Abstract

The fashion, beauty, and advertising industries have been positioned as key contributors to body dissatisfaction through the promotion of unrealistic and homogenous appearance ideals. Recently, some businesses within these industries have started to disrupt the status quo by taking actions that can be seen to be fostering positive body image (e.g., through representative and diverse imagery, body acceptance messages, and inclusive product ranges). The aim of this study was to explore the opportunities and challenges to foster positive body image from a business perspective. Participants were purposively selected based on their experience of leading business actions to foster positive body image in fashion, beauty, and/or advertising. In total, 45 individuals (82% women) took part in semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and then analysed using thematic analysis. Four themes were identified: (1) Personal motivations for championing change, (2) Industry ingrained appearance standards, (3) Business barriers to fostering positive body image, and (4) Fostering positive body image as an effective corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy. This study provides future directions for research aimed at creating healthier body image environments in addition to considerations for businesses seeking to foster positive body image.

Keywords: Body image; corporate social responsibility; qualitative research; social change

1. Introduction

Body dissatisfaction is a pervasive public health issue associated with many negative health and quality of life outcomes (Bucchianeri & Neumark-Sztainer, 2014). Significantly, as evidenced by sociocultural theory and research, the ubiquitous promotion of unrealistic appearance ideals by business (e.g., through advertising) has been identified as a potent predictor of body dissatisfaction via processes such as upward social comparison, appearance-ideal internalisation, and self-objectification (Levine & Murnen, 2009; Moradi, 2010). In response, existing efforts to attenuate the negative impact of business practices on body image have primarily focused on individual-level body image interventions that teach skills such as media literacy (Austin, 2012). However, while some have yielded promising results, in isolation their impact is limited due to finite financial and human resources, curtailing the number of people reached (Austin, 2012). In addition, individual-level body image interventions may be undermined by broader environmental influences that continue to promote appearance ideals, and so further reduce the impact of these approaches.

In response to the limitations of individual-level interventions, researchers have called for macro-level interventions to foster positive body image at scale (Austin, Yu, Tran, & Mayer, 2017). Specifically, researchers have advocated for increased evidence-based legislation and government policy to minimise the negative impact of industry on body image, for example, through banning the sale of diet pills to minors (Austin et al., 2017). Others have called for fat pedagogy in fashion design, so those working in fashion learn how to dress and design for larger bodies (Christel, 2018). Additionally, researchers have urged businesses themselves to be more socially responsible, for instance, through representing greater appearance diversity in their advertising (Barry, 2014; Diedrichs & Lee, 2011) and by not digitally modifying models' images (Rodgers, Kruger, Lowy, Long & Richards, *in press*). Notably, while including warning labels to highlight models have been digitally altered (e.g.,

to look thinner) has gained traction among some policymakers, current evidence suggests this is not an effective intervention to assuage the negative affect of exposure to idealised images (Tiggemann & Brown, 2018).

In the current study, *fostering positive body image* is operationalised as attenuating body dissatisfaction as well as promoting body acceptance, appreciation, and respect (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Although emerging work has started to apply strategic science to mobilise government policy changes to foster positive body image (Austin et al., 2017), seemingly no research has yet directly engaged with the business sector, despite its observed influence on population body image. Therefore, the overarching objective of the present study is to address this gap. Specifically, by systematically investigating the perspectives of business leaders who have taken steps to foster positive body image in their work, the goal of the present study is to better understand the challenges and opportunities for businesses to foster positive body image. In doing so, this study aims to understand and identify new ways to incite macro-level change to improve population body image.

1.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

In order to engage business in systematically creating healthier body image environments, it is necessary to understand how businesses respond to, and prioritise, social issues more broadly. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a relevant business framework that refers to a business' voluntary contributions to society beyond its economic and legal commitments (Carroll, 2016). Underpinned by stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), CSR holds that a business needs to consider the needs of multiple stakeholders (e.g., consumers, employees, government, and society) in addition to the needs of its shareholders for long-term success (Carroll, 2016).

There is significant variation in how CSR is conceptualised and applied in practice (Visser, 2011). CSR can be interpreted as business actions designed to limit unintended harm

to society that arises as a by-product of businesses' primary activities, such as working to reduce carbon emissions released during product manufacturing (Porter & Kramer, 2006). CSR can also be understood as a way in which business can 'add value' to society by actively addressing some of society's complex problems, while simultaneously advancing the business' bottom line (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In this way, CSR is integral to a business' core 'purpose' and therefore, profit (Hurth, 2017).

CSR is increasingly viewed as a strategic business imperative by researchers and practitioners and growing evidence supports the 'business case' for CSR (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Research suggests that CSR can improve the reputation of a business, which in turn may help yield a 'competitive advantage' by appealing to the growing number of socially orientated consumers, employees, and investors (Hull & Rothenberg, 2008). For instance, a strong CSR reputation is associated with favourable consumer attitudes (e.g., trust), as well as behaviours such as purchase intentions (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2011). CSR initiatives have also been linked to increased employee recruitment, engagement, and retention (Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun, 2008). Finally, although research examining the relationship between CSR and financial performance is mixed, it appears that CSR is at least not detrimental to company profits, particularly if considered as a long-term strategy (Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014).

The current study uses CSR as underlying framework to explore how businesses can take action to foster positive body image within their scope of work. Notably, body image has occasionally been cited as social issue that businesses can address through CSR (Du et al., 2011) underscoring the relevance of this application. Further, recent studies have started to look and evaluate specific CSR strategies on body image from a consumer perspective (e.g., Johnson-Young & Magee, 2019). However, relatively little is known about body image and CSR from a business perspective, providing an important rationale for the present study.

1.2. The Fashion, Beauty, and Advertising Industries

Many industries are considered complicit in creating a toxic body image social environment (Bordo, 2004) including porn (Tylka, 2015; Tylka & Kroon Van Diest, 2015), cosmetic surgery (Widdows, 2018), and weight loss/management supplements (Austin et al., 2017). However, this study focuses on the fashion, beauty, and advertising industries due to their mass influence and mainstream positioning, in conjunction with their notable role in establishing and reinforcing global appearance ideals.

The fashion industry encompasses design, manufacturing, marketing, retail, and editorial of all types of apparel (men's, women's, and children's), from haute couture to everyday clothing, and is valued at three trillion US dollars globally (FashionUnited, 2018). Fashion is a powerful force in influencing people's body image as fashion and the body are inextricably linked; fashion is showcased on the body and practicing fashion is an embodied practice (Chistel, 2018; Tiggemann & Lacey 2009). Notably, through the narrow selection of models for catwalk shows, advertising, and promotion, the industry serves to create and uphold unrealistic appearance ideals (Barry, 2014; Czerniawski, 2015; Mears, 2010). In turn, research consistently indicates that exposure to idealised fashion imagery is associated with increased body dissatisfaction among women and men (Barlett, Vowels, & Saucier, 2008; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Tiggemann, Brown, Zaccardo, & Thomas, 2017). Additionally, fashion can influence body image through the availability of clothing sizes (Christel, 2018). By only offering a limited range of sizes, fashion privileges certain body shapes and sizes while excluding others, dictating who can and cannot participate in certain fashions (Christel, 2018; Volonté, 2017).

Like the fashion industry, the global beauty industry contributes to unrealistic appearance standards by implicitly and explicitly dictating what it means to be beautiful (Jha, 2015). The industry, which includes 'personal care' (bath and shower, skincare, hair care,

nail care), fragrance, and cosmetics (Hudson, Kim, & Moulton, 2018) idealises smooth, young, and golden or fair skin through manufacturing and marketing (Yan & Bissell, 2014). Currently valued at 465 billion US dollars and projected to grow to an estimated 750 billion by 2024 (Nicolaou & Keane, 2018), the beauty industry yields significant influence in society. This influence is, in part, attributed to advertising spending. Specifically, beauty brands often are part of multinational companies that are among the biggest advertisers in the world, with some of the largest advertising spends dedicated to beauty brands (Hudson et al., 2018).

Finally, the advertising industry is often associated with establishing and reinforcing global beauty standards in body image research (Grabe et al., 2008). This is reflected in content analyses that find advertising on TV, in print, and online is saturated with idealised images, reflecting unrealistic and homogenous standards of beauty (Slater, Tiggemann, Hawkins, & Werchon, 2012). Significantly, unrealistic appearance ideals are not limited to fashion and beauty brand advertising, rather they are ubiquitous throughout advertising, "endorsing every product imaginable" (Westover & Randle, 2009, p. 57). This is important as advertisements can be an inescapable and powerful part of our environment (Dyer, 2008), and with 558 billion US dollars spent globally in 2018 alone (Statista, 2018).

1.3. The Current Study

Given the collective power and influence of the fashion, beauty, and advertising industries on defining and upholding societal appearance ideals, and subsequently on body image, insights from those working in these industries stand to be beneficial in efforts to create more positive body image environments. In recent years, some businesses in these industries have taken actions that can be interpreted as fostering positive body image. For example, some fashion and beauty brands seem to have broadened their conceptualisation of beauty and are including greater appearance diversity, most notably through their advertising

imagery (Murray, 2013). Some brands have also started including positive body image 'copy' (written or verbal) messaging in line with facets of positive body image such as body acceptance (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), body functionality (Alleva, Tylka, & Kroon Van Diest, 2017), body appreciation (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), and empowerment (Holmqvist Gattario & Frisén, 2019). This is often seen on brands' social media channels through positive body image quotes or on posts featuring less traditional models (e.g., curve models) or influencers accompanied by a positive body image caption. Finally, a few brands invest in research and community partnerships to develop and disseminate evidenced based body image curriculum to young people around the world (Johnson-Young & Magee, 2019).

Critics (e.g., Gill & Elias, 2014) argue that businesses engaging in actions to foster positive body image reflects a corporate co-option of feminist values, capitalising on a social trend to be 'body confident' and 'love one's body.' This is an important criticism to consider throughout this work particularly given the legacy of these industries to create, perpetuate, and profit from women's appearance insecurities as discussed in some seminal feminist texts (e.g., Bordo, 2004; Hesse-Bieber, 2007). Yet, it is also prudent to recognise that we live in a capitalist society, and that fashion, beauty, and advertising are major and legitimate industries contributing to Gross Domestic Product and provide 100,000s jobs in the UK alone[1]. To this end, it is perhaps a more pragmatic approach to seek ways to actively engaging with industry to reduce potent body dissatisfaction risk factors while we remain in a capitalist environment.

Using a strategic science approach, where researchers "identify agents of change and create reciprocal information flow between researchers and these actors" (Brownell & Roberto, 2015, p. 2445), the aims of this study were to: (1) understand how business leaders in the fashion, beauty, and advertising industries view the topic of body image as it relates to

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[1] For example, the British Fashion Council reported that the UK fashion industry contributed £32.2 billion to the UK's GDP is a major UK employer with some 890,000 jobs supported across the industry (Sleigh, 2018).

their industry; (2) explore the business opportunities and challenges associated with taking action to foster positive body image; and (3) find out what is required for more businesses in industry to engage in fostering positive body image. In doing so, this study will contribute to the literature by providing insights into how the power of big business might be usefully harnessed to create macro-level changes to complement existing individual-level body image interventions and social activism efforts.

2. Method

2.1. Design

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate mode of inquiry given the exploratory nature of the study aims. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility to discuss specific points raised by individual participants and allow for emerging and unanticipated issues to be explored in greater depth, while retaining some consistency across interviews (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016).

2.2. Participants

A total of 45 individuals (82% women) working in senior leadership positions in fashion, advertising, and beauty industries were interviewed. Participants were purposively sampled. Demographics are summarised in Table 1. Table 2 gives an overview of the nature of the company or agency where participants currently, or had, worked for based on information provided by participants and publicly available data. The size of the businesses that participants currently (or had formerly) worked at varied. Some worked in global companies with 100,000s of employees and multi-million and billion-dollar revenues, while others worked in companies or start-ups with a handful of employees. Notably, there was no correlation between company size and company revenue. In addition, many of the individuals working at some of the smaller agencies worked with, or for, some of the large multi-national brands, and those at a start-up may have formerly worked at a much larger enterprise.

A pragmatic, flexible approach was taken to determine sample size (Marshall, 1996). In line with guidance for quality qualitative research, sample adequacy was prioritised over sample size and the goal was to achieve adequate breadth and depth to fulfil the requirements of data saturation, that is, the point where new data does not disrupt existing global themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Saturation was thought to be reached after approximately 40 interviews. However, five further interviews, recruited through snowball sampling, were conducted after this point to further confirm saturation. These final five interviews provided extra detail but did not significantly differ in content or alter the main themes generated.

2.3. Recruitment

A maximum variation sampling strategy was employed (Patton, 2002) to ensure a wide spectrum of expertise and perspectives relevant to the study research questions. Efforts were made to include people working in different industries and for different sized businesses. Participants were purposively selected based on their position (or former position) in a senior leadership role at a business publicly recognised for fostering (or having fostered) positive body image. Individuals in senior positions were prioritised in order to capture insights from those with decision-making power. Snowball sampling was also employed throughout the study recruitment period.

Potential participants were identified systematically using the following steps.

2.3.1. Step 1. To identify brands who have taken action in fostering positive body image, a Google search using key search terms including "body positive brands" (yielding approximately 8.8 million hits in October 2017); "body positive advertising campaigns" (approx. 1.8 million); and "brands promoting body positivity" (approx. 5.1 million) was made at the start of recruitment (July 2017) and at the mid-way point (October 2017). The first 20 hits for each search were reviewed. The same search terms were entered into the inbuilt search engines of leading global advertising and marketing industry websites

including *Adage*, *Adweek*, and *Campaign*. These websites were selected based on their authoritative coverage of the advertising and marketing industry. Based on the search findings, a list was created of businesses that have received public recognition and press for fostering positive body image (either in the past or current) alongside their corresponding creative, public relations (PR), media and consultancy agencies.[2]

2.3.2. Step 2. Individuals were identified based on their involvement with business actions to foster positive body image (e.g., financial investment in research on body image, policy actions such as not airbrushing models, advertising campaigns celebrating appearance diversity, and inclusive product ranges). Depending on a business' specific engagement with actions to foster positive body image, decisions were made pertaining to the most appropriate person to respond to the study research questions. For example, if body image was at the core of a brand's purpose, the name of the CEO (or equivalent) was noted for recruitment as well as those working in senior positions like Vice President for Brand or Head of Brand Strategy. However, if a primary action of a brand was related to specific advertising campaigns for example, the name of the senior creative directors and strategists involved were noted for recruitment (these were often credited in articles found in *Adage*, *Adweek*, and *Campaign*).

The purposive recruitment strategy identified more women than men who had worked on initiatives fostering positive body image. In total, 98 individuals (women, $n = 84$) were invited to participate in the study over the six-month recruitment period (July through December 2017). A further five participants (women, $n = 4$) were introduced by individuals who had already participated in the study after this period; all five subsequently took part in the interviews. Consequently, 103 individuals (women, $n = 88$) were approached and 49 individuals (women, $n = 41$) agreed to the initial invitation to participate. Due to scheduling issues, four participants (all women) who agreed were unable to contribute. This resulted in a

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[2] Although brands often have in-house marketing teams, many also work with external agencies for their marketing and PR.

final sample of 45 participants (women, $n = 37$) and an overall response rate of 44% (42% for women and 53% for men). The recruitment process is summarised in Figure 1.

2.4. Procedure

The current study was approved by The University of the West of England Research Ethics Committee. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between July 2017 and April 2018. Accounting for participant preferences and the international nature of the sample, interviews were conducted via telephone ($n = 20$), in person ($n = 17$), video call ($n = 7$), and email ($n = 2$). All interviews were conducted and subsequently transcribed verbatim by the first author. Interviews lasted between 30 and 55 minutes ($M = 42$ minutes). Participants were informed of the aims of the research and that interviews would be anonymous.

Interviews followed a semi-structured guide (see Appendix) in line with the aims of the study. Participants were asked about the relevance of the topic of body image for their industry, the opportunities and challenges for businesses in their industry to take action to foster positive body image, and what is needed for more businesses in their industry to engage in foster positive body image.

2.5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was chosen due to its theoretical flexibility and its easy application to, and handling of, large data sets. Given the size of the dataset, NVivo was used to facilitate data organisation and visualisation, but all analyses were conducted manually.

The present research used pragmatism as the philosophical approach to make sense of the data. Pragmatism is an anti-dualist philosophy that accepts that there are both singular and multiple realities and considers how ideas arise from social interactions within society (Morgan, 2007). Accordingly, with a focus on utility (Morgan, 2007), an abductive investigative stance was adopted to allow for a necessary critical lens and considerations of

the specific sociocultural context located at a specific point at time, while also recognising participants' own reality or 'truth' as important.

The dataset was coded latently by the first author to identify 'under the surface' meaning of participants' responses and themes were subsequently generated based on these codes. The first author regularly met with the last author to discuss codes and theme development. All authors reviewed the final themes and agreed there were sufficient data to form a coherent pattern, to identify clear distinctions between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and to ensure representative verbatim quotes were selected to illustrate each theme. Importantly, themes were based on *relevance* over frequency; frequency being a feature more closely linked with content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, frequencies at which themes or codes were identified was not recorded. Further, the present study did not utilise a coding frame, multiple coders, or the calculation of inter-rater reliability scores, as these processes are underpinned by a positivist epistemology that indicates there is an accurate reality in the data that can be captured through coding (Clarke & Braun, 2006). Conversely, in acknowledging that reflexivity is central to the quality of qualitative research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), the first author kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process and regularly reflected on her thoughts with the second and last author. This was important in maintaining a critical outlook, particularly given the first author's positionality as a doctoral student and participants' roles as senior industry leaders, most of whom were older than the first author, which together created an inverse power dynamic between the interviewer and participants.

2.6. Research Team

The first author is a female PhD student in her early 30s. She led the design of the study following a detailed review of the body image and corporate social responsibility literature. She was responsible for recruitment, coordinating, conducting, and transcribing the

interviews, and led the analysis and write up. The first author has experience with thematic analysis across several projects with large data sets. The second author is a woman in her mid-30s who currently works as a partner at a corporate consulting group that focuses on businesses' social purpose. She previously worked in the beauty industry. The second author, contributed to design and the analysis of the present study, and reviewed drafts of the manuscript. The third author is an Associate Professor in Psychology. She is a woman in her mid-40s, who specialises in body image research and has extensive experience conducting and publishing qualitative research, including thematic analysis. The fourth author is a woman in her late thirties, and a senior lecturer in marketing who specialises in social change marketing, she has extensive experience conducting and publishing qualitative research. The third and fourth author contributed to the design, the interpretation of the results and reviewed drafts of the manuscript. The last author is a Professor in Psychology in her mid-30s, specialising in body image research, and has extensive experience conducting and publishing qualitative research, including thematic analysis. She provided the original conceptual idea for this area of research, contributed to the design and the analysis, and reviewed drafts of the manuscript.

Notably, the third and last author have conducted research funded from beauty brand Dove, owned by Unilever, and the last author has consulted on social purpose strategy for the brand. Prior to this research commencing, the second author was employed by Dove as a Global Director of the Dove Self-Esteem Project. Dove did not fund this research, and they had no involvement in the research design, analysis, or writing of this manuscript.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Themes and Subthemes

Four main themes and their respective subthemes are described and discussed below in relation to previous theory and research. Table 3 includes these themes and subthemes.

3.1.1. Personal motivations for championing change. This theme highlights participants' personal motivations for championing and leading actions to foster positive body image in their work. Although participants were not asked why they chose to engage in this work or how body image was relevant in their lives, it was clear that for nearly all the participants, body image was a personal issue. This was underscored by a female CEO of a PR company (15+ years of industry experience) who stated, "it's a personal thing if I'm honest. I feel strongly about it." Significantly, participants' personal connection to the topic of body image was tied to either to their feminist identity or their own experiences of body image *concerns.*

3.1.1.1. Fostering positive body image in line with feminist values. Although the study materials (e.g., information sheet, interview guide) were gender neutral, all the participants instinctively situated body image as a female issue, reflecting research showing that women and girls are disproportionately affected by body image concerns compared to men and boys (Grogan, 2016). This connection was often stated explicitly, for example, one female partner of an advertising company (15+ years of industry experience) said "[the term body image] instantly makes me think that it's a female issue." Further, while some participants acknowledged that men also experience body image concerns and are subject to pressure to fit a muscular and lean ideal (Barlett et al., 2008), they observed that in general women were under greater scrutiny for their appearance in society, and so body image was a more salient topic to women.

> [Body image] affects women more than it affects men because the way women look is
> perceived to be the most important part of who they are, whether that's right or that's
> wrong. The balance falls more harshly on women. [Group Strategy Director - Advertising
> – Female – 10+ years of industry experience]

In turn, it seemed that for many participants, fostering positive body image in their work was connected to their own feminist identity and values. In recognition of their respective industry's influence on body image as well as their own individual agency, many participants expressed a sense of responsibility to at least not be complicit in thwarting the confidence of young women and girls. Notably, several participants cited examples of brands promoting very narrow appearance standards as irresponsible and antithetical to feminism and their personal belief system.

> Like I really don't agree with the Victoria Secret show. For me, I cannot believe that that is happening in the world now. I think it's absolutely horrific. I think it's setting back women and feminism and empowerment by like 30 years. It's everything I don't believe in. [Global Communications Director – Fashion – Female – 20 years of industry experience]

Yet, there was variation among participants regarding the actions that they believed they should take and felt able to take in relation to their feminist values on body image and representation. In this way, there was an intersection between ideology and power, with some participants discussing the need to compromise their aspirations (e.g., on diverse models) in order to be palatable to those with more power in the business context. Meanwhile, others expressed less dissonance between their beliefs and company actions on body image but varied in how disruptive they believed was appropriate or necessary in their work. To this end, while some seemed to be grappling with a degree of disconnect between their (perhaps third-wave[3]) feminist views on body image and their ability to embody them in their work, others appeared more certain, either because they believed was good alignment between their work and their values or because they seemed to have boundaries between the two, with an understanding of what is feasible or even appropriate to do in the context of their work.

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[3] A detailed examination of participants' specific feminist ideology was beyond the scope of the present study.

Importantly, not all participants suggested that feminism underlined their personal impetus to foster positive body image in their work. A few participants spoke of extremely unrealistic images as dated, unappealing to consumers and accordingly, irrelevant.

When you start to take these ridiculous shots of just insane levels of beauty or retouching and you just think it's a bit sad. […] It feels quite old to me when I see […] like 1990s over-retouched images, inauthentic models. And I think when people see that advertising, they actually reject it. [Executive Creative Director – Advertising – Male – 15+ years of experience]

However, it is viable that a resurgence of popular feminism was underlying the social trend rendering the extreme 'perfection' described by the participant above as dated. Indeed, several participants suggested this and continued to say that their own motivation to foster positive body image in their work was amplified due to the socio-political climate in which they felt progress for women's rights was being threatened. For example, several participants (on both sides of the Atlantic) referenced the current US President, well-known for his anti-immigration and anti-feminist actions, policies[4], and rhetoric (Siddiqui, 2018), as impetus for explicitly not reinforcing these views in their work.

Relatedly, nearly all of the participants interviewed after October 2017 referenced the viral #MeToo[5] movement in support of their rationale to represent more multifaceted, less objectified, non-sexualised portrayals of women. Specifically, in addition to showing greater diversity of appearance, showing non-sexualised images of women (e.g., "not pouting"; CEO – Fashion – Female – 5 years of industry experience) was viewed as important. It is possible that due to the recent widespread feminist public discourse about #MeToo, including multiple

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[4] For example, in 2017, Trump reinstated a "global gag rule" policy that restricted the US government from providing funds to international family-planning organizations that offer abortion-related services.
[5] A movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault, started by Tarana Burke, an American social activist and community organizer, in 2006. The movement went viral in October 2017 where women shared their stories of sexual harassment (particularly in the workplace) on social media, with the hashtag #MeToo.

high-profile cases of sexual harassment in the fashion and advertising industries (Spanier, 2018), participants were able to more fully realise, and better articulate, the link between sexual harassment, feminism, body image, and their work. While it is important to note that all participants in the present study were engaging in business activities to foster positive body image prior to #MeToo going viral, the movement seemed to give participants more evidence to underpin their rationale for thinking more carefully about how women are represented in their company's actions.

   3.1.1.2. Personal experience as a motivator to instigate change. Many women in the present study shared their own relationship with their body as way of explaining why they felt fostering positive body image in their work was important.

I am always quite conscious of the type of women that we represent in our ads, that they are not too skinny, or I don't want to create any…because I also, for instance, I suffered myself from an eating disorder so I'm always super conscious of the types of bodies that we actually put out there. [Creative Director – Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience]

Growing up, I certainly thought that you had to be a size 8 and that long straight hair was the answer, because that's all I saw. […] when you don't have anyone to represent you, you then try and change yourself to fit into, it's terrible, you know, you change yourself to try and be like the girl that you think you should be. Like should my nose be slimmer? […] Or, oh my god, my stomach looks a bit big, like I can't wear what she's wearing on the front of the magazine. [Global Brand & Comms Director – Beauty – Female – 10 years of industry experience]

   In contrast, while some men also told personal stories to explain their motivation in fostering positive body image, these stories were about their daughters, nieces, wives, or

mothers, rather than their own body image. This could reflect a gender difference in comfort in talking about personal experiences, rather than an absence of body image concerns per se.

> I, as a citizen want [more brands to foster positive body image] to happen […] I have two daughters and I worry about the world that they will inhabit, and I want it to be a better world for them. [CEO – Beauty – Male – 25+ years of industry experience]

In addition, there was the suggestion from several participants that personally experiencing the body image concerns caused by their industries provided motivation and necessary insight to catalyse change, which in turn implied that personal experience was considered a relevant form of expertise.

> I think bringing more people [into advertising] that actually suffered from those beauty rules and labels will break them [Creative Director – Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience].

3.1.2. Industry ingrained appearance standards. This theme considers some of the ingrained biases held by those working in fashion, advertising, and beauty. It was evident that narrow appearance ideals, particularly around slimness, permeated individual beliefs and industry workplace culture, and consequently acted as a major barrier to change. Notably, while aging, skin colour, complexion, body hair, and other visible differences away from conventional gendered appearance standards were occasionally discussed, body size and the ideal of slimness were consistently at the centre of the interviews. Further, participants were not immune from subscribing to societal appearance ideals and biases about weight despite wanting to foster positive body image.

3.1.2.1. Internalised appearance ideals. The majority of participants believed that most people in their industry had strong views on what it meant to be beautiful and thus, aspirational, and thus, profitable. Participants frequently commented that many people working in fashion, advertising, and beauty subscribed to the belief that, for women particularly, being thin was the epitome of aspiration as articulated in the following quote.

There's always the notion [in fashion and advertising that] sex sells, beauty sells, skinny is still the most beautiful […] a lot of people still believe that skinny is the most beautiful. [Senior Strategist – Advertising – Female – 8 years of industry experience]

Accordingly, participants explained that being bigger in size was not viewed as aspirational by the majority of the industry. Several participants gave specific examples of the negative views held by work colleagues, clients[6], and members of senior leadership towards being larger in size as way to explain why they were not often included in promotion and advertising campaigns.

There were people [in the company] that were very concerned that showing women of larger sizes would actually turn people [i.e., consumers] away […] that it wouldn't be aspirational. [CMO – Fashion – Female – 25 years industry experience]

The fact is we don't put fat, ugly people in adverts because the clients just wouldn't let you. […] The reality of how they [clients] speak and what they think is shocking. Like this particular client, well like I say, she's French, she's tiny, she basically starves herself, I never saw her eat anything and for her to say that about [client referenced to a slim female celebrity as a "fat pig"] who is not remotely fat, is kind of – well it shows you what we are up against doesn't it? You know, what are the chances of her ever casting someone remotely normal? [Creative Director – Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience]

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[6] Advertising agencies commonly refer to brands they are working for as 'clients'

As demonstrated above, occasionally when participants described the actions of others, they revealed some of their own unconscious biases. For example, the creative director above used 'fat' and 'ugly' together, implying they are one of the same, yet was also appalled of how this client spoke about other women's bodies.

Other participants appeared to be more openly accepting of this industry norm privileging thinner bodies. In the following quote, one participant justifies the fashion industry's preference of thin models, but then states she is not "defending" these actions, perhaps indicating some cognitive dissonance.

It's very easy to make a tall, skinny girl look good in the clothes because it's simpler. It's just a simpler process because they hang neatly, you put them on a mannequin and the skinny girls don't have anything to bump against when they walk. I'm not saying, I'm not defending this by the way. [CEO – PR – Female – 25+ years of industry experience]

However, it is unsurprising that some of the participants may have internalised some of the appearance norms and ideals of their respective industries after so many years immersed within them. For some participants, certain industry conventions such as catwalk model size seemed so embedded within the culture and practice of fashion, they found it difficult to question them despite being supportive and instigating other aspects of industry change.

3.1.2.2. Appearance-ideal workplace cultures. Participants observed that there was little diversity within their industry workforce and suggested both explicitly and implicitly that this perpetuated the promotion of narrow appearance ideals in industry outputs (e.g., clothing sizes, advertising imagery) as well as appearance insecurities among employees. While these conversations centred again on body size, many participants also mentioned older women, people of colour, and disabled individuals as underrepresented and less visible in the workplace.

There aren't very many people who work in advertising who display, quote 'a diverse

body image'. They are by and large similar looking […] there aren't many […] very big

people. [Chairman – Advertising – Male – 25+ years of industry experience]

Interestingly, while participants occasionally referred to industry initiatives to address the

lack of certain markers of diversity (e.g., race) within the workforce, there was never mention

of addressing the lack of size diversity.

Participants spoke about the narrow appearance stereotypes within their industry and

some describing times when they felt pressure from their industry to conform to appearance

ideals or felt more insecure about their body at work. Several participants also reflected on

what it might feel like at work if a person did not fit a certain aesthetic or body type.

…because if you are not a cool guy in advertising, then what are you? If you are a

woman, there is that kind of pressure to look a certain way, to look hip, to be thin, to be

wearing something very fashionable, something very in style. […] The stereotype is the

skinny, pretty, account person and it's the cool, young creative guys [Group Creative

Director – Advertising – Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

Significantly, participants tended to relate this pressure to the patriarchal culture dominating

their industries, with more pressure placed on women. Further, there was the implication that

this culture was often internalised and replicated by women working in industry.

Relatedly, participants spoke about their own appearance concerns (e.g., wanting to lose

weight) and shared concerns of disordered eating among colleagues (as above with the

creative director's client) and being preoccupied with their weight and appearance. Several

participants also noted that appearance and body talk were often part of everyday

conversations in the office, a common practice among women, but, as noted in the research,

an unhelpful one (Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2017). However, while participants appeared

genuinely concerned for the well-being of their employees and colleagues on issues related to

body image and disordered eating, few spoke of systemically addressing this from a business perspective. Rather, they spoke about offering personal support, if they noticed any change in behaviour or appearance. This implied a belief among participants that employees' body image was not considered a responsibility of the industry.

   3.1.2.3. Weight bias and concerns around health. Beyond the internalised appearance ideals and the steadfast belief that thin is more beautiful and aspirational, weight bias, including negative stereotypes towards people who are larger in size, was reported as common across the three industries. While weight bias is ubiquitous in society more broadly (Puhl & Heuer, 2010), weight bias among those in fashion, advertising, and beauty is concerning because of the power and influence they have in communicating and cultivating societal appearance ideals. Participants often spoke quite openly describing weight bias within their industry. For example, a chairman (male, 25+ years of industry experience) of an advertising agency said, "I'm sure that there is a prejudice that fat people are lazy in advertising."

   Significantly, internalised weight bias was apparent in the views of a subset of the participants, particularly when weight was discussed in relation to health. Here, it was apparent that slimness (although not extreme thinness) was viewed as an indicator of health, while being of higher weight was a sign of poor health. Participants described their own reservations about including people of higher weight in their advertising due to concerns about promoting unhealthy lifestyle behaviours as a result. These concerns about health correspond with research documenting weight stigmatising public health rhetoric and media more broadly (McClure, Puhl, & Heuer, 2011). Interestingly, participants often distinguished between 'healthy' larger bodies (i.e., those that were toned and on the smaller end of the plus-size clothes range) and 'unhealthy' larger bodies, with the implication that the former was acceptable by virtue of looking healthy.

Whether anyone says in the advertising industry or not, much much larger people with weight problems that are like a health risk, it's just not something that you do. And I think also, just personally […] I don't think that anybody should promote unhealthy sizes. I think it's a public health risk, and when I look at some of the work by like [plus size clothing brand name] about celebrating…I'm just like why are you celebrating someone's early death is how I feel. [Group Strategy Director – Advertising – Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

Now you shouldn't make those people feel bad about themselves because everyone should be able to have a positive body image, but is it okay to celebrate someone being morbidly obese? Well, no. Because it has a huge impact on your health and well-being. [Global Head of PR– Beauty – Female – 10+ years of industry experience]

Some participants implied that showing larger models was socially irresponsible in relation to public health in the same way that they felt showing very thin models. Showing larger models was viewed as unhealthy as it was perceived to promote over consumption and under exercise, mirroring prior research exploring consumers' views on larger models (Diedrichs, Lee, & Kelly, 2011). This subtheme is in contrast to research that finds that positive body image regardless of actual body size is associated with engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviours (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Consequently, it seemed that fostering positive body image from a business perspective was conceptualised based on reducing perceived harm via reducing the use of ultra-thin models, rather than about radically challenging society's appearance ideals. It was evident that internalised appearance ideals and weight bias may limit the extent to which these individuals can conceptualise and support ways to promote positive body image across a range of business actions.

There were a few exceptions whereby some participants were attempting to redefine aspiration altogether, moving it away from purely aesthetic values to being about ways being or thinking, and so arguably demonstrated a deeper understanding of positive body image.

Instead of resorting to physical aspiration, that a woman should aspire to be physically perfect in some way, we would use attitudes for aspiration. We created a campaign that was full of women that we describe as having a "don't give a damn attitude," so they are confident, they are strong, they are confident in themselves, and they don't care what other people think of them. [Chief Strategy Officer – Advertising – Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

However, is unclear in the example above whether this philosophy transcended across this agencies' work or rather was a just good fit for that particular campaign. Certainly, there was less optimism that redefining aspiration away from aesthetic characteristics was a viable industry-wide goal.

3.1.3. Business barriers to fostering positive body image. This theme explores some of the business pressures participants described in relation to fostering positive body image in their work. Since the fashion, advertising, and beauty industries have all traditionally profited from promoting narrow appearance ideals, actions to foster positive body image were positioned as antithetical to the status quo. In turn, disrupting the status quo was viewed as a risk, both at an organisational and individual level. Consequently, underlying this theme was a sense of fear around making mistakes which could lead to negative business and personal repercussions, as well as a sense of isolation or lack of community. Power within and between organisations was also relevant in this theme as well as patriarchal infrastructures.

3.1.3.1. Brands are inherently risk-averse. Participants working at creative or PR agencies observed that brands were inherently risk averse. However, since brands typically commissioned agencies, this had inevitable repercussions on the parameters of the creative or PR agencies' work. Therefore, as brands often held the power in brand-agency relationships, understanding brands' aversion to risk seemed important in identifying avenues to change how different bodies are represented.

Participants felt that the pressure to generate shareholder value (i.e., profit) was central to brands' risk-aversion. The success of a brand, as well as the performance of those leading a brand, seemed to be primarily measured by share prices or profit. Subsequently, participants noted that if an action (i.e., promoting appearance ideals) was profitable, there was little business incentive to change, either at a brand or individual level.

> If something sells, clients [brands] don't want to change that formula because they are worried it will stop selling […] they see no reason to change it. I think they are, a lot of clients are risk averse, if they know something is working, they don't want to rock the boat." [Global Head of Strategy – Advertising – Female - 15+ years of industry experience].

Accordingly, participants implied that those working in brands were often fearful of taking action that went against the status quo in case it would negatively impact profit and consequently, their personal careers. As noted in the quote below, this could affect an individual's chances for promotion and a bonus, since the reward structure in brands centred on profit. Notably, those in advertising were also predominately incentivised on profit through creating profitable campaigns or promotion. However, there was also recognition for creativity and social impact through industry awards like Cannes Lion.

> There's a focus on short term sales. It's about getting things off-shelf. And that's related to tenure. You see a lot of marketing directors only in their roles for a couple of years at a

time so that long-term brand building piece is not something they're interested in. They

are probably being bonused on delivering sales, short term ROI [return on investment] and

so if they've got assets, they are going to use, simple as that. [Global Strategy Director –

Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience]

As noted above, high staff turnover or mobility within large conglomerates meant that

employees did not have time to develop a deep understanding of social purpose work aligned

to different brands. If body image was not a personal interest or was not a common focus

across multiple brands, insight and investment would be lacking. In this way, larger brands

were held back by bureaucracy. Meanwhile, smaller brands were seen as more agile to take

risks and try new ways of working, although they often had less advertising spending power

compared to large legacy brands.

   3.1.3.2. A lack of community. In relation to an aversion to risk, participants revealed

a lack of community, and in turn, security connected to doing work to foster positive body

image. Significantly, participants almost unanimously stated that taking action to foster

positive body image would be easier if more companies and business stakeholders were

doing it.

   As more people do it, more will follow. There's such a herd mentality in this industry.

   [Group Head of Strategy - Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience].

Notably, this quote above suggests that not just brands are risk averse, with those in

advertising also wanting security when working outside of the status quo. Some participants

spoke about wanting spaces for people in industry to come together to discuss how to foster

positive body image, implying a desire for community on this issue. While participants were

generally against regulation, they were often in favour of industry-wide commitments,

perhaps to clarify the 'correct' course of action as well as providing safety in numbers.

In the absence of industry standards or established corporate governance in connection with fostering positive body image, participants presented additional practical challenges in cases where other stakeholders were not aligned. For example, many participants described difficulties when other stakeholders (e.g., modelling/casting agencies, photographers, stock image providers) were not on board with fostering positive body image. This rendered the work more time consuming, which links back to profit.

> I think one of the challenges is that it's not us alone, so we have to look at casting agencies bringing in a broader pool of talent [i.e., more diverse range models or actors for ads] [Partner – Advertising – Female – 15+ years of industry experience]

Finally, participants reflected on a broader sense of fear and lack of confidence at engaging on the topic of body image as doing something differently would make them stand out and open them up to criticism if they made mistakes.

> It is a scary thing to do though because once you start to bring yourself into this conversation, you are continuously looked at. […] brands will always be cautious getting into a conversation that they can't sustain. [CEO – PR – Female – 25+ years of industry experience]

Accordingly, it seemed that more insights and education would be useful to be able to effectively foster positive body image while making a profit.

> Sometimes you will get it wrong. […] You can't buy textbooks that tell you how to do this and just like, simply apply them […], and learning is a cost. [CEO – Beauty – Male – 25+ years of industry experience]

Further, as several participants highlighted, with more brands operating in this space to foster positive body image, there stands be more competition related to effectively drive change on population body image, thus raising the bar on social impact as well as business outcomes.

3.1.3.3. Power and the patriarchy. Many participants pointed to the patriarchal ecosystem that dominated their industries as a barrier to fostering positive body image among women. Participants described that men often have an imbalance of power and so have the authority to specify what qualifies as beautiful, desirable, and therefore 'aspirational' for women. This 'male gaze' ties in with objectification theory whereby viewing idealised, sexualised images on women leads to self-objectification and consequently body shame and dissatisfaction (Moradi, 2010). Further, the lack of diversity and female leadership within fashion, beauty, and advertising has been noted elsewhere (Bain, 2019; Shapiro, 2018; Stewart, 2018).

> Most of the [fashion] companies, if you look at luxury, your main companies, the big companies, they are run by white men. Now, what do you know about a woman's body when you are a white man? Nothing. [CEO – Fashion – Female – 5 years of industry experience]

> You still have this very male dominated force within the advertising world that's making the core decisions on well, what does that women look like. […] and men in particular, are always going to cast women who look a certain way. [Group Creative Director – Advertising – Female – 25+ years of industry experience]

Accordingly, participants often viewed gender equality and increased diversity in leadership teams as a tangible solution to disrupting the influence of the 'male gaze' in their industry and to generating more appearance inclusive creative content (e.g., advertising) and products (e.g., a broad range of clothes sizes, foundation colours suitable for all skin tones).

> When you have women that run companies or run a creative team or act as brand directors or act as CEOs, they are much more open to representing a spectrum of body types for women. [Global Head of Brand – Fashion - Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

What I'm trying to do is get more women, and people of colour making the media. That

kind of self corrects this problem [of unrealistic beauty ideals] because then you've got,

kind of, not necessary an insurance that this will happen, but a likelihood that women will

[…] feature more dimensional women. [CEO – Advertising – Female – 25+ years of

industry experience]

On this point, given that most of the participants were women and that body image was

situated as a predominantly female issue, it is interesting to consider whether disrupting the

patriarchal culture within these industries may positively influence the representation of male

bodies since research has also noted lack of diversity in men's fashion advertisements for

example (Barry, 2014)

    3.1.4. Fostering positive body image as an effective CSR strategy. This final theme

explores whether fostering positive body image is an effective CSR strategy for the fashion,

advertising, and beauty industries. On balance, participants implied that taking action to

foster positive body image could serve to engage multiple business stakeholders and thus

could yield a competitive advantage. Significantly, given the emphasis on profit for the

sustainability of social actions in business, participants spoke about how fostering positive

body image could be profitable. However, participants also highlighted important caveats

where they felt actions to foster positive body image could backfire and have adverse effects

for business. Accordingly, they stressed the need for businesses to think deeply about how to

engage on the topic of body image to garner positive results.

    3.1.4.1. Fostering positive body image and a competitive advantage. Following the

first theme about the personal relevance of fostering body image, participants stated that they

found work that was more inclusive of appearance diversity was more rewarding and

engaging. By developing and leading work that was in line with their personal values

(thereby fostering value congruence), it is possible that participants (and other employees)

were less likely to experience cognitive dissonance in their work. This is relevant as cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962) argues that employees experience job dissatisfaction when their work actions (behaviours) and beliefs/values are incongruent. In contrast, when an individual's values and worked are aligned, they are more likely to experience a 'flow' state, that is, being in a state of complete concentration, experiencing clarity of goals, losing self-conscious rumination (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). This is potentially particularly relevant for creatives as 'flow' is associated with enhanced creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Several creative participants (i.e., those in advertising) expressed a dislike for working on advertising that reinforces, and portrays, homogenous appearance ideals as they felt it stifled creativity.

> I mean to be honest, I don't like working on beauty brands. […] because there's this kind of set way of doing things - it's very much about how things look like, so it is all about appearance and it is all about a swoosh of the hair or the perfect skin and the beautiful people all having to make this brand look like it's going to make you look beautiful. And for me, I find it very fake and very frustrating in terms of the creativity because I suppose my history and what I like doing is quite different ideas. [Creative Director – Advertising – Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

Relatedly, participants frequently reported that business actions to foster positive body image boosted engagement and satisfaction among their staff and peers, reflecting the literature on the benefits of CSR for employee engagement and job satisfaction (Glavas, 2016). Some participants felt that business actions to externally foster positive body image benefited employees' body image as well, as noted in the following quote.

> "[Our employees] are really passionate about our messages [to foster positive body image] for themselves as well as for our consumers…. So, people are really enthusiastic about getting the message out and I think that's good for everyone's body confidence as well." [Head of PR & Marketing – Fashion – Female – 10+ years of industry experience]

It is possible, for example, that by including more representative models in campaigns or having more inclusive product ranges (e.g., clothing sizes), positive messaging around bodies and appearance in external facing work, permeated the workplace culture to have a positive effect on employees. This is significant given the observation above in theme two that many individuals working within fashion, advertising and beauty feel pressure to conform to narrow appearance ideals. Further, in line with existing research, by encouraging employees to participate in CSR activities (in this case, fostering positive body image) businesses can build a sense deeper organisational commitment and loyalty with their employees, factors associated with employee retention and effort (Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun, 2008).

In addition to the positive impact on employees, participants also highlighted how fostering positive body image could garner a competitive advantage via valuable media coverage, press, and social media influencer endorsements. Participants noted that in addition to the fact that the media want to discuss body image because it was topical, it was also a way for brands to connect with journalists (and social media influencers) who had similar values. Interestingly, as noted in the quote below, this was linked to women working together and building connection through the topic of body image.

> And that's why whenever we did a campaign with [fashion brand], it was so successful, because we worked with female journalists who wanted to write about that stuff. Like anything we ever did about body positivity […] people loved it and the reason why was because we were speaking to the demographic. And these women want, they are hungry for this kind of really positive body image stuff. [CEO – PR – Female – 20+ years of industry experience]

Body image, it seemed, was an effective way to build solidarity and connection across female business stakeholders (e.g., employees, journalists) who resonated with the issue of body image. This is significant as research indicates that the impact of CSR on overall business

performance (i.e., profit) depends on the ability of CSR to influence a business' stakeholders (Barnett, 2007). Based on the present research however, is it unclear whether the same can be said for men and other genders. Therefore, more work is required to connect and engage with non-female identifying business stakeholders on the issue of body image.

      3.1.4.2. Is fostering positive body image profitable? Most participants believed that, in the long-term, actions to foster positive body image was profitable for businesses in fashion, advertising, and beauty.

> Of course [fostering positive body image is] going to be profitable. It won't be profitable
> necessarily in the short- term, it will be a long-term game [Head of Strategy – Advertising
> - Female – 15+ years of industry experience]

This reflects research that overall CSR efforts do not harm profits and, particularly, when evaluated in the long-term, they may be beneficial to a business' bottom line (Eccles et al., 2014). Further, participants suggested that by being inclusive in representation and products to accommodate bodies of different shapes and sizes, businesses can create shared value, meeting a social and business need, and therefore is profitable (Porter & Kramer, 2006)

> When you have all these brands that are stopping at a (US) size 6, they are just leaving
> dollars on the table on top of making women feel excluded. [Senior Vice President –
> Fashion - Male – 10+ years of industry experience]

      In addition, participants spoke about the benefits of fostering position body image on building consumer loyalty, which in turn is associated to positive financial returns (Du et al., 2011). However, participants often also acknowledged it was difficult to tangibly measure the impact of social actions on company profits in isolation (e.g., without considering product quality, wider market conditions), consistent with the research on CSR (Eccles et al., 2014). This is helpful in contextualising the earlier finding concerning a lack of data to conclusively

support the profitability with fostering body image, as the relationship between CSR and profit is undoubtedly complex.

Importantly however, participants cautioned that engaging on body image was not a short-term strategy and there was a risk of campaigns backfiring if they were perceived as being tokenistic. Some participants provided examples of one-off positive body image campaigns that provoked cynicism among consumers and other stakeholders (e.g., press) as they were perceived as inauthentic. This perhaps relates to the CSR paradox whereby social actions by businesses serve to raise awareness of a social issue but do not benefit the brand in terms of reputation or profit. Indeed, this paradox was found in the context of a brand promoting positive body image whereby the campaign messages were well received by consumers and yielded positive attitudes towards the campaign issue, but the brand was not viewed more favourably as a result of the campaign (Johnson-Young & Magee, 2019). This study potentially reveals how consumers can respond to isolated campaigns. Conversely, a recent qualitative study found young women had positive reactions (including favourable brand perceptions and purchase intentions) in response to a brand's commitment to increase the use of diverse models while also not digitally altering models' images (Rodgers et al., 2019 in press).

Accordingly, several participants stressed that for social action to be profitable, it needed to be embedded in the DNA of the brand. Notably, as one brand director of a fashion company [female – 20+ years of industry experience] stated, "no one brand can be everything to everyone […] you need to come back to why." In line with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), the success of CSR actions is dependent on the investment all business stakeholders (Barnett, 2007; Rangan, Chase, & Karim, 2015). Specifically, studies suggest that best practice CSR initiatives are aligned with the companies' business purpose, the values of the

companies' stakeholders, and the needs of the communities in which the companies operate (Rangan et al., 2015).

3.2. Reflexive Analysis

Reflexivity is central to the quality of qualitative research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). An important reflection in the present study was the positionality of the first author relative to the participants in how may have shaped the data and interpretation. One way to consider positionality is through insider/outsider status; a researcher is considered an 'insider' when they belong to the same group as their participants while an 'outsider' is not a member of that group (Hellawell, 2006). As a PhD psychology student, the first author was an outsider to the participants, who were all working in either fashion, beauty, advertising or PR. This outsider status was seen as advantageous in the interviews as it allowed the first author to ask 'naïve questions' and maintain a critical stance (Hellawell, 2006). In response, participants were open and generous in conversation, providing examples and clarification where needed. The only information that was rarely shared was specific information regarding revenue in response to campaigns, it is possible participants may have been legally bound not to disclose such information.

Importantly, though the first author was an outsider by occupation, prior to data collection she immersed herself with the academic literature on business social purpose strategy in addition to the broader grey literature on body image and social responsibility in fashion, beauty, and advertising. She also attended several business and advertising conferences, as well as networking events on CSR and inclusion, diversity, and representation. This background was useful for building mutual understanding, trust, and rapport with participants, as well as for contextualising responses.

Further, given the focus of this study on body image, the identity and appearance of the first author are potentially relevant to the way in which interactions with participations

unfolded. First, as a woman, the first author had an insider status with the majority of participants, where there was some shared understanding in reference to objectification of women, gendered appearance pressures, and body image concerns. This may have evoked greater comfort with the female participants to speak freely and very personally on these issues. Second, the body size of the first author may have played a role in informing participants' responses. It is possible that weight bias comments may not have been so frequent or overt had the first author been in a bigger body. Again, this may be a product of insider effects where participants and the first author were all 'straight size' (i.e., not plus) and there was perhaps an assumption that there was a shared view that being larger in size was not desirable from a health or aesthetic perspective.

A final reflection concerns the broader context of engaging with business on a social issue like body image. Feminist scholars have critiqued corporations for capitalising on the social movement of body positivity and women's empowerment under the umbrella of 'femvertising' whereby neoliberal, feminist language is used in advertising to appeal to stakeholders, but beauty is still sold and capitalism profits (Gill & Elias, 2014; Johnson & Taylor, 2008). To this end, the 'beauty myth' (Wolf, 1991) is not dismantled in this work and businesses attempting to foster positive body image is labelled as "insidious" and an "appropriation of feminist themes" (Johnson & Taylor, 2008, p. 955). There is an argument that such campaigns can do more harm than good as they "reproduce and legitimize the hegemony of beauty ideology in women's personal lives in the service of expanding sales and corporate growth" (Johnson & Taylor, 2008, p. 961). These arguments need to be considered and continually referred to as this work progresses in how to improve body image environments at a societal level. However, given the power and influence of business in society, compounded with the harm that promotion of narrow beauty standards has on body

image and well-being (Levine & Murnen, 2009), attenuating this harm in conjunction with business seems a practical first step in improving population body image.

3.3. Strengths and Limitations

The present study has several important strengths. First, this study makes a novel contribution to the academic literature on body image by introducing a previously absent business perspective on the topic of body image. By systematically investigating the viewpoints of business leaders in fashion, beauty, and advertising, the findings from the present study stand to help body image researchers to work more efficiently and effectively with businesses to create an environment that is less detrimental to body image. Second, the current study directly considers what is required to translate evidence-based strategies (e.g., greater diversity of body image in advertisements; Diedrichs & Lee, 2011) into practice. This stands to help direct future body image research aimed at business and open avenues for more research-practice collaboration. Third, the potential for impact of this study is enhanced due to the heterogeneous nature of the sample and power of the participants themselves. Including participants working in different leadership roles across three major industries allowed for the generation of macro-level, transferable themes that may resonate among others working in industry. Subsequent research would be useful to provide more in-depth insights to specific industries (e.g., fashion) or sectors within an industry (e.g., fashion magazines).

As with any study, there are limitations to this research. These will be considered using specific quality criteria for qualitative research, which suggests that concepts such as reliability and generalisability are suitable only for a quantitative approach (Patton, 2002). While efforts were made to make participants feel comfortable in speaking as candidly as possible (e.g., participants chose the location or method of communication for the interviews), it is important to note that participants may have been bound by legal contracts

to not disclose proprietary information that may have been of relevance to this study (e.g., expenditure and profits) or were legally prohibited from disparaging their brand, company, clients, or competitors. In addition, it is acknowledged that approximately half of those who were invited to participate declined to take part in the research. There is a possibility that the final sample was biased towards those who are more invested in the topic of body image and so were more willing to give their time and insight to participate. Although the majority of participants were women in the present study, this seemed to reflect the reality of industry practice at the time of the interviews. Interestingly, of those approached, proportionately more men accepted the invitation to participate in the present study. Finally, this research is limited to the fashion, beauty, and advertising industries, and individuals primarily in leadership positions. Future research should consider similar research questions with other appearance-related industries, such as the diet, fitness and cosmetic surgery industries. It will also be important to follow up the present study by gathering the perspectives of a larger sample of employees across a range of roles and levels of experience.

4. Conclusion

Findings from the present study indicate that when done well and consistently, actions to foster positive body image yield a competitive advantage for business as they provide opportunities to positively engage with multiple (predominantly female) stakeholders including employees, consumers, and media through a connection over shared (feminist) values and an alignment with a wider social movement. Said another way, by *authentically* fostering positive body image, businesses can create shared value for both business and society, generating profit and, at least, minimising harm on population body image. However, it was clear from the present study, that profit is central to business success and thus the sustainability of social purpose agendas. Therefore, further work documenting the financial

incentives of fostering positive body image as well as the broader business case is essential to systemic change.

In addition, it is worth reflecting on other barriers to widespread industry change on the topic of body image detailed in the present study and considering avenues of positive disruption. For example, while the fear of promoting unhealthy lifestyle behaviours through the inclusion of larger bodies suggests internalised weight bias and/ or a lack of insight of positive body image and the relationship between weight and health, it also indicates concern for social impact and population well-being. Therefore, collaboration between body image researchers and businesses could be useful to provide education and training on positive body image and weight bias. This could be included as part of industry inclusion and diversity initiatives, as well as in relevant degree and apprenticeship programmes. For example, Christel's (2018) fat pedagogy in fashion design, teaching fashion students to dress larger bodies while attempting to reduce weight bias, appears to have positive preliminary outcomes. Since participants noted that high turnover is common in industry and acts as a barrier to implementing successful strategies, continued conversations and learning across teams may help create a sense of shared understanding and awareness.

In sum, this study argues that including business strategies to foster positive body image is an important yet overlooked avenue to improve population body image that can complement existing individual-level actions, government policy work and social activism. In line with CSR theory and research, stakeholder perspectives are crucial to understand how businesses can successfully create business and social impact. Therefore, this study contributes to the field by presenting the views of 45 leaders in fashion, beauty and advertising on the topic of body image.

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Table 1.

Participant demographics by industry

	ALL	Fashion	Beauty	Agency
	(*N* = 45)	(*n* = 14)	(*n* = 8)	(*n* = 23)
Gender				
Men (%)	8 (18%)	3 (21%)	2 (25%)	3 (17%)
Women (%)	37 (82%)	11 (79%)	6 (75%)	20 (83%)
Mean Age (SD)	42.4 (9.8)	46.0 (11.9)	38.8 (10.0)	42.2 (8.2)
Missing	*4*	*1*	*0*	*3*
Ethnicity				
White (%)	37 (82%)	13 (93%)	7 (87.5%)	17 (74%)
Mixed Race (%)	2 (4.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (4%)
Asian (%)	2 (4.5%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Hispanic (%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (17%)
Location				
UK (%)	32 (78%)	12 (86%)	6 (87.5%)	14 (61%)
USA (%)	12 (20%)	2 (14%)	2 (12.5%)	8 (35%)
Other (%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Mean Year of Industry Experience (SD)	17.3 (7.9)	17.7 (10.5)	13.5 (8.2)	17.4 (5.7)
Missing	*12*	*3*	*2*	*7*

Table 2.

Summary of participants were affiliated with at time of interview based on business size.

Number of Employees	ALL (*N* = 45)	Fashion (*n* = 14)	Beauty (*n* = 8)	Agency (*n* = 23)
Small and Medium Size Businesses	**21**	**6**	**2**	**13**
1- 49	12	5	-	7
50-249	9	1	2	6
Large Corporations	**22**	**7**	**6**	**9**
250-999	7	4	-	3
1,000+	6	2	-	4
10,000+	9	1	6	2
n/a	**2**	**1**	**-**	**1**

Table 3.

Summary of themes and subthemes.

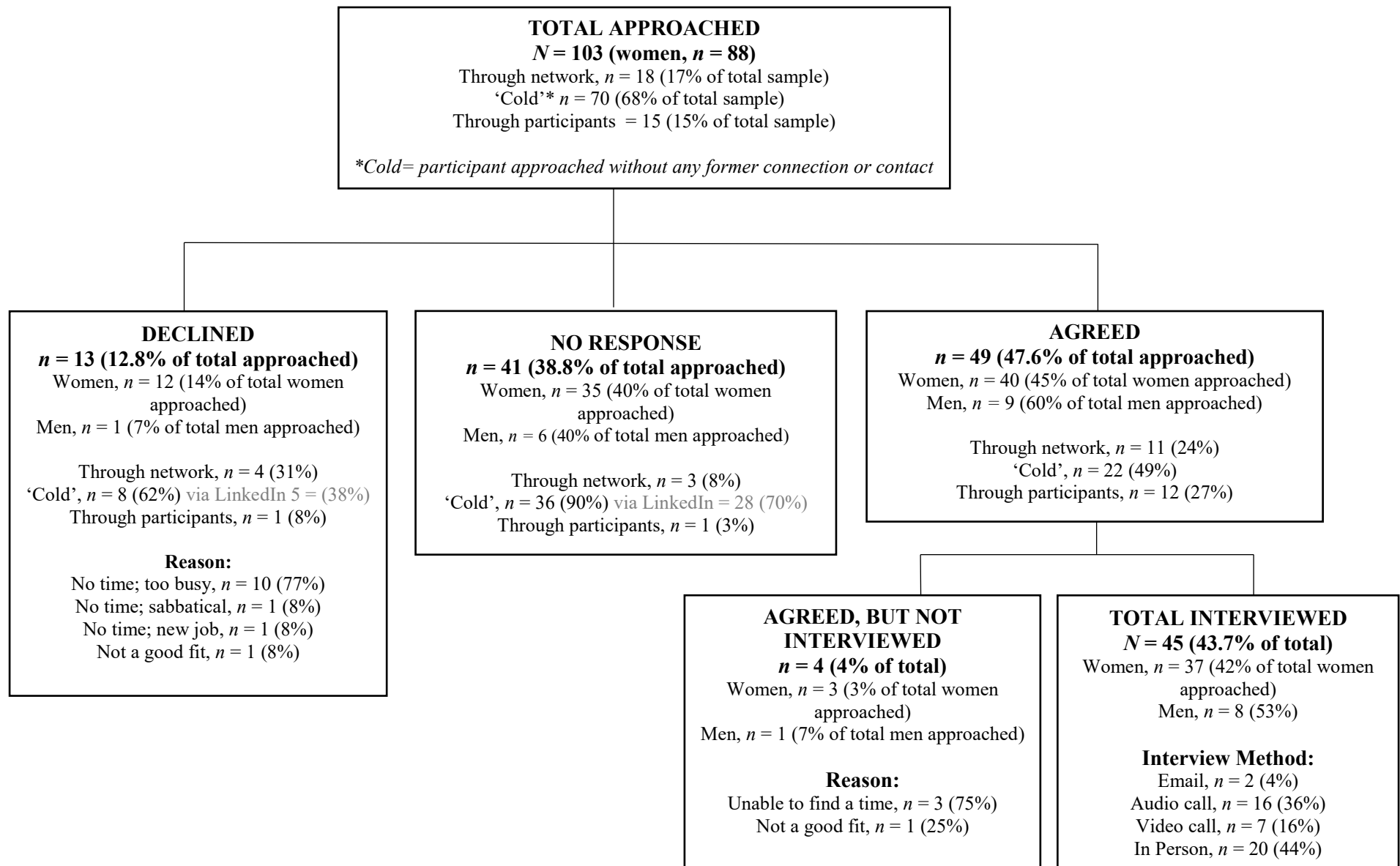| Theme	Sub-Theme
1. Personal Motivations for Championing Change	1.1. Fostering positive body image in line with feminist values
	1.2. Personal experience as a motivator to instigate change
2. Industry Ingrained Appearance Standards	2.1. Internalised appearance ideals
	2.2. Appearance ideal workplace cultures
	2.3. Weight bias and concerns around health
3. Business Barriers to Fostering Positive Body Image	3.1. Brands are inherently risk-averse
	3.2. A lack of community
	3.3. Power and the patriarchy
4. Fostering Positive Body Image as an Effective CSR Strategy	4.1. Fostering positive body image and competitive advantage
	4.2. Is fostering positive body image profitable?

TOTAL APPROACHED
N = 103 (women, n = 88)
Through network, n = 18 (17% of total sample)
'Cold'* n = 70 (68% of total sample)
Through participants = 15 (15% of total sample)

Cold= participant approached without any former connection or contact

DECLINED
n = 13 (12.8% of total approached)
Women, n = 12 (14% of total women approached)
Men, n = 1 (7% of total men approached)

Through network, n = 4 (31%)
'Cold', n = 8 (62%) via LinkedIn 5 = (38%)
Through participants, n = 1 (8%)

Reason:
No time; too busy, n = 10 (77%)
No time; sabbatical, n = 1 (8%)
No time; new job, n = 1 (8%)
Not a good fit, n = 1 (8%)

NO RESPONSE
n = 41 (38.8% of total approached)
Women, n = 35 (40% of total women approached)
Men, n = 6 (40% of total men approached)

Through network, n = 3 (8%)
'Cold', n = 36 (90%) via LinkedIn = 28 (70%)
Through participants, n = 1 (3%)

AGREED
n = 49 (47.6% of total approached)
Women, n = 40 (45% of total women approached)
Men, n = 9 (60% of total men approached)

Through network, n = 11 (24%)
'Cold', n = 22 (49%)
Through participants, n = 12 (27%)

AGREED, BUT NOT INTERVIEWED
n = 4 (4% of total)
Women, n = 3 (3% of total women approached)
Men, n = 1 (7% of total men approached)

Reason:
Unable to find a time, n = 3 (75%)
Not a good fit, n = 1 (25%)

TOTAL INTERVIEWED
N = 45 (43.7% of total)
Women, n = 37 (42% of total women approached)
Men, n = 8 (53%)

Interview Method:
Email, n = 2 (4%)
Audio call, n = 16 (36%)
Video call, n = 7 (16%)
In Person, n = 20 (44%)

Figure 1. Recruitment Flow Chart

Appendix

Interview Schedule

Introduction Questions **[5 minutes]**	a	Briefly tell me about your role at [insert name of company] - *Prompt: What are your key responsibilities / priorities?*
	b	Can you also briefly tell me about [insert name of company] - *Prompt: What's its mission / vision?* - *Prompt: How it positioned in the marketplace / USP?*
RQ 1. How do business leaders in the fashion, beauty, and advertising industries view the topic of body image as it relates to their industry? **[10-12 minutes]**	1.1	Do you think the topic of body image is relevant in the [x] industry? How? - *Prompt: When is it relevant or to whom?* - *Prompt: Is body image more / less relevant for other industries? Why?*
	1.2	Do you think it's possible for [name of industry] to make a difference to people's body image? How? - *Prompt: What actions - positive and negative?* - *Prompt: Who's body image? Consumers / the public / young people / individuals working in the industry?*
	1.3	Do you think there is anything [name of industry] should be actively doing or not doing related to body image? Why?

	1.4	Now considering your company specifically, is the topic of body image relevant? How? - Prompt: Where? (e.g., PR / branding & communications / employee engagement / CSR) - Prompt: Why more / less relevant to the industry as a whole?
	1.5	Do you think it is possible for your company specifically to make a different to people's body image?

RQ 2. What are business opportunities and challenges associated with taking action to foster positive body image? **[10-12 minutes]**	2.1	What do you think might be some of the main opportunities for businesses in your industry to take actions to foster positive body image? - Prompt: What have been some of the advantages for your company? - Prompt: Why would a business in your industry try and foster positive body image in the future?
	2.2	What might be some disadvantages for businesses in your industry to take actions to foster positive body image? - Prompt: what might attenuate these disadvantages?
	2.3	Why do you think we don't see more businesses taking action to foster positive body image? - Prompt: what are the main barriers?
RQ 3: What conditions are necessary for businesses to actively try and foster positive body image? **[7-10 minutes]**	3.1	What would it take for more companies in your industry to take any actions to foster positive body image?
	3.2	What would it mean to your business if more companies in your industry took actions to foster positive body image? - Prompt: Would your business need to do anything differently?
Closing	c	Is there anything else relevant to this discussion that we haven't yet covered?