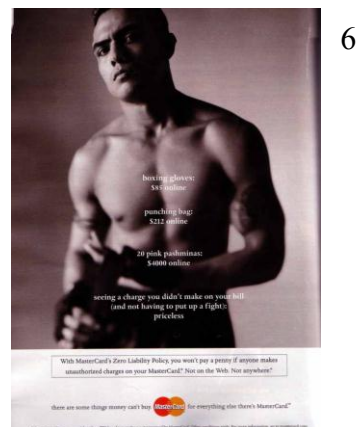
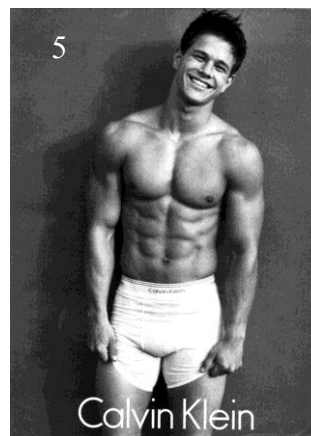
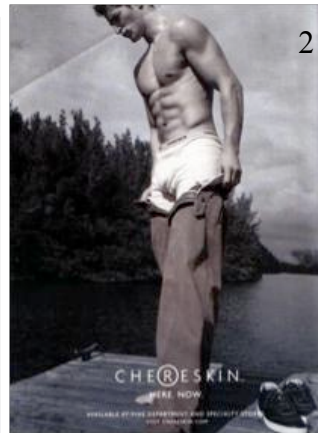
Table D6

Mill's Scale	Male	Female
Mean	3.42	3.75

Appendix E

Images

Men



Women

