

## *The Body Positivity Movement: Bettering College Women's Body Image and Health*

### **Project Objectives**

My goals with this research are to better understand how familiar college women are with the body positivity movement and whether or not their body image has changed due to the impact of the movement. Unfortunately, women are subject to unrealistic body standards that are ever-changing and unattainable. Because of this, it has become more common for women to have unhealthy body image, which can lead to the development of several illnesses such as depression, anxiety, as well as eating disorders. Dr. Jake Linardon states that in more than 50,000 adults, 60% of women thought that they were too heavy, 30% reported feeling very uncomfortable in a swimsuit, and 20% thought they were unattractive (Linardon, 2022). The issue of negative body image among young women continues to harm their mental as well as physical health.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

I will be researching how the body positivity movement is affecting college women's body image and health. More specifically, I will be analyzing the attitudes of college women attending MTSU to see if and how the body positivity movement has affected their body image and therefore, their health (most specifically their mental health). I will be collecting my data by sending out a survey via Qualtrics to all undergraduate students who identify as female.

### **Project Significance to Marketing Field**

After collecting my data, I plan to offer a call to action directed towards fashion companies. I am confident that with my research, I will be able to suggest which types of advertisements and marketing attempts are most successful in inflicting positive change upon women's body image and health. The falsification of advertisement images through the means of

airbrushing, photoshopping, etc. leaves an unrealistic impression of what the standard of beauty is for women. Researchers Susannah Woodbury and Emma Parkhurst claim that excessive exposure to edited and unrealistic advertisements “causes poor body image, which can trigger disordered eating, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, shame, eating disorders, self-hatred, depression, and low self-esteem” (Woodbury & Parkhurst, 2021). This issue is extremely relevant especially as social media becomes more accessible to the younger generation. Although I am conducting my research with college aged women, my hope is that the result of my study will positively impact the younger generations of girls. With a deeper understanding of how these marketing campaigns are affecting college aged women, I can determine what the best action is for large fashion companies to combat this issue.

### **How Project Differs from Prior URECA Projects**

A review of prior URECA projects indicates that there have been few research projects for the marketing discipline. Therefore, this project is unique in that it would investigate a topic not previously researched for URECA in the past. The information provided in the report would be beneficial to not only the fashion industry but managers across a wide variety of industries as well.

### **Role of the Mentor**

Dr. Lucy Matthews will be a guide to me throughout my research. I will continue to meet with her on a weekly basis to discuss progress as well as to receive feedback on the literature of my project. She will also help me analyze the data so that I may draw accurate conclusions from my research. I’m currently a junior marketing major and I presented my research proposal during scholar’s week this year, Spring of 2023. I was honored to receive 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the competition of undergraduate presenters from the Jones College of Business. My ultimate goal is to have my research presented at the Atlantic Marketing Association Conference and for journal publication.

## References

- Linardon, J. (2022, February 25). *Body image statistics 2022: 47+ shocking facts & stats*. Break Binge Eating. Retrieved February 6, 2023, from <https://breakbingeeating.com/body-image-statistics/>
- Woodbury, S., & Parkhurst, E. (2021, November 5). *How body image affects mental health*. Utah State University. Retrieved February 6, 2023, from <https://extension.usu.edu/mentalhealth/articles/how-body-image-affects-mental-health>

## **Project Timeline**

March 2023:

Weekly meetings with Dr. Matthews Thursdays at 10 AM

Daily writing and research

Start survey design

April 2023:

Send out survey

Analyze responses

May 2023:

Continue writing and revising literature

Analyze data statistically

Implement data results into literature

August 2023:

Finalize literature and final report

Present research at Atlantic Marketing Association

Conference in Wilmington, North Carolina