2005

A content analysis of body images of female models in YM Magazine from 1976-2004

Anna Simon Matthai
San Jose State University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.zpgz-348b>
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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BODY IMAGES OF FEMALE MODELS IN YM
MAGAZINE FROM 1976-2004

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Anna Simon Matthai

May 2005

UMI Number: 1427164

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APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS
COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Cecelia Baldwin

Dr. Bill Tillinghast

Dr. Mark Wu

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BODY IMAGES OF FEMALE MODELS IN YM MAGAZINE FROM 1976-2004

by Anna Simon Matthai

This study examined the body image portrayals of female models featured in advertisements in YM – a magazine targeted at teenage girls. This study compared the models in advertisements from this magazine from 1976 to 2004.

This study found that there has been an increase in the number of ultra-thin portrayals of females in magazine advertisements over a quarter of a century. Another trend observed was that the standard for what is considered thin has only become thinner as the proportion of models considered ultra-thin is significantly higher than such portrayals in the 1970's and 1980's. This study revealed that though there were some positive changes, the overwhelming majority of body image portrayals were still unattainable for the average teenager. There may be more diversity in the roles that women are portrayed in advertising but the same diversity is not reflected in body image portrayals.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Advertising is an important part of our lives in a consumer-oriented society. It is estimated that the average American views around 3000 advertisements in one day (Kilbourne, 1999; Gardner, 1999). Teenagers are the targets of much of this relentless advertising blitz, as they constitute a market with great potential. A report in *Media Post* quoting figures from the Magazine Publishers Association points to this segment's market size and purchasing power. Between 1999 and 2000, the number of teens increased 17 percent to 32 million. The report also noted that teens were powerful consumers in their own right and played a crucial role as influencers in the purchase of household items. As a group, teenagers spent \$112.5 billion in 2003. Older teenagers had significant amounts of discretionary income (Shields, 2004). Kilbourne (1999) noted that teenagers were an extremely desirable segment to advertisers because they developed brand loyalties that lasted a lifetime. In the book *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls must fight the addictive power of advertising*, Kilbourne (1999) noted that teenage girls spent over \$4 billion annually on cosmetics.

Teenagers trust the advertisements in magazines targeted to them more than advertisements in any other media –29 percent of teens trust advertisements in teen magazines versus 22 percent for radio or television (Shields, 2004). The images in these advertisements are often idealized representations. This is especially true of the

representation of the female form and adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to these portrayals in advertisements (Kilbourne, 1999).

Research has looked into the relationship between the impact of advertising images on self-esteem and self-image (Richins, 1991; Martin & Gentry, 1997). The unrealistic image sets a standard that many women aspire to. In a study it was found that even women who fall within the normal weight range perceive themselves as being too fat and diet to attain the unreasonable ideal set by the images in the media (Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994). An analysis of the figures of models in advertisements showed that models have become much thinner. Sex symbols like Marilyn Monroe would be considered fat by today's standards. The body type portrayed in advertisements is much thinner than the average woman and is one that excludes 95 percent of women (Myers & Biocca, 1992; Kilbourne, 1999).

Research has determined that female college students and adolescents compared their physical attractiveness to those of models in advertisements (Richins, 1991; Martin & Gentry, 1997; Crouch & Degelman, 1998). Some of these studies found that advertisements using attractive models adversely affected the self-attractiveness ratings of female adolescents (Crouch & Degelman, 1998). This was especially true for older adolescents. Martin and Gentry (1997) explained this difference between older and younger adolescents by using Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory proposed that human beings have the tendency to evaluate their opinions and abilities by evaluating themselves with others who were similar. In this context, it becomes important to analyze the body image and age of

models in advertisements in publications targeted to the respective demographic segments.

The media plays an important role in the socialization process for adolescents and is part of the sub-culture that encourages a thin ideal (Dunkley, Wertheim, & Susan, 2001). Advertisements in magazines for weight loss products and methods have been found to be important influences for adolescents in determining how to attain a good body. Kilbourne (1999) noted that the diet industry primarily depends on women being dissatisfied with their bodies. Since magazines and advertisements in them are important sources of information to adolescents, it is important to analyze and understand them.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, the researcher examined the body image of female models in advertisements in YM – a magazine targeted at teenage girls. This research aimed to add to the existing body of work in this area (Napoli, Murgolo-Poore, & Boudville, 2003). The researcher compared the models in advertisements from this magazine from 1976-2004. The researcher attempted to understand if there is potential for Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis to work by analyzing the age of the female models in the advertisements in the chosen publication. This will help in understanding if adolescents can relate to the models in the advertisements. An important dimension to understanding the effect that body image of models in advertisements has on teenagers is examining the advertisements for diet/weight loss products and cosmetics. The researcher examined body image as a function of the product types.

The object of this study is to provide advertisers, educators, and consumers with information about how the portrayal of the female body image has changed over the period of two decades. Most research in this area suggests media literacy and media education are essential for teenagers to comprehend these images and prevent them from being adversely affected by them (Eden and McCormick, 2000; Dunkley et al., 2000; Martin & Gentry, 1997).

In their study Napoli et al. (2003) noted that the feminist movement had resulted in the portrayal of women in more diverse, non-traditional roles in advertising. This study examines if that progress is also reflected in the body image portrayals of models in teenage magazines.

A study of teen magazines in Australia showed that the models in advertisements were all thin and athletic. They also showed that the age of the models corresponded with the target group (Napoli et al., 2003). If this study replicates these findings across the years under consideration it would indicate that unrealistic advertisements are prevalent in today's advertising and it is essential to design media literacy programs to help adolescents comprehend these messages.

Significance and Value of the Study

Adolescents are especially vulnerable to advertising as it is the time when self-concepts and identities are in the process of being formed (Kilbourne, 1999). Research also shows that visual information becomes the central message for adolescents (Eden & McCormick, 2000). This study attempted to examine the physical image of female models in advertisements in magazines targeted at teenage girls. The dimensions of

physical image that were analyzed were body shape, age, and attire/clothing. It is important to analyze and understand the images in these advertisements as they influence teenage girls in the development of their self-images. The study aimed to examine if there has been a change in these dimensions from 1976 to 2004. It is also important to analyze the number of advertisements for diet products and cosmetics as these are purported to be solutions and methods to attain the thin stereotype. The study attempted to show that there has been an increase in the use of thin models and that there are more advertisements for diet products. The results can be used by educators and advertisers to understand past and present body image portrayals of women in advertisements in the selected magazine and in other magazines in this genre.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Advertising is an integral part of our lives in a consumer-oriented society. The images in these advertisements are often idealized representations. This is especially true of the representation of the female form. Most of the portrayals are of unrealistically thin women. Today's ideals are even more difficult to attain because computer technology has made the ideal a composite of features from different models –not a real woman (Gardner, 1999). Advertisements have always offered stereotypical images of women, but perhaps the most dangerous stereotype is that of the super thin woman with the unattainable figure. Studies have shown that this stereotype is so pervasive, that women do not even see it as dangerous or unreasonable (Gustafson, 1999). The effect of the idealized body image in advertising is especially harmful to female pre-adolescents and adolescents. Research has found unrealistic media portrayals of women to be one of the causes contributing to eating disorders like anorexia in women (Myers & Biocca, 1992).

This literature review will explore some of the research in this field. It will look at studies that show the processes through which adolescents process advertisements, the effect of comparisons with attractive models featured in advertisements on body image of females, links between the images in the media and body image distortions, cultural differences in responses to comparisons with models in advertising, and a brief review of some of the studies that have explored female body images in advertising. Based on the literature review, the paper proposes a study to research the questions that emerged from the analysis of the literature review.

Adolescents and the Processing of Advertisements

Eden and McCormick (2000) noted that advertising was a pervasive force in a consumer-oriented society. Studies have shown that the average American is exposed to more than 3000 advertisements a day (Gardner, 1999). Critics have noted that advertisements attempted to present consumers with an idea of perfection and this is evidenced in the problem-solution format of many advertisements. Shields (2002) and Richins (1991) noted that advertisements worked on the hope it offered to consumers to move closer to the ideal by the purchase of an item. Shields (2002) wrote that advertising offered consumers a picture of an ideal situation and made a consumer realize that she or he could improve herself or himself with the acquisition of a product. She noted that advertising worked as one of the instruments of socialization and has played an important role in perpetuating stereotypes in gender roles (Shields, 2002).

Rouner, Slater, and Rodriguez (2003) noted that advertisers were using technologically sophisticated methods to present the ideal lifestyle. Shields (2002) noted that a pervasive image in advertising was of the perfect female body. Adolescents are the targets of a lot of advertising. This section will explore some aspects relating to how adolescents process advertisements.

In a study of how junior high and senior high students processed print advertisements, Eden and McCormick (2000) found that many adolescents were not able to identify the central theme or claim of the advertisement. The authors suggested that the visual information was becoming the central message. In the light of these findings, the authors expressed the need for more media literacy programs. Eden and McCormick

(2000) also noted a gender difference, as female students were able to detect the explicit claim of the advertisement more often than male students. Rouner et al. (2003) who studied how adolescents evaluated gender roles and sexual imagery in beer commercials also found that female students paid more attention to the central theme of the advertisement. However, they also noted that male and female students in their sample challenged product claims and the gender roles portrayed in the advertisements. This was especially true of female portrayals (Rouner et al., 2003).

Eden and McCormick (2000) found that visual images in advertising facilitated better memory. They also noted that students who were more involved in processing the advertisement i.e. students in the high elaboration processing condition involved in the evaluation of the stimuli, remembered more details from the advertisements. They found a gender difference in that females tended to remember more details than males. This finding was consistent with what Rouner et al. (2003) found in their study. Both studies also noted that emotional responses to advertising from female respondents were stronger than male emotional responses to advertising.

Rouner et al. (2003) also noted that female students made more comments about sexist and sexual content in beer advertisements. This could be attributed to the fact that females made a greater number of inferences from advertisements and were more comprehensive processors of information. Eden and McCormick (2000) also noted that females made a larger number of inferences when the stimuli were visual in nature. This fact is especially important in the light of the very unrealistic images prevalent in today's advertising.

The Body Project –Body Image Portrayals Over Time

Beauty standards and the ideal body type have always been different. Lanneau (1999) noted that when food was scarce a heavier woman was considered attractive, as the heavier body type indicated health and prosperity. As time progressed, that standard did not hold and a plump body was not a sign of status. Dixon, Kary, and Maccarone (1999) noted that the 1850's saw the arrival of women's magazines such as Ladies' Magazine and Godey's Lady's Book. It was also during this time that mass manufacturing and marketing led to the appearance of standardized sizes. In the 1890's the stage actress Lillian Russell was considered an ideal beauty and she weighed about 200 pounds. The authors noted that she had a flamboyant personality and was known for her love of jewelry.

Brumberg (1998) noted that a woman's weight was not considered an important part of her identity till around the 1920's. Around this time, the book "*Diet and Health with a Key to Calories*" by Dr. Lulu Hunt Peters became a national best seller (Dixon et al. 1999). In the early twentieth century, French fashion designer Paul Poiret developed the flapper look. The flapper look had straight lines and short skirts and it required a flat chest. This look replaced the Victorian hourglass ideal of a slim waist and broad hips. The dresses that exposed the arms and legs led to greater consciousness about the body. Most women of the day engaged in slimming or what we know today as dieting to achieve the ideal figure. Advice on becoming slim was generally targeted at adult women though college girls and high school girls also engaged in the practice of controlling their weight –giving rise to what Brumberg (1998) titled the 'Century of

Svelte.’ The 1920’s were also when tobacco companies like Virginia Slims and Lucky Strike targeted women and suggested that smoking could help in controlling weight. The increased consciousness about body weight could also be attributed to the arrival of weighing scales in American homes. Till 1920, women could weigh themselves only at the county fair or the drug store. Brumberg (1998) noted that the home scale becoming more common in American homes could have been the cause of an increase in the dieting or slimming trend. 1920 was also the year American women won the right to vote. The 1940’s and the world war saw the introduction of women into the workforce.

Dixon et al. (1999) noted that the 1950’s saw the focus shift from a woman’s weight to her breasts. Marilyn Monroe epitomized the standard of the ideal figure for this age. Brumberg (1998) noted that the ideal female figure from the 1950’s required full pointed breasts and long legs. The prevailing belief about weight was that it was psychological problem for girls as young as six years and parents were provided with advice about how to help their daughters deal with the ridicule that a fat girl may face. Advertisements for styles that helped girls look thinner were also popular. An advertisement in a 1958 issue of Life magazine is for a clothing line called Chubbettes and asks the reader “How happy can a chubby girl be” (Brumberg, 1998). The late 1950’s also saw the approval of drugs and supplements to help speed weight loss. Phentermine was an appetite suppressant that was approved by the Federal Drug Administration in 1959 (Dixon et al. 1999).

The 1960’s were a time of tremendous importance for the women’s movement in America. The year 1963 saw the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan

–the book that was instrumental in the modern American woman’s movement. Dixon et al. (1999) noted that in 1965 the average fashion model weighed about eight percent less than the average American woman. This can be contrasted with the similar statistics for the year 1987 when the average model weighed 23 percent less than the average American woman. This only goes to show that the standard for what is considered thin is only becoming thinner and more unattainable for the average woman. Lanneau (1999) noted that actuarial statistics published in 1979 showed that the average female weight for the population has increased from 1965 to 1987. The shift to the thinner models began with the arrival of British fashion model, Twiggy who was five feet seven inches tall and weighed only 91 pounds.

Dixon et al. (1999) noted that in the 1970’s the toned look became more popular and it was a trend that continued into the 1980’s. Jane Fonda’s *Workout Book* epitomized the fitness craze of the time. The new ideal demanded more control and more work to achieve the ideal figure. Brumberg (1998) noted that companies like Proctor and Gamble capitalized on this trend by marketing products such as Secret deodorant. The advertisements portray young women in athletic poses and aimed to make a connection between the product and the ideal female body. The 1980’s also saw the arrival of surgical procedures such as liposuction. The 1980’s marked the beginning of public consciousness about eating disorders such as anorexia when the singer Karen Carpenter died from the disease at the age of 32. The authors also noted that there had been a marked increase in the number of women diagnosed with eating disorders. In 1995, the United States Centers for Disease Control estimated that about 11 million women

suffered from eating disorders of various kinds. What was also especially alarming about the 1990's is that dieting had become a way of life for most adolescent girls in the pursuit of the ideal figure (Brumberg, 1998).

Dixon et al. (1999) noted that in the early 1990's a look known as heroin chic was prevalent. Popularized by models like Kate Moss, the ultra-thin, strung out appearance dominated runways till early 1998. Brumberg (1998) noted that the advertisements that featured this look as the ideal also pressurized women to mimic the look. Brumberg (1998) noted that the heroin chic look suggested that the ultra-thin and emaciated look was desirable. The look was gradually replaced by a more active look – but the urge to be thin still prevailed among American women.

Thin is in – Prevalent Images in Today's Media

Shields (2002) noted that the mass media played a vital role in reflecting idealized bodies. She wrote that in the 20th century the ideal had changed from the flat- chested body of the 1920's, to the hourglass figure of the 1950's, to the waif-like look of the 1970's, to the muscular, tanned, aerobicized body of the first decade of the 21st century (Shields, 2002).

A representation of these ideal types has been found in advertisements through the ages. Critics have complained about the one-dimensional portrayal of women in present-day advertising. The availability of computer technology to alter pictures has meant that the ideal has become more difficult to achieve. The ideal had always been difficult to achieve but the presence of computer technology made it practically unattainable as in many advertisements the model is a composite (Gardner, 1999). Gardner (1999) also

noted that the growing focus on individual body parts had led to a rise in eating disorders and lower self-esteem. Dunkley et al. (2001) noted that the mass media was one of the socio-cultural agents that created body dissatisfaction in young girls. An analysis of young adult literature led Young (2003) to note that in these novels, thinner women were depicted as being more powerful and in control, while larger women were depicted as being sexually passive and irresponsible.

Kilbourne (1999) explored some of the economic reasons behind the thin portrayals in the media. By presenting an unachievable ideal of beauty, the diet and cosmetic industries assure themselves of growth and profit. In her analysis, Kilbourne (1999) found that women who were insecure about their bodies were more likely to buy diet products.

The danger of the thin stereotype was demonstrated in a study conducted by researchers at Ball State University and Brigham Young University. Gustafson (1999) noted that young women exposed to several stereotypical images did not find the stereotype of the ultra-thin woman harmful. Their findings supported the notion that women were accustomed to seeing ultra-thin models and did not perceive the danger in this stereotypical portrayal of beauty and success (Gustafson, 1999).

Advertising has been vilified for upholding--perhaps even creating--the emaciated standards of beauty by which girls are taught from childhood to judge the worth of their bodies. Ethnographic interviews of junior and senior high school girls found the ideal girl resembles Barbie: 5 feet 6 inches, 110 pounds, a size 5, and eats whatever she wants and never gains weight (Stephens et al., 1994). Brumberg (1998) also noted that in 1995

the middle class white girl defined perfection as being five feet seven inches and 110 pounds. Researchers who worked with a computer model of a woman with proportions like the Barbie doll found that her back would be too weak to support the weight of her upper body and that her body was too narrow to contain a full liver. In other words, the ideal that young girls aspire to be is not one that real women can achieve.

Dixon et al. (1999) noted that fashion magazines deliberately promoted fantasy. They noted that it was a well-known fact that the average woman would not be able to attain the clothes or the figure. They also noted that though magazines talk about the dangers of eating disorders and the importance of a healthy lifestyle, the message to achieve the ideal figure was very much embedded in the advertising. The authors also noted that the total blame was not on the magazines as readers also needed to realize that models in fashion magazines were not the norm.

Epel, Spanakos, Bradley, and Brownell (1995) conducted a content analysis of personal advertisements in newspapers to determine body shape ideals across gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and age. The researchers noted that for women their advertised weights conformed to the thin ideal across all the groups surveyed. Epel et al. (1995) also noted that the frequent omission of body weight from the advertisements could have indicated that these women were dissatisfied with their body weight.

Myers and Biocca (1992) noted that television portrayals often depicted an unrealistic body image. They noted that the media advertised the positive attributes of an ideal body image that was thinner than the average woman. Research has found that

more than 75 percent of the female characters on television programs are underweight and those that are overweight were more likely to receive negative comments about their weight. Myers and Biocca (1992) also noted that it would be reasonable to conclude that body image messages from the media could have an impact on a young woman's mind.

Impact of Advertising on Body Image of Adolescents

Richins (1991) conducted a study to determine if female college students compared their physical attractiveness to models in advertisements. Richins (1991) used the framework of the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) for her study. This framework had also been used in studies by Martin and Gentry (1997). Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory proposed that human beings had the tendency to evaluate their opinions and abilities by evaluating themselves with others who were similar. Richins (1991) used this theory to show that comparisons may occur in the evaluation of traits like personal appearance.

Richins (1991) noted that female students compared their physical appearance to models in advertisements. The findings from the focus groups indicated that these comparisons were both general and specific. General comparisons were articulated in the following way –“Wow, I'd sure like to look like that.” (Richins, 1991, p. 75). Specific comparisons related to references to body parts like the arms or the hips. Martin and Kennedy (1993) studied the response of female adolescents and pre-adolescents to advertising and found that this group also compared their physical attractiveness to those of models in advertisements. Martin and Kennedy's (1993) research also revealed that the tendency of adolescents to compare themselves to models in advertising increased

with age. The authors noted that this occurred because of the increased importance of social comparisons and the emphasis placed on being physically attractive for older adolescents (Martin and Kennedy, 1993). This study was an extension of Richins (1991) research.

Richins (1991) also noted that exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness lowered satisfaction with own physical appearance. She also noted that those who were dissatisfied with their own appearance compared themselves more frequently to the models in advertisements. This finding was also reported with regard to pre-adolescents and adolescents in Martin and Kennedy's (1993) study.

Richins (1991) noted that exposure to perfect images in advertising also led to female viewers temporarily raising their own standards of physical attractiveness for the purpose of comparison. Martin and Kennedy's (1993) research also revealed the same finding for the older adolescents in the study.

In her study, Richins (1991) had hypothesized that exposure to highly attractive models would temporarily lower college students' self-perception of physical attractiveness. This hypothesis was not supported by her findings. Richins (1991) explained this phenomenon by noting that by late adolescence exposure to very attractive models was "old news" and therefore did not influence self-perception. She also noted the possibility that college age students were sufficiently dissatisfied with their body images and therefore the advertisement had no effect. Martin and Kennedy (1993) also noted that their findings did not support the hypothesis that self-perceptions of physical attractiveness would be influenced by comparison with attractive models in advertising.

They attributed this finding to the fact that the models in the advertisements were not similar to their research subjects. Martin and Kennedy (1993) used Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis to explain their findings.

Contrary to these findings, a study by Crouch and Degelman (1998) found that advertisements using attractive female models affected the self-attractiveness ratings of female adolescents. This study took into account how the characteristics of attractive models affected self-ratings of attractiveness. Participants in this study were exposed to 2 sets of stimuli –one with thin models and the other with over- weight models. The ratings for self-attractiveness were higher for the group that viewed the over-weight models.

The Influence of Media and other Mediating Factors in Influencing Body Image Perceptions

Thomsen (2002) noted that exposure to thin ideal images in women's magazines was associated with heightened concerns for body shape and size in a number of young women, although the media's role in the body image disturbance was mediated by personality and socio cultural factors. Thomsen (2002) noted that the media's role in the process was mediated by additional factors like personality and temperament, emotional distress, endorsement of traditional gender roles, and low self-esteem. The researcher used data from a survey of 340 women between the ages of 18 and 25 years. His study found that beliefs about men's expectations for female thinness, and expected weight gain or loss in five years were factors that could mediate the relationship between reading women's magazines and body shape and size concerns. Thomsen (2002) also noted that the reading of beauty and fashion magazines was linked to body shape concerns only

indirectly via beliefs about men's thinness expectations. The study also noted that women's magazines promoted a consumption-based culture by encouraging readers to fantasize about the creation of an ideal or perfect self.

Cusumano and Thomson (1997) studied three aspects of the mediating effects that affect the influence of magazines - media exposure, awareness of societal ideals, and internalization of socio cultural messages. The study used the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire to assess awareness of societal pressures regarding the thin appearance and internalization of these messages. The study revealed that social pressures and internalization of social standards of the thin appearance influenced the effect media portrayals had on body dissatisfaction, eating dysfunction, and self-esteem of college age women. Cusumano and Thomson (1997) used the socio cultural model that said that social pressures were the driving forces behind an individual's need to conform to social standards. The results were consistent with Cusumano (1997) who found that internalization of the thin ideal played an important role in the effect that body image portrayals had on self-esteem of young women.

A study by Thornton and Maurice (1997) showed that when exposed to photographs of thin models, women displayed decreased self-esteem and increased self-consciousness, social physique anxiety, and body dissatisfaction. This study also noted that women who had a low regard for an attractiveness ideal had greater self-esteem and less physical anxiety when exposed to the idealized photographs when compared with women who had a higher adherence to the attractiveness ideal. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the studies of Cusumano (1997).

The result of the studies mentioned in this section was also validated by a qualitative study done by Goodman (2002). The focus groups found that women were affected by the thin models portrayed in advertising, even when they knew that the portrayals were not realistic. All the women in the focus groups acknowledged the socializing effect of media. Many of the women also felt that being thinner meant that their career and social prospects were better. The women's muscular body ideal matched one of the mediated ideals, but they criticized the sacrifices models made to attain the ideal and the lack of realism in media images.

The Role of Motive for Comparison and Body Image Perception

Martin and Gentry (1997) noted that some of the inconsistencies in the findings of earlier studies could be explained by understanding the role of motives in the comparisons with models in advertising. Martin and Gentry (1997) found that motives played an important role in the changes in self-perceptions of physical attractiveness, body image, and self-esteem.

The authors (Martin and Gentry, 1997) considered 3 motives – self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement. They also noted that when self-evaluation was the primary motive for comparison with models in advertisements it resulted in the lowering of self-perceptions and self-esteem. They also noted that when self-improvement was the primary motive for comparison, self-perceptions of physical attractiveness increased. This finding was consistent with the findings of Myers and Biocca (1992). Myers and Biocca's (1992) study, which exposed female college students to commercials featuring female models with perfect bodies, found that these women felt

thinner than they normally did. Myers and Biocca (1992) noted “the young women who may have imagined themselves in the ideal body imagined themselves in the ideal body presented by the advertising. They may have also bought the ideal female body sold by the advertising” (Myers and Biocca, 1999, p. 127). Martin and Gentry (1997) also noted that self-esteem was higher when girls wanted to improve physical appearance, as there was an anticipation of improvement. The importance of the self-improvement motive was also highlighted in the focus groups in Richins (1991) study. The women who compared themselves to the models in the advertisements expressed more optimism and were not as negatively affected by the comparisons when they felt that they could improve a certain aspect of their appearance (Richins, 1991).

Martin and Gentry (1997) also found that when self-enhancement (an individual’s biased attempt to maintain positive views of him/her to protect self-esteem) was the motive, female pre-adolescents and adolescents tended to discount the model’s beauty. The self-perceptions of those respondents who were motivated by self-enhancement remained unaffected by comparison with the models in advertisements. Martin and Gentry’s (1997) research has implications for educators as they teach children about advertisements. The effect of highly attractive models in determining spokesperson effectiveness is discussed in the next section.

Impact of Highly Attractive Models in Advertisements

This literature review has shown that some women experience negative feelings when comparing themselves with beautiful models in advertisements (Martin and Gentry, 1997; Richins, 1991). Bowers (2001) studied the effect that highly attractive models had

on advertising effectiveness. Bowers (2001) noted that comparisons with very attractive models increased the negative effect. She also noted that negative comparisons were associated with lower evaluations of the model as a spokesperson. For some of the respondents (not a statistically significant number) a highly attractive model negatively influenced perceptions of the product (Bowers, 2001).

Bowers (2001) explained this result by noting that in the second advertisement that she had used in her study, the respondents were able to identify with the product advertised –a hair-coloring product. The respondents may have felt that they could have improved their appearance by the use of this product. To assess the credibility of the highly attractive model the study used a treadmill. The respondents could have found the ideal body more difficult to achieve compared to a change in their hair color. Bowers (2001) felt that this could have been the reason why the findings on effectiveness of the highly attractive model with regard to product claims did not reflect the negative impact of comparison with the highly attractive model. This elasticity or changes in the perception of body image was explored by Myers and Biocca (1992) in their study of the influence of media on the elastic body image.

Images in Advertising and the Impact on Body Image Distortions

Myers and Biocca (1992) noted that the prevalence of the thin body image in the media caused women to overestimate their body sizes and indirectly contributed to increases in eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia. The authors noted that the average young woman saw a fat person when she looked in the mirror. They also noted that the combined effect of all media messages affected the perception of body

images of young women. Myers and Biocca (1992) also noted that the emphasis on physical attributes led to weight loss becoming a way of life for some women. The authors also noted that a woman's body image varied with the context, social factors, and mood (Myers and Biocca, 1992).

A study by Dunkley et al. (2001) also found that the media was one of the socio-cultural factors that were part of the sub-culture that encouraged a thin ideal. The other influences were parents and peers. Dunkley et al. (2001) noted that when female adolescents lived in a sub-culture that encouraged dieting, they were more prone to it. The influence of peers was the strongest factor. Advertisements in magazines and information about weight loss methods were important influences in determining how to attain a good body.

Myers and Biocca (1992) acknowledged the importance of other socio-cultural factors but wrote "in our culture the ideal may be represented most forcefully in the media" (Myers and Biocca, 1992, p. 116). Their study found that women consistently overestimated their body sizes and the effect was more pronounced after exposure to commercial messages, rather than regular television programming. They concluded that body shape perception could be changed by watching less than 30 minutes of television (Myers and Biocca, 1992).

Myers and Biocca (1992) reported that exposure to ideal bodies had a therapeutic effect in that some women pictured themselves in the body image presented in the advertisement and felt a great sense of self-control. The authors also noted that the ideal could have seemed possible for the respondents to attain. However, they also noted that

the initial feeling of euphoria faded away and the respondent then realized that she was left with her own image. This led to feelings of dissatisfaction with their bodies and stimulated the need to engage in behaviors like excessive dieting (Myers and Biocca, 1992).

Differences Across Cultures and Races

Ideals of beauty vary across cultures. For instance, Ford, Honeycutt, and Casey (2001) noted that girlish images were more prevalent in the Japanese version of the teenage magazine *Seventeen*. This was in consonance with the images the Japanese viewed as beautiful. A study by Wan, Faber, and Fung (2003) noted that the ideal body in the United States was toned and sculpted while the ideal Asian body was more slim and delicate. This image was consistent with traditional Asian images of female beauty. This study also noted that women in Hong Kong experienced similar body image dissatisfaction as women in the U. S. The authors noted that this factor could be explained by the growing drive to modernize and consumption patterns becoming more and more like those in America. The authors also noted that this study could be capturing a period of cultural shift, with ideals moving closer to those prevalent in the U. S. The study also showed that women in Hong Kong engaged in dieting but exercising and willingness to get plastic surgery were more prevalent in the U. S. (Wan et al., 2003).

In a study titled *Does race matter? Effects of Idealized images on African American women's perceptions of body esteem*, Frisby (2004) noted that African American women also engaged in social comparisons with models featured in

advertisements. Frisby (2004) noted that her respondents made more comments about the model's physical features than about their self-evaluation. She also noted that self-evaluation did not negatively change mood or satisfaction if the idealized image was from a different background –this study used Caucasian models as one of the stimuli. Her study also confirmed existing research that suggested that African American women had a more positive body image than White women, no matter what their size. However, Frisby (2004) also noted that African American women with low self-esteem were negatively affected by exposure to idealized images of African American models. Frisby's (2004) findings supported Festinger's (1954) hypothesis that people preferred to compare themselves to those who had similar values, attitudes or personality. In this case, African American women did not identify with the Caucasian models but were influenced by African American models featured in advertisements (Frisby, 2004).

Previous Studies

There have been studies that have explored the roles that women play in advertisements. Napoli et al. (2003) noted that the feminist movement was responsible for an increase in consciousness that led to much of this research. Magazine advertisements from the 1960's and 1970's have portrayed women as homemakers who were not part of important decisions. Essentially they were depicted as inferior to men or as sex objects. Women were shown as passive, deferential towards men and sometimes lacking intelligence. Advertising targeted at children reinforced these stereotypes. The advertising industry has responded to these portrayals by depicting women in more positive roles (Napoli et al., 2003). However, there is still a lot to be done. This

literature review has shown that women and especially young girls are influenced by the images in advertising. However, most of the studies in this area have focused on the analysis of gender stereotyping or advertising's effects on the self-concept.

Napoli et al. (2003) did a content analysis of female images in advertising in the Australian editions of *Barbie*, *Girlfriend* and *Dolly*. These magazines target the 5 to 15 year demographic. Their study looked at ethnic and physical attributes of female models in advertisements. Their research found that most portrayals were of unrealistically thin Caucasian models (92% of the models in the advertisements were thin and 6% were classified as average). Their findings showed that advertisements did not reflect the diversity in the population. Napoli et al. (2004) also noted the danger of presenting and reinforcing these stereotypes –given the fact that the target audience is very young it is incumbent upon advertisers to recognize their social responsibility.

Possible Solutions

Many of the articles used in this literature review also suggested interventions that might bring about a change in the images used in advertising. Advertising has social and cultural consequences and it is important to examine methods of positive intervention. Martin and Gentry (1997) raised the issue of advertising ethics and mentioned consumer groups like 'Ban Anorexic Marketing' that attempt to get consumers to boycott products sold by companies that use extremely thin models in their advertising. The authors also emphasized that efforts such as this were serious and must not be dismissed.

Eden and McCormick (2000) stressed the need for advertising literacy. Their study found that adolescents were not able to identify the explicit claim in advertisements.

They emphasized the need to make adolescents better processors of advertising by developing consumer education or media literacy programs that showed adolescents what techniques advertisers used to send open and hidden messages (Eden and McCormick, 2000). Gardner (1999) also noted the need for programs to teach students how to deconstruct and understand media messages.

Shields (2002) noted the existence of magazines like *Mode* that featured bigger women. Shields (2002) noted that unlike mainstream women's magazines, *Mode* ran feature articles on women "who fit the heavier mold" (Shields, 2002, p.161). The advertisements in the magazine also featured heavier women. Shields (2002) made special reference to the advertisement for 'Just My Size Pantyhose', which featured a plus size model.

Dunkley et al. (2001) studied predictors of eating disorders in young girls and emphasized the need to design prevention programs that addressed the importance of socio-cultural agents such as the media, parents, friends, and teachers.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

This literature review gives evidence to show that images in advertising affect the perceptions of body image in female adolescents in many ways. While the research in this area focuses on the effect of the portrayals of female models with unrealistic figures on adolescents, there is very little literature that examines the portrayals themselves. Much of the research in this area has focused on gender stereotyping in advertising, the roles played by women in advertising and comparison across cultures. A study by Napoli et al. (2003) analyzed female images in adolescent magazine advertising in Australia.

This study focused on researching the female images in adolescent advertising in *YM*—a magazine targeted at teenage girls.

Based on the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that female adolescents are influenced by the body images in advertising (Richins, 1991; Martin & Gentry, 1997). However, younger adolescents are less influenced by these portrayals. The researchers who did these studies attributed this to the working of Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis in the social comparison theory. Festinger's (1954) theory assumes that people have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities, and in the absence of an objective basis of comparison, the need to evaluate could be satisfied with a comparison with others like the self. In adolescent females the comparison could be done with models in advertising.

The review also shows that ultra-thin portrayals of female models are increasing and there is the danger of the super thin stereotype becoming more prevalent (Gardner, 1999). As noted earlier, the ideal is becoming one that is harder for the average woman to achieve. In the light of these factors it becomes important to analyze the images prevalent in today's advertising and compare if there has been a change over the decades.

By examining the advertisements that feature female models in *YM* over the years 1976 and 2004 the following hypothesis were tested:

Napoli et al. (2003), Myers & Biocca (1992), and Kilbourne (1992) have illustrated that most of the models used in advertisements are unrealistically thin. An analysis by Stephens et al (1994, p. 139) concluded that the

“...worship of female scrawniness culminates a trend in Americans' collective taste that began in the early 1960s. During the last three decades, fashion models, Miss America pageant contestants, and Playboy centerfolds have grown steadily thinner. Paradoxically, as the standard has thinned, the average weight (in relation to height) of American women under age 30 has actually risen.”

In the light of these factors the following hypothesis was tested:

H1: *Female models used in the advertisements will be thin and there will an increase in the number of such portrayals from the year 1976 to 2004.*

Martin and Kennedy (1997) highlighted the working of Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis when they explained why the body image perceptions of younger teenagers were not adversely affected by exposure to thin models in advertisements. Therefore, it becomes important to study the age of the models in advertisements in magazines targeted at teenage girls. Therefore,

H2: *The female models featured in the advertisements from 1976 and 2004 will be in the same age group as the target audience.*

Dunkley et al. (1992) noted that the media was an important instrument in the socialization of young people. Kilbourne (1992) noted an increasing trend in the number of advertisements for diet products. Stephens et al. (1994) also noted that as the gulf between the cultural norm and the biological reality widened the number of diet aids had increased. They noted that throughout the 1980s, revenues of commercial diet centers grew 18 percent annually, reaching two billion dollars in 1990. They also indicated the need for more research in the immediate future that focused on advertising for thinness-enhancing products and services. Therefore, it is important to study the increase in such advertisements. A number of advertisements in magazines targeted at women and

teenage girls are for cosmetics/beauty products. Given the influence that these magazines have on teenagers (Shields, 2004) it becomes important to study the number of such advertisements. The researcher analyzed the product types as a function of the body type. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H3: *The number of advertisements for cosmetics and diet/weight loss products would have increased from the year 1976 to 2004.*

Chapter III

Method

Selection of the Research Approach

Content analysis was the method of research chosen for this study as the researcher aimed to examine the body images of female models featured in models for the time period under consideration. Content analysis has been defined as “a method of quantitative text analysis in which the researcher categorizes textual units into categories that have been inductively or deductively established” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 420).

The unit of analysis in the study was magazine advertisements featuring women in the selected publications for the years 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2004.

Selection of the Time Period

This content analysis examined the body images of female models in advertisements for the years 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2004. The year 2004 was chosen because it provided a current reference point for the study and the year for which the most recent material was available. A span of three decades is a reasonable time frame to observe changes in society and that is why 1976 was chosen. The year 1976 was chosen because it is representative of the time of the women’s movement. The researcher noted that patterns tended to be consistent across the decades and a three-year time span allowed the researcher to analyze three issues from various points of time in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Further, YM (*Your Magazine*) magazine began publishing under its current name and format in the year 1985.

Selection of the magazine

The magazine chosen for this study was YM. This magazine targets the female teenage demographic. Kilbourne (1999) noted that teenage magazine's often advertised themselves to potential advertisers in the magazine by saying the following: She's the one you want. She's the one we got. She pursues beauty and fashion at every turn. It's more than a magazine. It's her life. The she referred to is a teenage girl.

YM targets readers from the high school age group and has a paid circulation of 2,221,937. It is a monthly magazine and has been published since 1953. The acronym YM stands for Your Magazine. This magazine was known as Young Miss Magazine (until 1985): Young Miss (until 1966) and before that was called Calling All Girls. According to the Ulrich's Periodical Database publication of the magazine with its current name started in 1985. The content of the magazine focuses on fashion, articles about general grooming, trends in music, film/popular culture, features on relationships, and celebrity interviews. The advertisements in this magazine are mostly for clothing, cosmetics, and hair care.

Sampling Method

All issues of YM magazine for the years under consideration were reviewed. The units of analysis for this study were restricted to advertisements that featured female models. Only pictures of real people were analyzed. Advertising copy was not analyzed except for the purposes of determining the kind of product, as one of the research questions was to determine if there had been an increase in the number of advertisements for cosmetics and diet/ weight loss products. The focus was not on advertising copy as

the primary aim of the study was an examination of female body image in advertisements. All advertisements that met the above criteria were analyzed, even if there was duplication. It was important to include all advertisements, including duplicates to facilitate a complete analysis.

Coding Levels and Categories

The study examined print advertisements featuring female models for the years under consideration. The categories for analysis were formulated from the literature review, specifically from two sources –Napoli et al. (2003) and a study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation titled '*A Content Analysis: Reflections of Girls in the Media*'. The researcher did all the coding herself. A second coder coded 10 % of the sample and a Scott's Pi analysis was done.

The categories of analysis for body image were made up of the following dimensions: body shape of central characters, age of central characters in the advertisement, and the attire of characters in the advertisement. The kinds of cosmetic and diet/weight loss products advertised in the magazines were also analyzed. The researcher aimed to study body type as a function of product type.

Body shape

Ultra-thin, Thin, Muscular, Average, Overweight

Age

Less than 5 years, 6-12 years, 13-18 years, 19-34years, 35-50 years, 50 + years

Attire

Casual wear (jeans, casual skirts and pants), business attire, lingerie/sleep wear/swim suits, uniforms, and dressy (evening dresses, gowns etc).

Cosmetics

Lip make up (lipstick, lip gloss, lip liner), eye make up (mascara, eye shadow), foundation/ blush, face and body creams and lotions, nail polishes, hair care products such as shampoos, hair styling gels, hair removal products, perfumes.

Weight loss/diet products

Weight loss/diet pills, advertisements for systems of weight loss like Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig, foods that help with weight loss like Slim Fast line of products, exercise equipment, and gymnasiums.

The detailed coding sheets are provided in the appendix.

Content Analysis Procedure

Before beginning the content analysis for this study, the researcher conducted a training session with the second coder and a pilot test was done to ensure that the coding met the necessary coding reliability. After coding 10% of the sample, Scott's Pi formula was used to calculate inter-coder reliability for all categories coded in the study.

Coder training sessions - The researcher trained a second coder on what advertisements to code and a brief explanation of the coding categories.

Administration of the pilot test - The two coders coded 10% of the sample for the study.

All the issues from the years 1976, 1979 and 1985 were coded.

Results of the Scott's Pi formula - The Scott's Pi formula was used to calculate inter-coder reliability as it takes into account that some agreement between coders occurs because of chance and also covers the number of categories used and probable frequency of use (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). The Scott's Pi showed that inter-coder reliability was in the acceptable range. For such studies, it is recommended that inter-coder reliability should reach at least 80%. The Scott's Pi for this study showed inter-coder reliability of 91%. This is an acceptable level and the researcher was justified in using one coder for the study. It also proved that there was consistency between two independent coders using the same coding instrument.

Statistical Analysis

The percentages of the advertisements that fell into each coding category were determined. A t- test was used to analyze the difference between the time periods under consideration for the magazine. A chi-square test was also done when the data allowed for the use of the test. The researcher found that certain categories were coded at 0, as there were no advertisements that fell into that category. As a result the chi-square analysis could not be done for these categories. To analyze the number of advertisements for cosmetics and weight loss products, percentages and frequencies were used.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Background of the study

This study examined the body image portrayals of female models in advertisements in YM magazine from 1976 to the present. The study focused on issues from 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2004. The study also explored the age of the models featured in the advertisements and their attire. These components were analyzed to help understand if adolescents could relate to the models featured in the advertisements. The data for the time period under consideration was obtained from 492 advertisements featuring female models. The study also looked at the number of advertisements for cosmetics and weight loss/diet products, as it constitutes an important dimension of understanding the effect that the total message of the body image of models in advertisements conveys. The data for this portion of the study was obtained from 959 advertisements for cosmetic/beauty products and 43 advertisements for diet/weight loss products and systems.

It has been shown in the literature review of this study that teenage magazines like YM are an important and influential source of information for their targeted demographic segment – the teenage girl. YM targets readers from the high school age group and has a paid circulation of 2,221,937.

Hypotheses Test

The data to study the first hypothesis came from 492 advertisements from 1976-2004. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the advertisements for the years under study.

Table 1

Distribution of Advertisements in YM Featuring Women/Girls for 1976-2004

Year	No. of ads	% of total
2004	85	17
1997	83	17
1994	84	17
1991	53	11
1988	32	7
1985	65	13
1982	55	11
1979	10	2
1976	25	5
2004-1976	492	100

The table illustrates that there has been an increase in the number of advertisements in YM that featured female models from 1976-2004. This trend reflects the increase in the number of advertisements in magazines for the time period under consideration.

H1: Female models used in the advertisements will be thin and there will an increase in the number of such portrayals from the year 1976 to 2004.

The first hypothesis stated that female models featured in the advertisements would be thin and there would be an increase in the number of such portrayals over time.

A t-test was used to determine if the relationship was significant. A chi-square test was also used to determine if the relationship between body image and time was significant.

Table 2

Body Shape of Female Models for the Years 2004-1976

Body Shape	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
	N=93	N=89	N=96	N=61	N=38	N=72	N=66	N=12	N=29
Ultra Thin	27%	18%	15%	38%	5%	11%	14%	8%	7%
Thin	66	70	70	62	89	88	62	75	90
Muscular	3	11	14	0	3	1	18	0	3
Average	4	1	1	0	3	0	6	17	0

The above table illustrates that the overwhelming majority of the models featured in the advertisements are ultra-thin or thin. None of the models were found to be overweight. A small proportion of models are considered muscular –these advertisements were mostly for sports shoes or sports clothes. None of the models were coded as over weight. This finding is consistent with what previous studies have found. The t-test results support the hypothesis.

The results of Table 3 indicate that the number of ultra-thin portrayals have increased over time. The trend of increasing ultra-thin portrayals starts in the early 1990's and has continued till 2004. This finding is in line with Kilbourne's (1992) observation that the standard of what is considered thin has become thinner over time. The number of muscular portrayals also shows signs of increasing over the 1990's. The percentage of average portrayals has fallen from the late 1970's and the early 1980's.

Table 3

T-test Results for Body Shape of Female Models for the Years 2004-1976

Body Shape	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
Ultra Thin	27 ¹	18	15	38 ⁴	5	11	14	8	7
Thin	66	70	70	62	89 ⁵	88 ⁶	62	75	90 ⁹
Muscular	3	11 ²	14 ³	0	3	1	18 ⁷	0	3
Average	4	1	1	0	3	0	6	17 ⁸	0

Superscripts indicate that differences are significant at p value less than or equal to .05

1: Significant difference from the years 1994, 1988, 1985

2: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1991, 1985

3: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1991, 1985

4: Significant difference from the years 1997,1994,1988,1985,1982,1979,1976

5: Significant difference from the years 2004,1997,1994,1991,1982

6: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1997, 1994,1991,1982

7: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1991, 1988, 1985

8: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1994,1991, 1985, 1976

9: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1994, 1991, 1982

The chi-square distribution shown in Table 4 for the ultra-thin and thin categories also indicates that the distribution is significant. The chi-square distribution is on the following page.

Table 4

Chi-square Distribution for Body Shape of Female Models for 2004-1976

Year	Ultra Thin	Thin
	N=100	N=402
2004	25%	16%
1997	16	16
1994	14	17
1991	23	9
1988	2	8
1985	8	16
1982	9	10
1979	1	2
1976	2	6

X^2 (df 8, N=502) =28.63, $p < .001$

H2: *The female models featured in the advertisements from 1976 to 2004 will be in the same age group as the target audience.*

A t-test and a chi-square distribution were used to examine the second hypothesis.

Table 5

Age of Female Models for the Years 2004-1976

Age	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
	N=93	N=89	N=96	N=61	N=38	N=72	N=66	N=12	N=29
6-12 years	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	2%	0%	11%
13-18 years	73	57	61	48	50	56	53	83	37
19-24 years	11	42	39	52	50	32	45	17	52

The results of Table 5 indicate that the majority of the female models are teenagers. The table also reflects that some of the models in the advertisements are in the

19-24 year age group and that makes them a little older than the target audience of the magazine.

Table 6

T-test Results for Age of Female Models for the Years 2004-1976

Age	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
6-12 years	16 ¹	0	0	0	0	12 ⁸	2	0	11 ¹²
13-18 years	73 ²	57	61 ⁴	48	50	56	53	83 ¹¹	37
19-24 years	11	42 ³	39 ⁵	52 ⁶	50 ⁷	32 ⁹	45 ¹⁰	17	52 ¹³

Superscripts indicate that differences are significant at p value less than or equal to .05

- 1: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1994, 1991, 1988, 1982
- 2: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1991, 1988, 1985, 1982, 1976
- 3: Significant difference from the year 2004
- 4: Significant difference from the year 1976
- 5: Significant difference from the year 2004
- 6: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1985, 1979
- 7: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1979
- 8: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1994, 1991, 1985, 1982
- 9: Significant difference from the year 2004
- 10: Significant difference from the year 2004
- 11: Significant difference from the years 1991, 1988, 1976
- 12: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1994, 1991, 1988
- 13: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1979

The t-test results from Table 6 illustrate that female models are mostly in the same demographic that YM targets. The chi-square distribution also indicates that the distribution for models in the 13-18 and 19-34 year age group is significant. The chi-square distribution is on the following page.

Table 7

Chi-square Distribution for Age of Female Models from 2004-1976

Year	13-18	19-34
	N=320	N=214
2004	21%	5%
1997	16	17
1994	19	18
1991	9	15
1988	6	9
1985	13	10
1982	10	13
1979	3	6
1976	3	7

X^2 (df 8, N=534) =36.38, $p < .001$

In terms of the attire of the female models, most of the models are attired in casual clothes. About a fifth of the models are seen in lingerie/swim wear or sleep wear. The move to more formal clothing like gowns is seen from the early 1990's. Most of these models were featured in advertisements for perfumes and colognes. The small increase in the percentage of models in uniforms reflects the increase in advertisements for sports shoes and clothes. Table 8 reflects this trend.

Table 8

Attire of Female Models for the Years 2004-1976

Attire	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
	N=93	N=89	N=96	N=61	N=38	N=72	N=66	N=12	N=29
Casual wear	77%	61%	75%	72%	79%	77%	59%	83%	59%
Business suits	0	0	1	0	13	0	0	0	0
Lingerie/swim wear	10	12	5	18	8	17	38	17	38
Uniforms	3	8	9	0	0	0	0	0	3
Dressy	10	19	10	10	0	6	3	0	0

The results from the t-test in Table 9 show that there has been a small but significant increase in the percentage of models attired in casual clothes. There has been a decrease in the percentage of models dressed in lingerie/swim wear/sleepwear. This can be explained by the variety of products being advertised. In the 1970's and early 1980's most of the advertisements were for tampons, where the message was being comfortable in revealing/close- fitting clothes. Table 9 is shown on the next page.

Table 9

T-test Results for Attire of Female Models from the Years 2004-1976

Attire	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
Casual wear	77 ¹	61	75 ⁶	72	79 ¹¹	77 ¹³	59	83	59
Business suits	0	0	1	0	13 ¹²	0	0	0	0
Lingerie/swim wear	10	12 ³	5	18 ⁹	8	17 ¹⁴	38 ¹⁵	17	38 ¹⁶
Uniforms	3	8 ⁴	9 ⁷	0	0	0	0	0	3
Dressy	10 ²	19 ⁵	10 ⁸	10 ¹⁰	0	6	3	0	0

Superscripts indicate that differences are significant at p value less than or equal to .05

1: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1982

2: Significant difference from the year 1988

3: Significant difference from the year 1994

4: Significant difference from the year 1991,1985,1982

5: Significant difference from the year 1988,1985,1982,1976

6: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1982

7: Significant difference from the years 1991, 1985,1982

8: Significant difference from the year 1988

9: Significant difference from the years 1997,1982

10:Significant difference from the year 1994

11:Significant difference from the years 1997, 1982

12: Significant difference from the years 2004,1997, 1994, 1991, 1988, 1985

13: Significant difference from the years 1997, 1982

14: Significant difference from the year 1994

15: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1997, 1994, 1991, 1988, 1985

16: Significant difference from the years 2004, 1997, 1994, 1991, 1988, 1985

H3: *The number of advertisements for cosmetics and diet/weight loss products would have increased from the year 1976 to 2004.*

An analysis of the frequency distribution reveals that about a third of the advertisements are for hair care products. A fifth of the advertisements are for face and body creams. A significant proportion of these advertisements are for creams that treat acne. This reflects the needs of the demographic segment that YM targets.

Table 10

Advertisements for Cosmetics from 2004-1976

Cosmetics	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
	N=82	N=149	N=164	N=167	N=102	N=135	N=115	N=27	N=18
Lip	11%	10%	7%	4%	3%	6%	13%	11%	28%
Eye	5	6	7	6	13	9	19	7	28
Blush/foundation	6	4	7	14	10	8	9	4	11
Body/face creams	17	29	23	24	17	24	28	19	11
Nail	7	1	2	2	6	9	6	11	11
Hair removal	15	5	2	3	3	4	2	0	0
Hair care	30	19	28	17	28	13	14	33	0
Perfumes	9	26	24	30	20	27	9	15	11

The results from Table 10 also indicate that a fifth of the advertisements are for lip make-up, eye make-up and foundations/blush. The frequency distribution also reveals that advertisements for hair removal products like bleach have increased over the years.

Table 11

Advertisements for Weight Loss Systems/Products from 2004-1976

Weight loss products	2004	1997	1994	1991	1988	1985	1982	1979	1976
	N=0	N=13	N=6	N=6	N=5	N=10	N=3	N=0	N=0
Weight loss pills	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Weight loss systems	0	100	50	100	100	100	100	0	0

Table 11 illustrates that there have not been many advertisements for weight loss/diet products. The advertisements for these products start from the early 1980's and show a steady increase over time. They are mostly for weight loss camps and for systems of weight loss that advocate certain kinds of diets. Many of them were in the form of

testimonials. The weight loss camps are mostly in summer and advertisements for them are found in issues leading up to those months.

Tables 12 and 13 illustrate that the advertisements for cosmetics products feature thin or ultra-thin models. The researcher was not able to code body image for all the advertisements for cosmetics/weight loss systems because many of these advertisements featured just the product being advertised or just the models face/silhouette. Some advertisements for weight loss systems featured models that were classified as average. These advertisements featured teenagers of average size and promised that attending the weight loss camps or weight loss system would enable them to get the ideal figure that they wanted. The muscular models featured in the perfumes/deodorant advertisements points to the trend of featuring muscular models in these advertisements as these products are advertised as tools that help achieve the ideal muscular body image. Table 12 shows that advertisements for cosmetics have always featured thin models.

Table 12

Body Image of Female Models Featured in Advertisements for Cosmetics and Weight Loss Products from 2004-1976

Body Shape	Lip	Eye	Blush	Body cream	Nail	Hair removal	Hair care	Perfumes	Weight loss
	N=3	N=2	N=6	N=34	N=4	N=17	N=32	N=99	N=12
Ultra thin	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	25%	11%	0%
Thin	100	100	100	97	100	100	75	80	75
Muscular	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
Average	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25

Table 13 illustrates that most of the models featured in advertisements for cosmetics/weight loss products were in the slightly older 18-34 years age group. The advertisements that featured older female models could have been using older models for the aspiration value of creating an ideal that young teenagers may want to grow up to be. The advertisements for face creams/lotions were mostly for acne and featured teenage models. This could be because acne is a problem that teenagers face.

Table 13

Age of Female Models Featured in Advertisements for Cosmetics and Weight Loss Products

Age	Lip	Eye	Blush	Body creams	Nail	Hair removal	Hair care	Perfumes	Weight loss
	N=6	N=2	N=6	N=34	N=4	N=17	N=32	N=99	N=12
13-18	0%	0%	0%	74%	0%	88%	56%	20%	100%
19-34	100	100	100	26	100	12	44	80	0

Table 14

Attire of Female Models Featured in Advertisements for Cosmetics and Weight Loss Products

Attire	Lip	Eye	Blush	Body creams	Nail	Hair removal	Hair care	Perfumes	Weight loss
	N=6	N=2	N=6	N=34	N=4	N=17	N=32	N=99	N=12
Casual	100%	50%	50%	65%	50%	41%	56%	70%	17%
Business	0	0	50	35	0	0	0	2	0
Lingerie	0	0	0	0	0	59	9	2	83
Dressy	0	50	0	0	50	0	35	17	0
Uniforms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0

Table 14 illustrates that the female models were attired mostly in casual clothes. The exceptions were in advertisements for perfumes and deodorants where some of the models wore dressy evening clothes. Advertisements for hair removal and weight loss systems featured models in lingerie/swim wear. This is only natural considering the categories under consideration.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusions

Body Image Portrayals

This study examined the body image portrayals of female models in advertisements in YM magazine. The study draws attention to this fact in the light of increasing concern about the effect that portrayals in advertisements have on the development of the self-concept in adolescents. There has been increasing concern about the effect that unrealistic body image portrayals have on adolescents. A study by Stephens et al. (1994) found that body dissatisfaction in females appeared to encourage disturbed eating behaviors. Previous research has also found that advertisers have been guilty about setting a body image standard that is very difficult for the average person to attain. The literature review of this study has shown that the average weight of models featured in magazines in the United States has dropped – in the 1960's the average model was about eight percent lighter than the average American woman, but in the 1980's the average model was about twenty - seven percent lighter than the American woman (Dixon et al., 1999). Stephens et al. (1994) also noted that children and adolescents were bombarded with images that equated thinness with beauty. Richins (1991) noted that college age female consumers used models in advertisements as a standard to determine the attractiveness of other females around them. These studies and others mentioned in the literature review point to the impact that body image portrayals in advertising have on regular adolescents.

The study looks at a time in history when the role of women and girls is in the process of undergoing change. Napoli et al. (2003) noted that the women's movement did bring about significant change in the roles that women were portrayed in. The intent of this study was to examine the body image portrayals from 1976 to the present to understand if the increasing concern about this issue and the progress that women have made has had an impact on the number of unrealistically thin portrayals of women. This study is an extension of previous research done in the area, such as the study conducted by Napoli et al. (2003) that explored the body image portrayals of models in Australian magazines targeted at teenage girls.

The results of this study demonstrate that there has been an increase in the number of ultra-thin portrayals of females in magazine advertisements over a quarter of a century. However, it must be noted that the proportion of thin or ultra-thin models is consistently above 85% for the years under consideration. A disturbing trend seems to be that the standard for what is considered thin has only become thinner as the proportion of models considered ultra-thin is significantly higher than such portrayals in the 1970's and 1980's. A more positive trend is the small increase in the number of muscular portrayals from the 1970's to the present. This indicates that some advertisers are looking to promote a healthier body image. The proportion of those coded as average has also become slightly higher and reflects a small improvement over the 1990's. This analysis reveals that though there are some positive changes, the overwhelming majority of body image portrayals are still unattainable for the average teenager. While women are being

portrayed in a variety of positive and non-traditional roles (Napoli et al., 2003), the standard of beauty is still equated with being thin.

A brief analysis of the articles in *YM* revealed that there was a lot of emphasis on dieting and exercise. The tone and message of all these articles was to find the right weight as opposed to being very thin. All of them promoted healthy eating habits, exercise, and a balanced diet. An article in the 2004 issue was titled “10 ways to feel good about your body” and it encouraged teenagers to look for role models who were off regular size. *YM* also carried fashion spreads that featured plus size models. The magazine also addressed the concern of what boys feel about a girl’s weight by carrying interviews with a few young gentlemen about this issue. While the content of the magazine is very positive and focuses on attaining a body image that is realistic and healthy, the advertisements do not reflect this trend. The message embedded in the advertising stresses the need to attain the ideal body. For instance, an advertisement for Pantene shampoo featured a very beautiful model with a perfect figure and said that the reader may never attain the model’s body but had a shot at attaining hair like the model’s, if the reader used the product. This dichotomy between the content and the advertisements is what advertisers and educators will need to address. The results also highlight that positive changes brought about by the non-traditional roles that women are portrayed in have not yet filtered down to influence the body image portrayals of women in advertising.

Age and Attire

This study examined the age of the female models in advertisements to understand if there was the potential for Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis to work. Martin and Kennedy (1997) highlighted the working of this hypothesis to explain why adolescents were not adversely affected by exposure to thin, older models in advertisements. The results of this study showed that most of the models were in the 13-18 years age group and were attired in casual clothes. YM's readership is constituted of female high school students. This demographic segment should relate to the models featured in the advertisements. This allows the potential for Festinger's (1954) similarity hypothesis to work. At least a third of the models are also in the older age group (19-34 years). Younger models in the 6-12 years age group have been featured in some years but there is no consistent pattern. The analysis of the age and attire of the female models revealed that the targeted demographic would be able to identify with the models in the advertisements.

Advertisements for Cosmetics and Weight Loss Products

This study also examined advertisements for cosmetics and weight loss products as a function of body image. Stephens et al. (1994) noted that as the gulf between the cultural norm of thinness and the biological reality widened the number of diet aids had increased. This finding is also reflected in this study. The advertisements for weight loss products begin in the early 1980's and have shown an increasing trend. Such advertisements in the 1980's were mostly for weight loss camps where the focus was on losing weight and having fun doing it. There were a few advertisements for methods of

weight loss systems that focused on eating a particular kind of diet. There were also advertisements for what appeared to be a surgical procedure to loose weight but the content of these advertisements was vague. Most of these advertisements were in the form of testimonials that addressed the benefits of being thin.

The number of advertisements for cosmetics and hair care products has risen significantly. This is only to be expected because YM is a magazine that focuses on beauty and fashion. The data also points to what Brumberg (1998) noted about the increase in advertisements that featured women who were classified as muscular/athletic in advertisements for perfumes or deodorants. The products are advertised as a means to attain the ideal athletic body. Female models featured in the advertisements for cosmetics were mostly thin. The advertisements for weight loss products featured women who were classified as average as they were the 'before' scenario. The models were mostly attired in casual clothes and with the exception of advertisements for acne were in the older age group –thereby creating an ideal that teenagers could aspire to.

Conclusions

This study concluded that the body image portrayals of women and girls in advertising have always been thin and is moving to being ultra-thin. From the 1970's to the present, some positive change has been made in terms of muscular portrayals but the overwhelming standard is thin. It also must be noted that the advertisements that featured the muscular models were mostly for sports shoes and other athletic equipment. Previous research by Brumberg (1988) and Kilbourne (1999) had shown that the ideal body type portrayed in the media changed depending on the period under consideration

and that the standard of what is considered thin had only become thinner. The findings of this study concurred with the above observation. The fact that the standard of what is considered thin is becoming thinner is reflected in the increasing number of ultra-thin portrayals. Advertisements often follow a problem-solution format and the literature review of this study has shown that advertisements in magazines targeted at teenagers are influential in shaping their decisions. In the light of this fact it is very important to pay close attention to the ideals that are set forth in the advertisements featured in this medium.

The study also revealed that adolescents would relate to the models in the advertisements because about half of them are in the same age group as the reader. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory proposed that human beings had a tendency of evaluating themselves with those whom they considered similar. The fact that the models featured in the advertisements were in the same age group as the target audience increases the possibility of female teenage readers comparing themselves with the models featured in the advertisements. A significant proportion of advertisements for cosmetic products like colognes, eye make up or lip stick/lip gloss featured older female models thereby creating an inspirational value for the teenage readers.

This study also found that most models featured in the advertisements were attired in casual clothes –thereby increasing the element of identification with the reader. This was especially true of the models in the 13-18 years age group. Some of the models in the 19-34 years age group were attired in formal evening clothes or business suites. This conclusion also points to the need for parents and educators to stress the importance of a

healthy body image and point to the fact that the portrayals in advertisements are not reflective of the body shape/appearance of the majority of teenagers. It is also important for advertisers to understand that unrealistic portrayals have an adverse effect on the development of a healthy image of the self at a time that is crucial to the development of the self-concept.

This study concluded that there was an increase in the number of advertisements for cosmetic products of various kinds. This study did not find many advertisements for weight loss products in the years under study but there has been an increase in the number of such advertisements. Since weight loss systems are purported as solutions to attain the ideal body image it is important to pay attention to them. The advertisements for various kinds of weight loss systems were seen in the 1990's and 1980's. Advertisements for weight loss systems in the 1990's also featured plastic surgery as an option to attain the ideal body image. The advertisements for weight loss systems in the 1980's were mostly for weight loss camps where the advertisement emphasized that the process of losing weight would be fun and monitored by experts like dieticians and doctors. The move towards more drastic measures to attain the ideal figure must be monitored and discouraged.

The study also concluded that advertisements for cosmetics featured thin or ultra-thin models. The only time a model of average size was featured was as a "before" scenario for the weight loss camps.

The analysis of the age of the models featured in advertisements for cosmetics products concluded that the age of the model depended on the product being advertised.

For instance, products to treat acne or pimples featured a female model in the 13-18 years age group as it built a sense of identification with the reader. The clothes the models wore also built the sense of identification as most models were dressed in casual attire like jeans, informal pants, and t-shirts. Some of the advertisements for cosmetic products like perfumes and colognes bought in an element of aspiration by featuring older models. The results of this study have shown that the age of the model featured in the advertisement is to some extent a function of the product being advertised. When the advertisement offered a remedy to a problem faced by teenagers it featured a younger model. This was especially evident in the advertisements for products that treated acne/pimples.

Other studies have revealed that the women's movement has had a positive impact on the role of that women are portrayed in advertising, the same cannot be said of the body image portrayals. The standard for what is thin has only become thinner. The evidence would suggest that advertisers have not embraced a more realistic standard for the models featured in teenage magazines. Studies have shown that unrealistic images in advertising have an adverse impact on the prevalence and increase in eating disorders. Napoli et al. (2003) highlight the need for advertisers to show their social conscience and focus on more realistic portrayals of women and girls.

The content of YM reflects the concerns that educators and researchers have about the ideal body image but the advertising does not reflect the content. The content of the magazine is very positive in terms of stressing the importance of a healthy diet and exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. There were also articles that examined real-life

stories of teenagers who suffered from eating disorders and the debilitating effects and consequences of starving oneself. The articles offered help and advice to counter the onset of eating disorders and discussed potential resources to help solve the problem. The magazine also realized that a preoccupation that teenage girls might have is what the opposite sex desires as the ideal figure in a young woman. An article that featured interviews with young men showed that the majority of them stressed the importance of personality over a typical kind of body type. While the interviews may not reveal the completely true picture it does point to the fact that the magazine features such opinions. It is true that there is a lot of emphasis on diets in the magazine but the stress is always on eating well to achieve the desired body image. Many of the January issues for the years under consideration did feature a YM recommended diet and exercise regime. The advertisements do not reflect this trend towards stressing a healthy lifestyle. This study has shown that the models featured in the advertisements have figures that the average teenager may not be able to attain. The study has also pointed to certain messages in the advertisements that reflect that the body image featured is unattainable. This results in a dichotomy between the editorial content and advertisements and advertisers, educators, and parents need to work together to resolve this issue. While the magazines and advertisers have a responsibility, readers also need to understand that the portrayals in the magazines are not reflective of the real world. Readers need to realize that magazines that focus on fashion have an element of fantasy in them.

This study has revealed that though progress has been made in the roles in which women and girls are portrayed in, the standard for what is beautiful is only becoming

thinner. The portrayals that reflect that beauty comes in all sizes have still not come along. A former model for Ann Taylor, Ann Quinn, says it best when she says: "You can be beautiful and all that you have to do is believe that you are."

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Appendix A

Coding Sheet – Body Shape

Year							
Ultra – thin							
Thin							
Muscular							
Average							
Over weight							

Appendix B

Coding Sheet – Age

Year							
Less than 5 years							
6-12 years							
13-18 years							
18-34 years							
35-50 years							
50+years							

Appendix C

Coding Sheet – Attire

Year							
Casual wear							
Business attire							
Lingerie/sleep wear/swim wear							
Uniforms							
Dressy							

Appendix D

Coding Sheet – Cosmetics

Year							
Lip make up							
Eye make up							
Foundation/blush							
Face/body creams and lotions							
Nail polish							
Hair removal products							
Hair care products like shampoos etc.							
Perfumes							

Appendix E

Coding Sheet – Weight Loss/Diet Products

Year							
Weight loss/diet pills							
Weight loss systems like Weight watchers, Jenny Craig							
Foods that help with weight loss							
Exercise equipment							
Gymnasiums							