

HE SAYS, SHE SAYS: A COMPARISON OF MEN AND WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF
THE APPEAL OF FEMALE MODELS IN ADVERTISING

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ADVERTISING

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2009

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To my parents and grandparents for their unending love, support and enthusiasm for my continued education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people I want to thank for their help and support throughout graduate school and the completion of this thesis. I would first like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. J. Robyn Goodman, Dr. Debbie Treise and Dr. Lisa Duke Cornell, for their guidance throughout this process. With your help, I have completed something I never thought I would do (write a thesis!) and it is something I am truly proud of.

I am blessed with a huge support system of family and friends. I thank my parents, Karen Larson and John Larson, for believing in me and encouraging me during all the activities and endeavors I have taken on over the years. Their love and guidance have meant so much to me. I thank my grandparents, Sonny and Betty Williamson and Red and Reda Larson, for urging me to continue my education and supporting me in every way. I also thank them for the role models they have been to me and countless others. Thanks go out to my brother, John Louis, for his tolerance on my most stressful of days (I know I am not always easy to live with!). I am thankful for the friendship we have.

I thank Lesley and Lindsey, who are always ready with a pep talk when I need one, a heart-to-heart when necessary, and a lot of laughter at any given moment. I also thank Alex, who has been my biggest cheerleader throughout this process. I thank him for listening to me, loving me, and believing in me.

Finally, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior for all of these blessings. Although at times I have taken it for granted, I am thankful for the opportunity to freely learn, study and grow as a student and as a person. To Him, I owe it all.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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May 2009

Chair: J. Robyn Goodman
Major: Advertising

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the difference between male and female perceptions of two different types of female models used in advertising. The objective was to understand how the males and females in the study perceived female models in order to help explain why they may feel the way they do about a brand or advertisement.

The researcher used a qualitative triangulation of methods (focus groups, in-depth interviews, and body language and observations) to collect the data. The participants were Caucasian, between the ages of 18 and 24, had lived in the United States for 15 years or more, and were undergraduate college students at a large public university.

Overall, the female participants recognized that Models 3 and 4, the Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models, were easier to relate with, were more natural, and seemed more similar to themselves than Models 1 and 2, the Sexy/Sensual (SS) models. The females tended to say mostly positive things about the CCG models, but as a whole chose Model 2 as their favorite model for use in advertising.

The male participants overall found that Models 1 and 2 (the SS models) were more attractive and sexually appealing, while Models 3 and 4 (the CCG models) were more approachable, natural, and seemed to have better personalities than Models 1 and 2. The males tended to say mostly positive things about the CCG models, but found them mundane in the context of an advertisement and did not think they were sexually attractive. Overall, however, the male participants seemed to have the most favorable response to Model 1 and were more excited and stimulated by her than the other models. Key ideas that were repeated throughout the study were that the females called Models 1 and 2 “aspirational,” while Models 3 and 4 were “relatable;” the male participants said Models 1 and 2 were out of their league, while Models 3 and 4 were “approachable.”

The researcher has completed the present study with a conclusion that the males and females in the study prefer an advertising model that inspires them in one way or another; the males preferred to see a model they aspire to date, while the females preferred a model that they aspired to be similar to. That said, the participants also explained that the effectiveness of a female advertising model also depends on the product she represents and individual viewers’ personal tastes and preferences. The researcher has found that in the case of these males, sex appeals effectively caught and held attention, while the use of blatant sex appeals using female models were not effective for the women in the study. The researcher feels that the present study has effectively added to the ongoing discussion on whether sex and beauty actually sell by concluding that for these participants, sex and beauty attract and catch attention.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Beauty is a valuable quality in American society. It is often associated with socially desirable traits, including power, love and a contented social and occupational life (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). These assumed traits can transfer onto attractive communication sources, including advertising models (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Therefore, the physical attractiveness of a spokesperson is an important aspect of advertising effectiveness. Beautiful spokesmodels have been linked with the ability to effectively persuade consumers, positively influence purchase decisions, and can create a higher level of advertiser believability (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Beautiful women have also been used to attract attention to brands and advertisements because attractive spokesmodels have been found to be more likeable, are described in more positive terms, and have a positive impact on the products they are associated with (Joseph, 1982). This reflects the long-held belief that beauty and sex sell.

However, beauty and sex are not interchangeable descriptions for advertising models. There is a presumed difference between a simply beautiful model and a provocative model; that is, what is seen as beautiful may not also be provocative in nature (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). It is also difficult to nail down what constitutes a “beautiful” model and a “provocative” model. For many years, researchers have attempted to classify models into categories to better explain the difference between types of beautiful models and the beauty they hold (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992; Bower & Landreth, 2001; Goodman, Morris, & Sutherland, 2008). While some studies have found that highly attractive or sexy models have been more successful (e.g. Baker & Churchill, 1977; Patzer 1983), other studies have found that more normally attractive female models are more effective (e.g. Bower, 2001; Bower & Landreth, 2001; Christy, 2006; Tsai & Chang, 2007; Goodman et al., 2008).

However, beauty is subjective; what is thought of as unattractive to one person may be beautiful to another. To capitalize on this belief, some recent advertising campaigns have begun to use more naturally beautiful or normally attractive women in hopes of speaking to women who can relate and identify with such models (Lippert, 2006; Hosea, 2008). For instance, skin and beauty care brand Dove and its “Campaign for Real Beauty” have made a point not to use stereotypical models in advertisements, but rather smiling, curvy “real” women (Lippert, 2006; Hosea, 2008). As a result, Dove’s sales have been steadily upward since the campaign’s launch in 2004, and parent brand Unilever saw a 6.7% growth in sales in the last year alone (Hosea, 2008). The “real” women in these ads are thought to appeal to women because viewers enjoy seeing someone like them on the glossy pages of a magazine or in a television commercial. As Alessandro Manfredi, global brand director for Dove explains, “Dove only uses real women. It has to feel true and make women feel good about themselves” (Hosea, 2008). These ads have sparked a renewed interest in a long-time controversy: what kind of model really works best in a given situation?

This study seeks to find an answer to this commonly asked question; at the very least, this study will come closer to a definitive set of guidelines for choosing advertising models for ads directed toward women. The study aims to go one step further, however, and examine what kinds of models appeal most to men as well. Responses between the genders will be compared and contrasted in an attempt to explain how advertisers can more effectively choose models to target men and women.

Need for Study

Past studies have generally attempted to explain how female models are perceived by examining responses from only one gender (e.g. Bower, 2001; Reichert & Fosu, 2005; Christy, 2006; Goodman et al., 2008). There have been few studies in which both male and female

participants were used in order to compare the genders' perceptions of female models (e.g. Peterson & Kerin, 1977; Tsai & Chang, 2007; Parker & Furnham, 2007; Sengupta & Dahl, 2008); even so, the known studies that have compared men and women's responses have not examined the preference of one type of model over another qualitatively to explore underlying attitudes, as is the case in the current study. In terms of types of models that men and women prefer, studies have found that sex appeals (therefore, sexy/provocative models) are often used to target men and are usually successful (Reichert & Lambiase, 2003; Monk-Turner, Wren, McGill, Mattiae, Brown, & Brooks, 2008) while women usually do not prefer sex appeals (or sexy/provocative models) unless sex is relevant to the product or situation (Parker & Furnham, 2007; Sengupta & Dahl, 2008). Because female models are used to sell many different products to both men and women, it is important to establish how males and females are similar and dissimilar in their perception of models so that advertisers can make appropriate decisions when positioning advertising to either women or men, or to both women and men.

In addition, there is a lack of qualitative research in the area of preferred beauty types. There are many quantitative studies (e.g. Baker & Churchill, 1977; Patzer, 1983; Richins, 1991; Bower, 2001; Bower & Landreth, 2001; Tsai & Chang, 2007; Goodman et al., 2008) that identify general responses of men or women to female models, but this research does not explain the underlying processes or motives, or even how men and women make sense of beautiful models that lead to their perception of said models. Qualitative research is desirable in this area of because it will help explain primary reasons that certain models appeal to specific consumers. It is important to try to understand participants' thoughtful processes and how participants believe they feel about this topic of interest. Therefore, this study will fill a void in current research that does not answer the specific ways in which the sexes perceive advertising models.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain a deeper understanding of the difference between the male and female perceptions represented in the study of two different types of female models used in advertising. The two types of models used in this study reflect the two types identified by Goodman et al. (2008), which are Sexy/Sensual and Cute/Classic Beauty/Girl-Next-Door. The comparison of men and women's perceptions of female models will be generally defined as assessing similarities and differences between the men and women in the study in terms of perceived appeal, or likability, of female models based on the models' physical characteristics. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has defined "appeal" as the power to produce an approving response ("Appeal," 2009). "Appeal" is used as a synonym for "attractive," which is defined as something that arouses interest or pleasure ("Attractive," 2009). Essentially, the researcher seeks to understand the extent to which a model is found to be pleasing, likeable or attractive by the observer, who uses only the model's physical traits to determine the level thereof. The hope of the researcher is to effectively explain why and how the men and women in the study classify and perceive the appeal of a model when viewing her, including the participants' personal thoughts, anecdotes, descriptive titles of models and overall attitude toward the models. The objective is to understand how males and females perceive female models in order to explain attitude toward the advertisement. The models will be presented alone, without a specific product or brand, so that the participants may focus only on the model herself.

Research Questions

The analysis and understanding of relevant previously conducted research brought about several research questions to be answered by the present study. This study is concerned with

distinguishing the difference between men and women's perceived likeability, or appeal, of female models in advertising. As such, the research questions are as follows:

- I. How do Sexual/Sensual (SS) models and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models appeal to men and women?
- II. What model characteristics appeal to men?
- III. What model characteristics appeal to women?
- IV. Are certain models more appealing to men and/or women both in an advertising context and out of an advertising context, or are certain models only appealing when in an advertisement or out of an advertisement?

The present study seeks to answer these research questions by conducting a triangulation of qualitative research, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and examining nonverbal behavior as demonstrated by the participants.

The following pages explain in detail the research and subsequent data of the present study. Chapter 2 details the relevant body of literature and theoretical context for the current study. Chapter 3 provides explanation of the chosen research design and describes the execution of the methodology and analysis applied during the research portion of the study. Chapter 4 outlines the study's findings by organizing participants' responses into themes, ending with proposed theories. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the outcome of the study, practical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the literature review is to examine the body of previous research in order to explain how the present study fits into the existing research. To start, beauty and attractiveness are often leveraged sources of brand and advertisement believability, and an attractive source can positively influence purchase decision (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Since beauty, attractiveness and sex have often been used in advertisements based on the belief that these tactics sell products, the effectiveness of using beautiful models and sex appeals in advertising has been discussed. Moreover, a discussion of society's changing beauty ideals and preferences is presented in order to examine how advertising may affect body image. The chapter concludes with a critique of the literature, as well as an explanation of what the present study will contribute to the body of knowledge.

Beauty and Sex as Weapons of Persuasion

Because this study focuses on the physical appearance of female models in advertising, it is important to understand why physical attractiveness of a communication source is an important aspect in advertising effectiveness. Typically, two factors-- physical attractiveness and likability-- play a role in how well a model or spokesperson can evoke positive affective reactions in the consumer (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). As Bower and Landreth (2001) explain, highly attractive models are often associated with the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype. In general, beautiful people are perceived to have more socially desirable traits, such as a prestigious job, a happy family and marriage, and a more content social and occupational life (Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966; Dion et al., 1972; Kanner, 1994). In addition, beautiful people and advertising spokespersons are believed to be free from the problems of "normal" people, an advantage over averagely attractive communication sources who are

perceived as normal people who endure everyday dilemmas (Dion et al., 1972; Kanner, 1994). Furthermore, beautiful advertising spokesmodels have been linked to the ability to effectively persuade consumers, influence purchase decisions, and create a higher level of advertiser believability (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Advertisers have also used beautiful women to attract attention to their brands and advertisements because attractive (versus unattractive) communicators are found to be better liked, are perceived in more positive terms, and have a positive impact on the products they are associated with (Joseph, 1982). This reflects the long-held belief by advertisers and society alike that beauty and sex sell.

However, beauty and sex are not interchangeable descriptions for advertising models. Like beauty, sex has been found to be an effective persuasion tool in certain scenarios, and as a communication method, it appears in two major forms: sexual suggestiveness and nudity (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Sexual suggestiveness generally involves the body position, facial expressions, or clothing of a model, all of which are sexually permissive and seductive, whereas nudity involves little or no clothing on the model. Whether or not sex truly does sell, however, has been debated by many and will be discussed at length later in the review.

Beautiful Models in Advertising

Because of their persuasive nature, beautiful and attractive models are frequently used in advertisements. However, the effectiveness of using highly attractive models (HAMs) in advertising has been questioned and thus debated in several studies (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Patzer, 1983; Richins, 1991; Bower, 2001; Bower & Landreth, 2001; Christy, 2006; Tsai & Chang, 2007; Goodman et al., 2008).

The Debate on the Use of Highly Attractive Models

Baker and Churchill (1977) found that using attractive models had a positive effect on affective evaluations of the ad but had varied effects on purchase intentions. The study

concluded that when a product is related to romance, such as perfume, men had higher purchase intentions when the female model was attractive; however, when the product is unrelated to romance, such as coffee, men showed higher purchase intention if the female model was less attractive (Baker & Churchill, 1977). Patzer (1983) found that highly attractive models can have a positive effect on attitude toward the ad, including attitude toward brands, and can positively effect consumers' ultimate purchase decisions. The study discovered relationships between an advertising communicator's physical attractiveness and perceived expertise and overall liking for the communicator (Patzer, 1983).

However, while beautiful models may be assessed as more likeable or as having more expertise, normally attractive models are usually seen as more trustworthy than HAMS because normally attractive models are perceived as more similar to the audience, thus connecting with "real" women (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994). Similarly, Bower (2001) and Christy (2006) found that HAMS in advertising are not positively related to women's purchase decisions. Bower (2001) conducted an experiment showing an advertisement containing a highly attractive model to women. The results stated that when adequate negative affect is produced as a consequence of comparison with highly beautiful models, assessment of both the model as a spokesperson and the product itself might be harmfully affected because of model derogation (Bower, 2001). In other words, sometimes the use of a highly attractive model makes female viewers feel badly about themselves, thus creating dislike for both the model and product. Likewise, Christy (2006) examined how advertising can appear offensive to female consumers and adversely affect their purchase decision. In-depth interviews with female participants revealed that female consumers are most offended by advertising that they view as forced exposure to harmful influences on female identities, behaviors, or the perceived social order (Christy, 2006). Therefore, HAMS may

be more effective when used for attractiveness or romance-related products but are not always the most effective way to sell all products.

Futhermore, Tsai and Chang (2007) found that normally or averagely attractive models are considerably more effective than highly attractive models for both male and female adolescents. In a series of experiments, males and females ages 18 and 19 were shown two mock advertisements containing a highly attractive model and a normally attractive model. Both genders showed a more positive attitude toward the fictitious brand that the normally attractive model advertised, and also showed more positive purchase intentions (Tsai & Chang, 2007). Although adolescents (ages 18 and 19) were used, the Tsai and Chang study may provide a correlation that the present study can draw similarities from, because it will use young adult participants (ages 18 to 24).

However, some studies have not been able to detect an effect based on a high level of attractiveness of an advertising model. Cabellero and Solomon (1984) used less, moderately, and highly attractive models for in-store displays for both beer and facial tissues. The beer sales were not affected by the attractiveness of the spokesmodel, whereas facial tissue sales actually increased when advertised by the less attractive spokesmodel (Cabellero & Solomon, 1984). Similarly, in a study by Caballero, Lumpkin, and Madden (1989), grocery shoppers were shown videotapes of less, moderately, and highly attractive models in the context of television advertisements for a soft drink and cheese. The study found that the level of attractiveness possessed by the advertising model did not affect purchase intension of either product (Caballero et al., 1989).

There have been contradictory results from past studies that have sought to understand if highly attractive models are more effective than normally attractive models. Although the use of

highly attractive models is believed to be more effective (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007), there have been many inconsistencies in the existing literature.

Different Beauty Types

Besides looking at the effect of models' attractiveness on products and advertisements, some researchers have looked at how the match-up effect between models' beauty types and products in advertising influence ad appeal and purchase intention (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Solomon et al., 1992; Bower & Landreth, 2001).

The Beauty Match-Up Hypothesis, as defined by Solomon et al. (1992), states “perceivers distinguish multiple types of good looks, and that in advertising, certain beauty ideals are more appropriately paired with specific products than with others” (p. 23). Thus, when a “match-up” exists between a model and product, the advertising is more effective. Solomon et al. (1992) conducted a study to determine the correspondence between types of beauty used in advertising and the products they represent. Data was collected from a sample of 18 female fashion editors, who sorted 96 images of models into categories according to appearance (Solomon et al., 1992). The results determined that there are multiple types of highly attractive models (HAMs) that may be suitably matched to communicate certain brand images. The six types of beauty that Solomon et al. (1992) distinguished are Classic Beauty/Feminine, Sensual/Exotic, Cute, Girl Next Door, Sex Kitten, and Trendy¹. These beauty types were then differentially linked with a set of perfumes, magazines, and other products representing varied advertising images (Solomon et al., 1992). For instance, Chanel fragrance had a strong a positive match-up with the Classic Beauty

¹ Classic Beauty: perfect physical features, symmetric facial features; Feminine: soft, romantic look, symmetric facial features; Sensual and Sex-Kitten: sexual looks with the latter more overt and youthful and the former more classy and understated, for Sensual also will have symmetric facial features; Cute: child-like/youthful physical features or attire; Girl-Next-Door: natural, not made-up appearance, simple attire, and athletic looking; Exotic: ethnic looking, symmetric facial features; Trendy: offbeat look, perhaps flawed or asymmetrical in contrast to the classic beauty, also can appear ethnic with provocative attire or pose (Solomon et al., 1992).

type, whereas White Linen fragrance had a strong positive match-up with the Girl-Next-Door type (Solomon et al., 1992). Other studies have found that an overall match-up between the model and the product also helps increase believability and likeability of the model and product and can possibly even positively affect purchase decision (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Bower & Landreth, 2001).

Bower and Landreth (2001) found that with attractiveness-relevant products (cosmetics, skin care products, and so forth), highly attractive models are often-- but not always-- the most effective choice (Bower & Landreth, 2001). The results suggest a match between a model and a product improves an ad's effectiveness by enhancing perceptions of the model's expertise about the product (Bower & Landreth, 2001). Therefore, consumers draw inferences from an ad's spokesmodel based on how highly attractive they are. For example, highly attractive models are assumed to know more about products that enhance beauty, such as lipstick, because of the attributions consumers have about beautiful people, whereas normally attractive models are assumed to be more knowledgeable about problem-solving products, such as acne treatment, since consumers assume it is more likely they have dealt with acne as compared to a highly attractive model (Bower & Landreth, 2001).

A study by Goodman et al. (2008) explored women's emotional responses to the six different beauty types as defined by Solomon et al. (1992). They discovered that the initial six beauty types were not sustained; instead, they combined into two independent dimensions: Sexual/Sensual (SS) and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) (Goodman et al., 2008). By testing emotional reactions to models with varying levels of SS and CCG, models with higher degrees of CCG were found to produce considerably greater pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Goodman et al., 2008). In other words, it can be concluded that those models seen as Classic

Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door were overall more likeable than the models viewed as Sexual/Sensual. Goodman et al.'s two independent dimensions will be used as the model types in the present study.

Sex Appeals

Related to the idea that beauty sells is the impression that sex sells, too. The use of sex appeals, including how they are used, what products they attempt to sell, who they target, and how often they occur, is explained at length below.

The Use of Sex Appeals in Advertising

Sex appeals are widely and increasingly used, as determined by a content analysis by Reichert and Carpenter (2004), which examined ads in *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*. The study found overall increases in sexual dress and intimate contact in magazine advertisements from 1983 to 2003; for example, nearly half (49%) of female models were explicitly clothed in 2003, whereas 40% were sexually attired in 1993, a 9% increase in just 10 years (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). In addition, 78% of women in advertisements in men's magazines (*Esquire* and *Playboy*) were dressed sexually in 2003, versus 53% in 1993 and just 29% in 1983 (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004).

Sex appeals are not used solely for mature audiences, however. In a content analysis conducted by Reichert (2003), ads targeted to young adults, ages 20 to 29, were found to be 65% more likely to contain provocatively dressed models and 128% more likely to contain sexual behavior than those for mature adults. Therefore, the findings suggest that advertisers use sexual imagery to appeal to young adult audiences (Reichert, 2003). This study may shed light on the intensity of sex appeals aimed at participants in the present study (ages 18-24).

Two studies further found that sex appeals are more often used to target male consumers than female consumers (Reichert & Lambiase, 2003; Monk-Turner et al., 2008). Monk-Turner et

al. (2008) conducted a content analysis of magazine advertisements to examine the portrayal of male and female advertising characters to determine whether a sex appeal was used to sell a product. It was found that most of the advertisements did not use a sex appeal, but when sex was used, it was more likely to appear in an ad aimed at a male audience, and the sexually objectified characters were likely to be females alone or coupled with a male (Monk-Tuner et al., 2008). Similarly, another content analysis of magazine ads in *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Esquire*, and *Details* revealed that sex appeals are used to persuade both women and men, although a higher proportion of sexual ads appear in men's magazines (12%) compared to women's magazines (6%) (Reichert & Lambiase, 2003). Important to note is that a variety of sex appeals are used and directed toward women, such as attractiveness, behavior, and esteem, whereas most appeals directed toward men emphasize more and better sex (Reichert & Lambiase, 2003). In addition, male-only sexual images are relatively nonexistent in sexual ads compared to female-only images (45%) and couple images (47%) (Reichert & Lambiase, 2003).

The Effectiveness of Sex Appeals: Does Sex Really Sell?

In order to determine whether an advertisement positively influences purchase decision, an ad must be effective in terms of recall, likability, clarity and relevance to the consumer, among other things (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Therefore, the studies mentioned below have examined the effectiveness of sex appeals in advertising to find if there is truth to the claim that sex does, indeed, sell the intended product.

Males and females typically recall and react to sex appeals differently (Parker & Furnham, 2007; Sengupta & Dahl, 2008). A study by Parker & Furnham (2007) looked at the recall of sexual and non-sexual TV advertisements embedded within programs, with or without sexual content. The results indicated that male participants better recalled sexual advertisements

regardless of the TV program's content, while females recalled non-sexual advertisements more accurately (Parker and Furnham, 2007).

Likewise, Sengupta and Dahl (2008) investigated differences and similarities between men and women in their spontaneous reactions to unwarranted sexual appeals in advertising. The participants were given a booklet of advertisements and were told the study involved the recall and memorization of advertising content; there was no mention of sex appeals or sexually suggestive advertisements (Sengupta & Dahl, 2008). The researchers explained that although earlier research suggested that both males and females would react negatively to such ads because of perceptions of unethicity and manipulateness, men on average actually exhibited a more positive attitudinal response to gratuitous sex appeals than women (Sengupta & Dahl, 2008). Furthermore, women with more liberal attitudes to sex reacted in a manner very similar to men; specifically, these women reported a stronger liking for a sexual ad than a nonsexual ad (Sengupta & Dahl, 2008).

These findings are similar to a study by Reichert and Fosu (2005), which examined women's reactions to sex appeals by testing their responses to a sexual commercial, then examining the relationship between women's sexual schemas with their responses. In the study, sexual schemas were defined as people's cognitive views of themselves that predict approach or avoidance to sexual behavior and information (Reichert & Fosu, 2005). The results suggested that women who have more positive sexual self-schemas-- that is, their schemas predicted more approach than avoidance to sexual conduct-- were found to have more positive attitudes-toward-the-ad and brand interest for the sexual ad; however, purchase intention was not affected (Reichert & Fosu, 2005). Therefore, gender is not the only thing affecting reaction to a sex appeal: sexual involvement and openness can affect the reaction to a sex appeal as well.

In addition, the reactions to sex appeals vary according to the level of relevance the product has to a sex appeal. Peterson and Kerin (1977) found that an advertisement for a body oil (a product relevant to sex) containing a seductively dressed female model was far more appealing to both men and women versus an ad containing a nude female model that was for a ratchet set (an irrelevant product to sex). Therefore, the effectiveness of a sex appeal in advertising is considerably influenced by its appropriateness (Peterson & Kerin, 1977) and thus the given product or brand should be taken into consideration.

Gendered Body Type Preferences, Societal Ideals and the Implications of Sexual Appeals on Body Image

Besides studies exploring the effect of sex appeals on consumers, numerous studies have looked at beauty effects on consumers by exploring the role of thin beauty ideals on men and women's perceptions (e.g., Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz & Thompson, 1980; Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1992; Mathes & Kahn, 1975; Richins, 1991; Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Lavine, Sweeney & Wagner, 1999; Bower, 2001). It is important to understand how society's preferences have changed because this may help explain some responses from participants in the present study.

First, there are several studies that have established that the current mediated beauty ideal is much thinner than it was decades ago. For example, Garner et al. (1980) found changes in measurements from 1960 to 1980 in Miss America pageant contestants and *Playboy* magazine centerfolds, which are both sources for beauty ideals in the U.S. The contestants and centerfolds were found to have decreasing size measurements during the 20-year period, which points to a trend toward a thinner standard (Garner et al., 1980). Since consumers learn what is socially acceptable and desirable from sources such as the media (Bandura, 1994), this may provide a

reason why some consumers prefer to see a smaller, thinner female model if they prefer her to a more normally sized model.

For decades, advertising has been criticized for its allegedly detrimental effects on its viewers, specifically women and their body images and self-esteem. Richins (1991) and Bower (2001) found that some females experience a negative affect by comparing themselves with attractive models. According to Bower, this negative influence can come from the decrease in positive self-image that results when consumers compare themselves to highly attractive models (2001). This may help explain the choices of favorite and least-favorite models by participants in the present study, specifically females who may feel a sense of inadequacy when viewing highly attractive models.

Similarly, sexual-natured and sexist advertising has been studied in terms of how it affects dissatisfaction with the viewers' body image. Lavine et al. (1999) discovered that women who were exposed to television advertisements that depict women as sex objects judged their current body size as larger than reality and revealed a larger discrepancy between their actual and ideal body sizes than women who were exposed to ads that did not present women as sex objects or who were not exposed to ads at all (Lavine et al., 1999). Conversely, men who viewed the sexist ads judged their own bodies as thinner than reality and preferred a larger body for themselves (Lavine et al., 1999). Therefore, both female and male participants in the current study may feel insufficient when seeing sexy models, and thus may prefer more normally posed and less overtly sexual models.

In two exploratory studies, Richins (1991) revealed that among female college students, idealized advertising images elevate comparison standards for attractiveness while lowering satisfaction with an individual's own attractiveness. Somewhat similarly, Martin & Kennedy

(1993) tested the effect of advertising beauty images on female fourth, eighth and twelfth graders and found that exposure to advertising including highly attractive models raises comparison standards for physical attractiveness but does not affect self-perceptions of physical attractiveness. The inclination of female preadolescents and adolescents to compare themselves to models increases with age and is more prevalent in those with lower self-perceptions of physical attractiveness or self-esteem (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). Thus, the use of highly attractive models in advertising can be particularly harmful to those who have low self-esteem or low perceptions of their own physical attractiveness. Therefore, if participants in the present study already experience low self-esteem or the like, they may feel especially inadequate when viewing the Sexy/Sensual models and may thus prefer the Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next Door models instead. Obviously, a participant's self-esteem cannot be assessed unless he or she explicitly discusses his/her own esteem or body image.

Summary

Beauty is a commonly used persuasion tool in advertisements and can be linked to higher believability and likeability and can positively affect purchase decisions (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). The use of highly attractive models in advertising has been debated in several studies (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Patzer, 1983; Richins, 1991; Bower, 2001; Christy, 2006; Tsai & Chang, 2007; Goodman et al., 2008); however, whether using a highly attractive model is more advantageous over using a normally attractive model is still unresolved.

An advertising model's effectiveness is also affected by the match-up effect between models and products in advertising. This match-up effect has also been examined to explain how some models may be more effective than others in certain situations (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977; Solomon et al., 1992; Bower & Landreth, 2001).

In addition, society's gendered body type preferences and changing ideals have been studied and have revealed a trend toward a thinner body standard (e.g., Garner et al., 1980; Wiseman et al., 1992; Rand & Wright, 2001). Studies have also examined advertising's effects on body image of the observer (e.g., Mathes & Kahn, 1975; Richins, 1991; Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Lavine et al., 1999; Bower, 2001).

In conclusion, the appeal and use of different types of models has been debated and studied, contradicted or upheld, by the studies explained above. Overall, there is no absolute answer to the kind of model that is most effective in a given situation since so much depends on the model individually, the brand or product she advertises, the context of the advertisement, and the viewer's own beliefs and opinions about what an attractive, catchy or likeable model entails.

Critique of Literature

The body of literature that was analyzed and reviewed reveals a void in the area of qualitative research in the realm of the appeal and likability of models in advertising. The overall criticism of the literature is that there have not been many studies that use qualitative measures to understand women's (or both men and women's) perceptions toward models, and there have been no qualitative studies that compare the different genders' feelings toward Sexy/Sensual model types versus Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model types in advertising. Qualitative research will serve to augment the findings of previous quantitative studies in order to present a more well-rounded and fuller explanation for the types of female models that men and women prefer to see in advertisements.

What This Study Will Contribute

This study will contribute to the modest existing qualitative research on how female models in advertising appeal to males and females. The present study will use the two different types of female models (Sexual/Sensual and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door) that were

distinguished by Goodman et al. (2008) in order to better explain how the men and women in the study differ or agree on the use of certain female model types. This study seeks to come a step closer to understanding how the sexes differ in their perception, and what those points of differentiation are.

It is central to understand the ways in which males and females classify models, and which type of model appeals more to each gender, because the appearance of an advertisement's spokesperson does influence likability of the ad and brand and has the ability to influence purchase decision (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). This is important to advertisers and those creating advertising because it is critical to understand what consumers like, remember, and connect with.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of qualitative research is to develop theory rather than test theory. However, Social Comparison Theory helps support this study because it helps explain the way consumers compare themselves with models, a common finding in previous research, which may lead to the liking of and reaction to models in advertising.

Social Comparison Theory suggests that individuals feel compelled to compare themselves with other people and with social standards (Festinger, 1954). Festinger (1954) believed the only reason for social comparison was self-evaluation, which involves making a comparison with others or social standards. This process can lead to the feeling of inadequateness for consumers who do not live up to the comparison person or standard (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). Past research has found that women who view advertisements containing beautiful women rate average-looking women's attractiveness lower and society's ideal of physical attractiveness can have a harmful impact on women (Gulas & McKeage, 2000).

Festinger's (1954) original formation of social comparison proposed that the only motivation for comparison was self-evaluation, but two additional motives-- self-enhancement

and self-improvement-- have been recognized and, together with self-evaluation, determine social comparison's result (Wood, 1989). Self-enhancement occurs when one compares him/herself to someone who will defend, sustain, or better self-perception, while self-improvement occurs when one learns how to better him/herself or finds encouragement from another (Wood, 1989). Although Social Comparison Theory applies mainly to the female participants in the study, both males and females are influenced by mass media, which can affect consumer perception of oneself. Therefore, it is likely that women will be more attracted to models who increase their self-enhancement and provoke self-improvement, while men will be more attracted to models whose appearances inspire them to better themselves via self-improvement.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

In order to compare responses to female models between the males and females in the study, this qualitative study used both focus groups and in-depth interviews. The researcher felt that qualitative research was the best approach to answer the following research questions:

- I. How do Sexual/Sensual (SS) models and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models appeal to men and women?
- II. What model characteristics appeal to men?
- III. What model characteristics appeal to women?
- IV. Are certain models more appealing to men and/or women both in an advertising context and out of an advertising context, or are certain models only appealing when in an advertisement or out of an advertisement?

The present study sought to answer these research questions by conducting a triangulation of qualitative methodology in order to explain the underlying motives and reasoning behind the participants' responses, which is explained at length below.

Development of Research Design and Methods Used

This study used focus groups and in-depth interviews in order to answer the research questions. Focus groups are a group of participants who are interviewed together by a moderator in order to prompt a discussion, whereas in-depth interviews are one-on-one conversations with an interviewer and an interviewee (Babbie, 2007). Focus groups were used to generate discussion about female models; interviews were used to supplement the findings of the focus groups. In addition, the moderators' personal observations of participants' body language and outward show of emotions were considered, resulting in a triangulation of methods. Qualitative research does not make generalizations. This means that by using focus groups and interviews as the methods the particular and specific meanings behind participants' responses gave more

information than only the generalized numerical descriptions that are the result of quantitative research (Morgan, 1997).

By using these two methods together, this study triangulates its data. Triangulation is the use of several different research methods to “test” the same findings (Babbie, 2007). According to Jankowski and Wester (1991), triangulation can be a constructive force in not only the development of theory but the development of the methodology as well.

Triangulation is useful because each method used has its own strengths and weaknesses, and by using multiple methods, the researcher may get a fuller and more accurate understanding of the themes discovered (Babbie, 2007). As a stand-alone method, focus groups provide a group interaction that allows the participants to “share and compare” experiences and attitudes with each other, making focus groups particularly useful when seeking to explain people’s views, ideals and experiences (Morgan, 1997). However, a danger of focus groups is the idea of “group thinking,” where some participants simply agree with other participants instead of discussing their own opposing viewpoints. As opposed to focus groups, in-depth interviews provide one-on-one discussion in which the participant is not influenced by what others say (Babbie, 2007). A weakness of interviews, however, is that there is no interaction effect, meaning the interviewee cannot be reminded of a relevant thought by what others have said. Therefore, when only one method is used, there is a danger that the research findings may in part reflect the chosen method, so the researcher has opted to use triangulation to avoid this potential issue.

However, it is important not to assume that because triangulation is used, the research findings are necessarily more accurate. Jankowski and Wester (1991) explain that there is an assumption with triangulation that the weaknesses in each solitary method will be compensated

by the strengths of another. That said, although triangulation offers more confidence in the conclusions drawn in qualitative studies, it cannot guarantee more validity.

Selection of Participants

The recruitment process in the study was the same for the focus groups and in-depth interviews. The participants were selected on a few basic criteria, which is important to ensure that all groups and interviewees have certain common characteristics (Knodel, 1993). Both male and female college students were selected, and all were between the ages of 18 and 24. This demographic was appropriate because it tends to be a prime target for media and advertisers, particularly online (Khan, 2008). The participants had all lived in the United States for at least 15 years, so they were fully acculturated into American media, culture and beauty ideals. All participants were Caucasian because different races can hold different beauty preferences and ideals. This racial selection was made because this specific topic has not been studied before, and the Caucasian market is considered a mainstream target in the U.S (Khan, 2008). There was no preference of using entirely strangers or acquaintances because the topic was not considered overly sensitive (Morgan, 1997). The researcher was unable to screen for sexual orientation in order to only include heterosexuals due to discriminatory and sensitivity issues; however, the participants had the opportunity to disclose their orientation after their group or interview in the Participant Demographic Questionnaire. This was asked to possibly help the researcher explain certain remote or widely differing responses from participants, since those who are homosexual may have viewed the models differently than the rest of the participants in their group.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses at a large, public Southeastern university. The potential participants were told that the research topic concerned female models in advertising; however, they were not told the precise reason for the research at the time of

recruitment so that the generated responses were spontaneous (Duke, 2008). In order to screen for the selected criteria explained above, potential participants were given a short screening questionnaire that was distributed in classes from which participants were recruited. The questionnaire determined if students were eligible to participate in the study by asking basic demographic questions (Appendix A). The questionnaire also asked for contact information so the researcher could contact the potential participant if they should meet the research needs and were eligible to participate. Based on the questionnaires, the researcher divided the participants into two focus groups of all females and two groups of all males, resulting in a total of four focus groups. Later, an additional male focus group was added due to low attendance rates of recruits in the first two male groups. In addition, the researcher used four female participants and four male participants for one-on-one in-depth interviews. The participants were divided into focus groups and interviews at the convenience of the participant; in other words, one-on-one interviews were scheduled when it was more convenient for a participant than coming to one of the scheduled focus groups. There was no break characteristic that placed the participant in either a focus group or an interview.

After the screeners had been analyzed and participants were selected, the researcher contacted the potential participants to let them know when the focus groups or interviews would be held and its location. This was done by email and telephone as necessary. A reminder was sent via email the day before and the day of each focus group or interview to the respective group of participants or individual participant. The participants were offered extra credit and also received dinner at the time of the focus group or interview.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a group of participants who are interviewed together in order to prompt a discussion (Babbie, 2007). Morgan (1997) defines a focus group as a group interview that relies

on interaction between the participants based on topics that are supplied by the moderator. It is this group interaction that allows the participants to “share and compare” experiences and attitudes with each other, while the researcher learns what participants think, how they think about it, and why they think that way (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups are particularly useful when seeking to explain people’s views, ideals and experiences (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups provide the most effective way to answer the research questions because the researcher hopes to explain how and why participants’ beliefs and past encounters shape their opinions of female models (Morgan, 1997). This method is desirable in this study due to its group nature, which facilitates conversation and thought.

Research Design

Focus groups must go through several stages in the research design process. The first decision is what the purpose of the research is and how focus groups will help achieve the desired research goals. After the purpose has been determined, the researcher must determine who will participate, how structured the groups will be, how big the groups will be, and how many groups in the total project will be needed (Morgan, 1997). A moderator’s guide is then created, and the focus groups are conducted.

Selection of participants

In focus groups, participants are not randomly selected and assigned to groups because, “as researchers, we are often more interested in understanding the particular than the general” (Morgan, 1997, p. 18). Also, focus group participants were not randomly selected so that the researcher would discover a range of opinions on the topic. A randomly sampled group may not hold a shared perspective on the topic and therefore, “may not even be able to generate meaningful discussions” (Morgan, 1997, p. 35).

The groups in this study were controlled through segmentation, or matching carefully chosen categories of participants (Morgan, 1997). Segmentation provided a level of homogeneity in order to allow for more comfortable and fluid conversations among participants (Morgan, 1997). In this study, participants were divided into women-only groups and men-only groups. Therefore, gender was the break characteristic, which is useful when comparing views between groups (Knodel, 1993). Because the research topic is based on the difference between men and women's perceptions, the differences in perspectives due to gender may have reduced the level of comfort or affect how clearly either perspective gets discussed; therefore, participants were divided into groups based on gender.

Size of groups

The average size of a focus group is six to 10 participants, because when there are fewer than six, the discussion may be difficult to carry on, while with more than 10, the conversation may be difficult to control (Morgan, 1997). However, it may be necessary to have either a smaller or larger group due to the level of involvement of the participants. If the level of involvement is relatively low, it is more difficult to maintain an active discussion in a smaller group (Morgan, 1997). In the end, "the purposes of the research and constraints of the field situation must be taken into account" (Morgan, 1997, p. 43).

In this study, the researcher aimed to have eight to 10 participants in each of the groups because the level of involvement-- interest in the topic or arousal-- that the participants had with the research topic was relatively low. This is due to the nature of the topic, which was not expected to be exceptionally arousing to any of the participants because they did not necessarily have a particular interest in the topic of study. However, since all of the participants had lived in the U.S. for at least 15 years, they were fully aware of the types of models that are prevalent in advertising as well as society's general feelings about beauty, models and advertising. In order to

better guarantee this number, the researcher over-recruited by approximately 20% (Morgan, 1997). The actual sizes of the female groups were nine and 18 participants, respectively. The size of the male groups were and two, three, and four participants, respectively.

Number of groups

The number of focus groups in a study is the primary determinant of how much data the research will produce (Morgan, 1997). The rule of thumb is that it takes three to five groups to reach theoretical saturation, or the point where no new information is generated (Morgan, 1997). Fewer or more groups may be needed, however, before the moderator can anticipate what will be said in the next group (Morgan, 1997). This study began with two groups each of females and males for a total of four groups. An additional male group was added because the first two male groups were very small in size due to recruits not showing at the last minute. The researcher wanted to ensure that theoretical saturation had been reached, so a third group was necessary. Therefore, there were two female groups and three male groups conducted for a total of five focus groups.

Level of structure in the groups

The level of structure in focus groups involves choices about interview standardization, which is whether the same questions will be asked in every group, and moderator involvement, which is the extent to which the moderator controls the discussion (Morgan, 1997). More structured groups typically involve a higher level of moderator involvement in which the moderator controls the discussion rather than letting it flow freely and also has more standardized questions, meaning that the same questions will be asked in every group (Morgan, 1997). This study used a more structured group design for several reasons. First, the researcher was comparing the male and female groups' responses, so the same questions were asked in each

group. Second, the moderator strove to create a higher level of involvement in each of the groups to ensure they stayed on topic to yield results that helped answer the research questions.

More structured groups are useful when the researcher has a “strong, preexisting agenda for the research” (Morgan, 1997, p. 39). Moreover, high moderator involvement will keep the topic of conversation centered on the research topic, which is valuable to the researcher as aforementioned (Morgan, 1997). Additionally, a goal that often relies on having a more structured approach is when a comparison between groups is being made, as is the case in this study (Morgan, 1997).

Interview Content and the Moderator’s Guide

When the number and size of groups have been determined, as well as the level of structure, the researcher must then determine what the interview content will include. This is done by creating a moderator’s guide, which is a list of questions or topics that the researcher wants to cover at some point during the focus group (Appendix C). In this study, the researcher, a female, moderated the female groups, and a male colleague moderated the male groups. This was done so that the gender of the moderator would not negatively influence the groups’ discussions or disrupt the homogeneity, which allowed for more fluid and comfortable conversation (Morgan, 1997). The researcher trained the male moderator by reviewing the moderator’s guide and sharing the expectations for the study with him. The moderators were also responsible for taking notes during the discussion that described the nonverbal cues of the participants, which were elements of the collected data.

A typical focus group lasts one to two hours, so it is important to maintain the focus of the discussion and not try to explore too many topics (Morgan, 1997). The moderator’s guide helped keep the dialogue on topic by organizing discussion topics in a specific order to create a natural progression from topic to topic, with some overlap (Morgan, 1997). Usually, a moderator’s guide

tends to be relatively general with open-ended questions and seeks to elicit specific responses without directly asking about the specifics of the topic or situation at hand (Knodel, 1993). The number of questions is influenced by the topic, but 10 to 12 well-developed questions are usually sufficient for a two-hour focus group (Krueger, 1993). In this study, the moderator's guide began with general questions about women in the media and moved into asking about specific female models in advertisements. Each question on the guide was accompanied with possible prompts in order to probe responses. Some of the prompts were general in nature and useful in both the male and female groups, whereas some were appropriate for only the male or female groups, such as "How is this model similar to you?" (female groups), and "How is she like your ideal woman?" (male groups).

The discussion opened with the moderator's introduction, which stated the topic in a truthful but general way, as well as the purpose for the research (Morgan, 1997). The moderator's introductory remarks are discussed at length below.

Krueger and Casey (2000) indicated that there are five main types of questions: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending. The opener is a question that all participants answer in order to get them talking and make them feel comfortable (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Morgan (1997) calls this kind of question an ice-breaker because all of the participants answer the same basic questions to help set the mood for the group as a whole (Morgan, 1997). In this study, the participants were asked to state their first name, their major, and their favorite female celebrity or person in the public eye. These questions helped the participants relax and become more comfortable with one another and also served as voice identification on the tape for ease of transcription.

The next kind of question is the introductory question, which familiarizes the participants with the topic of study; in this case, the introductory question was related to women in media and advertisements. Next, a transition question moved the discussion toward the key questions, which are the heart of the discussion and require the greatest attention in the analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Finally, the ending questions closed the discussion and allow the participants to reflect on the comments they made during the session (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Krueger and Casey (2000) suggests one of three ending options: the all-things considered question in which participants reflect on the discussion and identify the most important aspects, the summary question in which the participants verify the summary of the discussion with the moderator, and the final question which asks the participants if they think the researcher missed anything they think is important to the topic. In this study, the researcher used the last option and asked the participants if they would like to add anything else or if they thought there was something left out of the discussion that they found important. This option is similar to Morgan's (1997) technique for asking for a final summary statement, which can allow each participant to open up and say something they have been holding back until this point. The finality of a summary statement and the opportunity to be uninterrupted allowed each participant to say what was important to them, which was significant to the researcher (Morgan, 1997).

Moderator's introductory remarks

The researcher created an opening statement to read to the participants before each focus group began. The words chosen as the opening for the focus group can influence the quality of the research collected during the discussion in several ways. First, the moderator may be too specific and include unnecessary details about the focus group (Krueger, 1993), which can lead to partiality in the participants' responses (Goodman, 2007).

In a typical introduction, the moderator introduces him or herself and states the purpose for research; in this case, the purpose for the research was for master's thesis research. This is also the point where the moderator introduced the ground rules for the group, such as no side conversations or equal participation from group members, and explained that the discussion would be audio-taped (Morgan, 1997). Audio-tape was used over video-tape because participants generally feel more at ease when they are not on camera (Duke, 2008). It is recommended to keep the instructions and introductory remarks relatively short, as lengthy instructions can create the expectation that the moderator will be telling the group what to do; therefore, the moderator gave short remarks and instructions at the start of the group (Morgan, 1997).

Morgan (1997) suggests that the best way to begin the session is often with an honest introduction by admitting that the researcher is there to learn from the participants. In this study, the moderator began with introducing his or herself and explained that the researcher wanted to learn from the participants about their perceptions of female media models without going into further specifications (Appendix C).

Pretesting the moderator's guide

The moderator's guide was pretested before the focus groups were conducted. This was done to ensure the questions were clear and that they were not phrased in a way that relies on expert knowledge or on assumptions (Krueger, 1993). This was also done to make certain the questions in the guide were not abstract and there was no confusion by the participants (Krueger, 1993). This is important, as more specific questions elicit responses that more accurately indicate how the individual participant feels, instead of responses that are seen as socially acceptable or general in nature (Krueger, 1993).

The researcher's thesis committee looked over the moderator's guide in order to pretest the guide. Krueger (1993) also suggests that the first focus group can be used as a pilot in case of

misunderstandings of questions by participants, and the moderator's guide can then be adjusted for future use. In this study, the original moderator's guide was not altered, as the participants easily understood the questions and did not need further explanation of each question posed by the moderator.

Conducting the Focus Groups

The focus groups took place in the fall of 2008 over the course of three weeks, with one male and one female group taking place each of the first two weeks, and the third male group taking place the third week. They were held in the evening between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. The groups were conducted in classrooms on the campus from which the participants were recruited, a location chosen because of convenience to both the researcher and participants. The site was also chosen because it was place that the participants felt comfortable, since it was located in the college from which they were recruited. Morgan (1997) explains that there is little use for a site that is uncomfortable for the participants.

When the participants arrived, the moderator greeted them and offered them the food and drinks provided for dinner. They were then shown to their seats, where a name placard waited for them to write their first name so that the other participants and the moderator would know how to address them.

After all of the participants arrived and were settled into their seats, the moderator began by turning on the recording equipment, which included two audio-recording devices situated in the center of the table so that the entire discussion was easily heard and recorded on both devices. The moderator then began with his/her introductory remarks and double-checked the audio-recording devices to ensure proper function. Then, the moderator started to ask the actual questions as laid out on the moderator's guide and more or less followed the order listed on the guide with prompts interjected as needed. In addition to the questions on the moderator's guide,

the participants were shown four female models that had been used in advertisements. As determined by the researcher, the present study used the two different types of female models (Sexual/Sensual and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door) that were distinguished by Goodman et al. (2008). The Sexual/Sensual (SS) models selected were typically described as beautiful but also sexy or provocative. These models were in a sexually suggestive pose or have sensual facial expressions. The Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models were considered attractive or beautiful but not overtly sexual. These models were smiling or had otherwise friendly facial expressions and were shown in more normal, natural poses. The chosen models were found by the researcher on online photography databases and were discussed with the researcher's committee, who were in agreement that the chosen models adequately represented the two types of models in the study.

The models were displayed onto a screen by a projector in order to enhance the photos and detail. All four of the models were shown in similar clothing (lingerie/underwear) and were alone in the photograph without props, backgrounds, or other major differentials. All of the photographs were shown in black and white so the models could be assessed in as similar a setting as possible, so that similarities and differences could be more easily evaluated between the two types.

After the closing remarks were made and the focus group discussion was over, a demographic questionnaire was distributed to the participants (Appendix B). This questionnaire was given after the groups because it asked participants to disclose personal information, including an optional question about their sexual orientation. The researcher did not want the participants to respond to the models differently due to any questions on the questionnaire; therefore, it was given at the end of the group.

In-Depth Interviews

Babbie (2007) defines a qualitative in-depth interview as “an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry” (306). Most basically speaking, an interview is a conversation in which the interviewer establishes the general direction for the conversation (Babbie, 2007).

In-depth interviews were chosen to supplement the focus group findings specifically because they are one-on-one. This allows the interviewee to respond according to how he or she personally feels, rather than merely agreeing with other participants in a focus group or going along with what is being said in a group environment. This tendency to agree is known as “groupthink,” or the inclination for people in a group to conform to the opinions or responses of outspoken members of the group (Babbie, 2007).

Another reason in-depth interviewing was chosen as a supplementary method to focus groups was the flexibility for questions to evolve as the interviews were conducted (Babbie, 2007). In other words, if certain questions elicited short responses while some elicited longer, more passionate responses, the moderator was able to more effectively probe these areas and thus personalize the moderator’s guide to each participant. If the interviewer found that certain questions did not work well in one-on-one situations, then the interviewer could shorten or altogether eliminate those questions in the remaining interviews.

A final advantage of interviews was the ability for the interviewer to focus completely on one participant. In a focus group, the moderator must keep up with the body language and non-verbal cues from several participants at a time, while in a one-on-one interview, the interviewer can more clearly record or recall these important elements of the interview (Babbie, 2007). In this study, the visual observations of participants were treated as the third component of data collection and were the final side of the triangulation of methods.

Research Design

The interviews were conducted after all of the focus groups had been conducted. Therefore, the researcher had already established the purpose of the research. Different participants were used in the focus groups and interviews. In addition, the purpose for using in-depth interviews to help achieve the desired goals was determined as the ability to either support or contradict what was said in the focus groups.

Number of interviews

The number of interviews conducted was four each with female and male participants, for a total of eight in-depth interviews. This number is much smaller than the typical number of interviews in a qualitative study when interviewing is the main data collection method; however, there were only eight conducted because this method was secondary to the use of focus groups and served only to support or reject findings in the groups. The researcher planned to continue adding interviews until theoretical saturation, or a level of redundancy, was achieved (Morgan, 1997). Theoretical saturation was achieved after four interviews of each males and females; thus, no interviews were added to the original planned number of eight total interviews.

Level of structure in interviews

The level of structure in interviews is determined the same way as in focus groups. This involves choices about interview standardization the extent to which the moderator controls the discussion (Morgan, 1997). Babbie (2007) describes that in field research, less-structured interviews are more appropriate because they allow for more natural progression of conversation. However, the interviews in this study took a moderately-structured form to compromise between the highly-structured focus groups and the suggestion that less-structured interviews may be better. Therefore, the interviewer used the same guide as was used in the focus groups, but was allowed more freedom to probe deeper or wider, change the order of questions, or eliminate

questions from the interview as they saw fit. The same list of questions (the moderator's guide) was used in every interview. Also, the researcher wanted to keep the level of structure somewhat similar in every interview because the researcher not only compared males' and females' responses, but also compared the responses in the interviews to those in the focus groups. A goal that often relies on having a moderately to highly structured approach in interviewing is when a comparison between groups is being made (Morgan, 1997).

Interview Content

After the number of interviews had been determined, as well as the level of structure, the researcher determined what the interview content would include. Due to the fact that the researcher's goal was to compare the responses of the in-depth interviews to those in the focus groups, the decision was made to use the same guide as was used in the focus groups (Appendix C).

Conducting the Interviews

The researcher began with four female interviews and four male interviews and planned to continue adding interviews until theoretical saturation was achieved. In this case, the original number of interviews was not changed, as the interviews closely reflected what was said in the focus groups.

The researcher interviewed the female interviewees, while the same male who conducted the male focus groups interviewed the male interviewees. This was done to ensure comfort by the participants, allow for more honest responses, and so that the gender of the interviewer would not negatively influence the discussion (Morgan, 1997).

The interviews took place in the fall of 2008 over the course of two weeks. They were held in the evening between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. The researcher chose locations to hold the interviews according to convenience and familiarity to the participants, which is crucial to ensure an

adequate amount of comfort in an interview. Morgan (1997) explains that there is little use for a site that is uncomfortable for the participants. The interviews ran from ten to twenty minutes in length.

Once the participant had arrived, the interviewer began by turning on the recording equipment, which included two audio-recording devices situated in the center of the table so that the discussion was easily heard and recorded on both devices. The interviewer then began with his/her introductory remarks and double-checked the audio-recording devices to ensure proper function. Then, the interviewer began asking the questions as laid out on the interview guide and more or less followed the order listed on the guide with prompts interjected as needed. In addition to the questions on the guide, the participants were shown the four female models that were shown in the focus groups. However, due to the varied locations of the interviews, the models were not projected on a screen as they were in the focus groups. The interviewer instead showed each model to the interviewee on the screen of a laptop.

After the closing remarks were made and the discussion was over, a demographic questionnaire was given to each participant (Appendix B). As with the focus groups, this questionnaire was given after the interviews because it asked participants to disclose personal information.

Data Analysis

After the focus groups and interviews had been conducted, the researcher transcribed them so that the comments and discussion could be more easily developed into a coding system. The data from these sessions included verbal comments and the discussion of the participants, as well as the moderators' observations of the nonverbal behavior. These nonverbal cues included the extent to which each participant exuded agreement, emphasis, boredom, excitement, indifference, and other thoughts in regards to the conversation.

Once the transcripts had been typed, each line of conversation was examined in order to assess how it pertained to the study. For example, in some cases, there was dialogue that was off-topic from the group or otherwise had nothing to do with the question posed. By using inductive data analysis, a hallmark of qualitative studies according to Creswell (2007), patterns, categories and themes were built from the “bottom up.” The inductive process involves the researcher working between the development of themes and the database, which in this case, was the set of transcripts (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative data was examined inductively, working from specific quotes or statements by individuals, moving toward more general perspectives (Creswell, 2007). The objective of coding and analyzing every line of the transcripts was to create a system of patterns or categories that would then evolve into the overall themes of the research findings.

There were several phases in the coding process. The three phases of coding, as advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1990) are open, axial, and selective. Open coding is the development of categories of information. Axial coding is making connections between the categories. Selective coding is building a story that connects all of the categories and attempts to make sense of them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In the open coding phase, the researcher examined the transcripts and developed categories of information. During this phase, the researcher also pulled specific supporting quotes and information to uphold the categorizing of the information. Essentially, when the researcher found that a certain comment exemplified the given category, she included the quotation in the analysis. Because the questions on the moderator’s guide were divided into sections for each of the four models, the researcher first organized the data into themes that developed during discussion of each model. These themes were also divided into female and male participants’

responses. Therefore, in the open coding phase, the researcher listed all of the themes for each model for female participants, then repeated this coding system for the male participants. When reporting the data, the researcher compared and contrasted the male and female responses for each model so that an assessment of responses could be easily made between the genders.

Once the gathered data had been organized into categories according to gender and models, the researcher identified a single category as the central phenomenon, as suggested by Creswell (2007). However, because this study was concerned with comparing results between male and female participants, there was a central phenomenon selected for each gender. The central phenomenon is typically the category that was widely discussed by the participants at length, and it is chosen because it seems central to the process being studied (Creswell, 2007). Due to the nature of this study, the central phenomenon was the model that each gender collectively chose as their favorite model, and most importantly, the reasoning behind this choice, which was the axial coding phase.

In the axial coding phase, the researcher began to examine the database for other categories that supported, related to, or explained the central phenomenon. These are typically the causal conditions that influence the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007); in other words, these relevant categories help explain the “why” behind the central phenomenon. Lastly, in the selective coding phase, the researcher organized the axial codes into a figure that presented a theoretical model of the process under study. This was how the theory was built (Creswell, 2007). The selective coding phase in this study consisted of comparing the axial codes between the male and female participants in order to explain the differences in their choices of favorite female model.

The themes, axial codes, and selective codes that developed over the course of the study are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Demographic Sketch of Participants

There were a total of five focus groups conducted (three male, two female) and eight in-depth interviews conducted. There were a total of nine male participants in the focus groups and four males who were interviewed, while there was a total of 27 female participants in the focus groups and four females who were interviewed.

The participants were all between the ages of 18 and 24, were currently enrolled as undergraduates at a major Southeastern university, had lived continuously in the United States for at least 15 years, and were Caucasian. The only break characteristic was the gender of each participant. For complete demographic information and data pertaining to individual participants, see Appendix D.

The average age of female focus group participants in the study was 20 years old, while the male groups skewed older with an average age of 22. All female focus group participants were advertising majors, while the male focus group participants majored in a variety of subjects, including advertising, finance, economics, agricultural studies, and building construction.

As a whole, the female focus group participants came from more educated households than did the male focus group participants. Nearly 64% of female focus group participants' fathers held a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 61% of their mothers held a Bachelor's degree or higher, versus 56% and 33% for the males' fathers and mothers, respectively.

The male focus group participants were slightly heavier overall users of media than were the female participants. All the focus group participants, male and female, said they used the Internet five hours a week or more. Males showed higher usage of television and newspapers, while the females showed higher usage of radio and magazines. Both male and female

participants who regularly read a newspaper commonly listed the school paper, *The Alligator*, as well as *USA Today* and/or *The New York Times*. Female magazine readers commonly listed *Cosmopolitan*, *People*, *InStyle* and *US Weekly* as magazines they read on a regular basis. The only repeated magazine that male focus group participants listed was *Sports Illustrated*. All of the focus group participants listed their sexual orientation as “heterosexual”, with the exception of one female participant who did not respond to the question.

The female interviewees’ average age was 22.5, whereas the average age of the male interviewees was younger at 21 years old. The female interviewees studied a variety of disciplines, including education, public relations, political science, and interior design. The male interviewees also studied a variety of disciplines, including finance, accounting, political science, and religion.

The female interviewees as a group came from the least-educated households of the four groups of participants (female focus group participants and interviewees, male focus group participants and interviewees), as only one female interviewee’s father had received a Bachelor’s degree or higher, and none of their mothers had received a Bachelor’s degree or higher. The male interviewees as a whole came from fairly educated households, with two participants’ fathers having received a Bachelor’s degree or higher, and two of the participants’ mothers held a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

All interview participants showed heavy media usage, as all used the Internet for five hours or more per week, the same percentage as the focus group participants. All female interviewees (100%) also listened to AM/FM radio one or more hours a week, watched five hours or more of television a week, and read at least part of one magazine a week. Seventy-five percent of male interviewees watched five hours or more of television per week, listened to the radio one hour or

more per week, and read at least part of one magazine each week. Overall, half of the interview participants, male and female, said they read a newspaper regularly; of those, 75% listed *The Alligator* as a paper they read often. All of the participants noted their sexual orientation as “heterosexual.”

Participants’ Responses and Resulting Categories

Participants were asked opening questions about females in the public eye, media and advertising. The discussion then moved to assessing the individual models and ultimately led to the choice of a favorite and least-favorite model.

In terms of responses to models, female participants in both of the focus groups and the interviews gave very similar responses. Likewise, the male participants in all three of the focus groups and the four interviews also gave similar responses to all of the models.

Celebrities and Women in the Public Eye and Media

Before participants were shown the models for discussion, they were asked to describe whom and what they talked about in regards to celebrities or women in the public eye. Although a few specific celebrities were named, the most common response from female participants was that they talked about celebs’ appearances and clothing, specifically how to copy a style or a certain look worn by a celebrity. These participants explained:

It’s really shallow. I mean it’s not like they stand for something great politically. It’s all about appearance. –Amy (FG)¹

We talk about what they’re wearing, how thin they are. We don’t particularly talk about people specifically. But I think it’s mostly to make us feel better about ourselves.
–Laney (IV)

Similarly, male participants said they talked about female celebrities’ appearances but specifically how attractive (or unattractive) they are.

¹ Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality of participants. “FG” after a participant’s name denotes a focus group participant; “IV” denotes an interviewee.

... with Victoria's Secret, if I see that commercial with my guy friends, we make comments about what they're wearing, because it's not very conservative at all. And some of that I enjoy looking at! –Mike (FG)

Besides the physical attractiveness of women in the public eye, male participants also said they discussed movie roles played by women, particularly if the movie was good or if the role was played well by the actress. Male participants also said they occasionally discussed how intelligent a woman sounded in a movie, interview, or other public appearance if she particularly impressed them.

When asked how celebrity and female public figures made them feel, female responses most commonly stemmed from a feeling of inadequateness, for example:

(They make me feel) inferior! (*Laughing from the group*) They're your goal in life, to look like that, or act like that. They're on a pedestal, and they're what you see as the perfect person. –Amy (FG)

I think they make you feel insecure, because they have the perfect bodies, perfect boobs, no cellulite. When you constantly see these women plastered on movie screens and in ads, sometimes you think 'I'll never be able to afford those clothes, I'll never be that skinny.' Those kinds of things. –Layla (IV)

Some female participants pointed to the fact that certain types of women inspired them more than others, as these participants explained:

The only ones that I think 'I wish I looked like that' are the ones that are a little more relatable, because the ones that are super skinny, I know I will never look like that- and I don't want to. It's not normal. –Katielyn (FG)

I feel like the ones that are more relatable, it's okay to want to look like them, because they are usually more healthy: they're working out, eating right. And we should want to do those things and live a healthy lifestyle. If they don't mind doing it, then what's the problem? –Darin (FG)

In this case, the females said they enjoyed seeing women who were not very thin, but rather preferred to see women who have a healthier—and thus more desirable—body weight. Weight was the main component the females saw as criteria for beauty and desirability.

However, there was another side on the issue of how these women influenced females' feelings. Some participants brought up the idea that they were used to seeing very thin models and celebrities and thus were not negatively affected by them. The idea that many of these women are "airbrushed" and have professional hairstylists and make-up artists to make them look like that also came up several times.

When asked how celebrity and female public figures made them feel, the males' responses mostly involved the idea that beautiful women were everywhere they looked and were very common. The males were surprisingly nonchalant about celebrities, models and beautiful women. For instance,

For me, I don't really feel that they have any influence on my day-to-day life. It's kind of like, you expect there to be a pretty face to look at, and I feel like all these women that are in the field are pretty much unattainable. And I get it. I'm not necessarily tired of it, but I'm not necessarily impressed, either." –Mike (FG)

Both males and females brought up the idea that these women were "unattainable." The males found they were unattainable in terms of ability to date them, whereas the females found these women's beauty and good looks unattainable. This shows that beautiful models in advertising also showcase how unattainable they are, whether it be their beauty or themselves as a partner.

The participants were also asked what attracted them to a model in an advertisement. Many females immediately said they liked to see models that were like them or someone they can relate to, as Rachelle (FG) explained:

I think if the model looks like me, then I feel like- 'oh, okay!' - like I'm more attracted to that. When they don't look like me at all, then it's like 'I don't even care about this at all.'

Conversely, some participants said they would rather see an advertising model that does not look like them and someone who is an inspiration to them. Amy (FG), explained,

Like the commercials for Dove, the body wash ones, that have average women in them-like, I don't want to buy that, I don't want to be an average woman! (*Laughing from group*) I mean, I want to look like Reese Witherspoon showering, not an average woman!

Male participants explained that sexy or beautiful models in advertisements attracted them the most. One participant explained that “sex appeals” worked best to attract him to an ad. Another common suggestion for attracting males to advertising was to use attractive female celebrities, because they already have a “connection” with celebrities, or a mental correlation between the celebrity and her assumed beauty, personality or role. Males said that only advertising models that “appeal” to the target audience should be used in ads for men. In other words, males suggested testing the market in order to understand which female model appealed to the audience in terms of attraction. Males also explained that the use of humor in an ad made them like and remember an advertisement more effectively.

Another point of appeal for an advertising model for both males and females is the assessed match between the model and the product:

(I like it) when it’s believable that they would use that product. Like makeup- you see it on them and you think, ‘Wow! Looks good on her, maybe I’ll try it.’ Especially if it is a celebrity. –Carly (FG)

I think the more realistic the portrayal, the more inclined I am to buy it. –Dana (FG)

When it’s like an interview in a magazine, and it’s like Jessica Simpson and they try to make her look like she’s cooking, and she’s wearing pretty clothes and her makeup is all done, I don’t relate to that. –Ari (FG)

Overall, most female participants, prior to seeing the models in the study, said they enjoyed seeing more natural, relatable models in advertising, but that a model’s appeal depended on the observer’s personal taste, the product being advertised, and the celebrity, if applicable, that was modeling in the advertisement. Male participants explained that the use of attractive or sexy models appealed to them the most, but like the females, admitted that an advertisement’s effectiveness had something to do with the match between the product and the model.

Responses to Model 1

Model 1 was the first Sexy/Sensual model shown. She had long, very blonde hair, was wearing lingerie, and had on a lot of make-up. She was posed standing on her knees on a bed wearing high heels, therefore revealing her whole body. Repeated descriptors of Model 1 from the female participants included “provocative,” “sexy,” “fake,” “skinny,” “eye-catching,” directed toward men, “stupid,” “beautiful,” and “slutty.” The male participants repeatedly used words such as “provocative,” “sexy,” “hot,” and “attractive” to describe Model 1 but did not use any negative descriptors to suggest that her sexiness correlated to promiscuity.

Not a single female participant said she could relate to Model 1 or that Model 1 was similar to her in any way, mostly because hypersexuality has negative associations for females. Thus, the female participants did not view themselves as overly sexual, and therefore did not see themselves as slutty, unintelligent, or a sex object. When asked how Model 1 made them feel, many male participants said she turned them on or that they were otherwise physically attracted to her. This points to the idea that males do not necessarily believe hypersexuality has negative associations but may still hold negative beliefs about females who are promiscuous, as is often demonstrated by the idea that males want a “good girl” to be their wife. In addition, one male participant said Model 1 was “out of my league.”

In terms of body language, many female participants exhibited a combination of disgust, shock and disbelief when seeing Model 1 for the first time. For other females, the nonverbal attitude was one of boredom, as if it were commonplace to see models like her. The male participants’ body language, on the other hand, suggested that they enjoyed looking at and analyzing Model 1. Many smiled voyeuristically upon seeing her for the first time.

When asked what celebrity Model 1 was like, nearly every single participant, male and female, said “Pamela Anderson.” Female participants said Model 1 was like Pamela Anderson

“during her *Baywatch* years,” because of both similar physical looks and the personality Model 1 portrayed, which they presumed to be unintelligent and shallow. A female interviewee explained Model 1 was like Pamela Anderson “before the plastic surgery.” Other celebrities that females named were Christina Aguilera, Paris Hilton, and Kendra from the *Playboy* model reality show, *Girls Next Door*. Other celebrities that males named were Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears.

Resulting categories

Female participants had mostly negative reactions to Model 1, whereas male participants were forthcoming with mostly positive descriptions of her. The responses have been divided into themes and are discussed at length below.

Provocative, highly sexy: The most talked-about element by the female participants was Model 1’s provocative nature, which they saw as a negative aspect. Female participants called her “skanky,” “slutty,” and “trashy.” Many said that her pose was what heavily contributed to her provocative nature. For example,

I mean, I think a big thing is the pose. I think she would look more tasteful if she was in a more natural pose. –Katielyn (FG)

When you think about it, what makes this so unappealing to women in her position: arms up, hair over her face, arching her back, all that. –Kristine (FG)

These responses from females suggest that a model that is perceived as highly sexy is also perceived as slutty. Therefore, highly sexy models targeted toward women have a negative association and thus do not elicit a positive response.

Male participants also found Model 1 to be highly sexy and provocative, which they conversely saw as positive attributes. Like the females, the males repeatedly brought up her physical pose. Male participants explained that Model 1 was trying to make a certain statement by her stance and facial expression. For instance:

I would say she is definitely provocative. She's not really wearing anything at all. And the face that she has is like, staring at you...like she's trying to portray something to you. It's very attractive and sexually appealing. –Mike (FG)

In relation, another male participant said Model 1 looked like she “was ready to go.” As Louis (FG) explained, “She's ready for it. She's arching her back and everything.” The males found her pose attractive, yet some thought it looked “forced.” For example, Lonnie (FG) said, “I consider her attractive. In that pose, though, I almost think she's trying too hard.”

Male participants repeatedly said Model 1 was not only sexy, but also “attractive,” “beautiful,” “hot,” and “sexually appealing.” Therefore, what females thought of as sexy/slutty, males saw as sexy/beautiful. One male participant explained that Model 1 was “probably what 90% of men would consider attractive.” Another male participant summed it up and said, “She's just someone you want to look at.”

Directed toward men: Male and female participants alike repeatedly made comments about how Model 1 looked like she was in an ad targeting males or meant to be seen only by males. Females suggested she looked like she could be in *Maxim* or *Playboy*, both of which are male publications. These participants explained why they thought Model 1 looked like an ad for men:

She looks like she's selling something to men. Because women hate her for looking like that and men love her for looking like that. –Carly (FG)

This is meant for man because I don't know any rational advertiser who would use her to advertise to women. –Kristine (FG)

In other words, women do not like a model that is perceived to be targeted toward a man, such as Model 1. The idea that “women hate her” for her appearance is linked with the idea that her appearance is unattainable and different than a normal woman. In contrast, however, Lynn (FG) pointed out another way of thinking about the model:

So, we say that the ad looks like it's geared toward a man, but I think either way, women want to look like her. –Lynn (FG)

Therefore, even though females were somewhat affronted by Model 1's perceived positioning toward male audiences, there was also the idea that she provided an element of inspiration for female audiences.

Male participants also felt Model 1 was advertising a product that was intended for men, or in an advertisement that was directed toward men. This was mostly due to her physical position, as one participant explained:

I think she's geared toward men. She looks like she's about to engage in some, uhhhhh, promiscuous activities. (*laughs*) But that's what guys like. –Jake (FG)

Other male participants called Model 1 a “typical model” for men's advertisements and said she was the kind of woman that “most men” were “attracted to.”

Shallow, stupid: Both male and female participants said that Model 1 did not look intelligent. For females, this was based on Model 1's very blonde hair color, as there was no other reason listed by participants. Females said she looked like a “dumb blonde” and one female said she did not look like she was “educated.”

One male participant said Model 1 looked shallow by suggesting she did not “have much of a personality.” Another participant said she looked “stupid.” One male said this about Model 1:

As far as her personality, I wouldn't think much about it. Like, I would assume she didn't have much of a personality...If her attractiveness was better than her personality, then I would probably only notice her appearance. I probably wouldn't ... want to hear what she had to say. –Mike (FG)

This reflects the idea that many males believe a female cannot have both brains and beauty, so to speak.

Unrealistic, fake (females only): Nearly all of the female participants called Model 1 “fake” or otherwise suggested she was not realistic by calling her a Barbie doll, saying she was “airbrushed,” and said she was very thin. Many made remarks about the amount of make-up she was wearing (“dark eye make-up,” “dramatic eye make-up”) and her hair color (“bleach-blonde,” “dumb blonde”).

The participants all agreed that being “fake” or looking too “done-up” was not a good thing for an advertising model and did not make a model appealing to them. However, some participants, specifically those who seemed bored with Model 1, pointed out that this kind of model was common and they were used to seeing women like Model 1 in advertising:

I think we’re all used to this. Like, it’s not like we’re all like ‘Oh, my God’ when we see this. –Lynn (FG)

I think it’s a bad thing we’re so used to this! It’s so prevalent, like pictures like this. I mean we know they’re out there, so we don’t really care. –Analiz (FG)

Participants overall felt that Model 1’s “airbrushed” appearance was an unrealistic portrayal of women.

Aspirational, eye-catching, beautiful (females only): Contradictory to their belief that Model 1 was “slutty” or “skanky,” some female participants said that Model 1 was undeniably beautiful, even if that beauty was not natural. Some females in the focus groups and interviews said that she was “beautiful,” “hot,” “not an average woman,” and that she “catches my eye.”

Related to this was the idea that Model 1 was seen as an inspiration, as Katelyn (FG) explained:

I mean, it doesn’t make me feel bad about myself. It gives me inspiration. Like, ‘Okay, some girls can look like that!’ It’s not so much about looking like her. I mean, I have dark hair and I don’t want to have blonde hair. But as far as being in shape, yeah, she’s an inspiration.” –Katelyn (FG)

Similarly, another focus group participant, Analiz, explained, “She’s what women want to be. But very few actually look like that.”

Sexier than Victoria's Secret (females only): In both of the focus groups, female participants said eerily similar things comparing Model 1 to Victoria's Secret models. In both groups, this topic came about because one participant said that Model 1 reminded her of a Victoria's Secret model, and another participant quickly disagreed. At this point in both focus groups, many other participants got involved. The exchanges in female focus group one and two are below.

From the first female focus group:

Lynn: I mean, it depends on the context. Like if she's a Victoria's Secret model, then maybe we would be attracted to that because we're used to looking at models like that to buy lingerie, you know? I mean, when you look at a Victoria's Secret catalog, you flip through and you may say 'God, I love that' when you see her.

Analiz: I think it's different than a Victoria's Secret model though.

Lynn: Yeah that's true, like she has the whole dark make-up, one-eye-showing-only thing going on. She looks like she's ready to...get it on! (*laughing from group*) I mean, she's on the bed with heels on!

Analiz: You're saying it's more sexy than a Victoria's Secret model.

Abby: She's more provocative.

Analiz: Yeah, like for Victoria's Secret, she may be wearing the exact same thing, but it's a little more toned down. And that dark eye make-up- it totally changes everything.

Lana: Victoria's Secret may be a little more classic (sic.)

From the second female focus group:

Ari: At the same time though, isn't she like a Victoria's Secret model? And don't we all shop at Victoria's Secret?

Laurie: But I feel like Victoria's Secret advertisements aren't trashy.

Violet: The ones geared toward us don't look like that.

Darin: I think the Victoria's Secret models are more natural, like they wouldn't have bleach-blonde hair or be covering their face. And that dramatic eye makeup! (*laughing from group*)

Wilma: And they don't pose their models like that, on a bed with high heels.

Kristine: The way she has her hands up, it's just not what Victoria's Secret is trying to convey.

As demonstrated by the excerpts from both focus groups, the participants concluded that Model 1 was not like a Victoria's Secret model, as she was too sexy and provocative, not natural enough and was not the kind of image that Victoria's Secret emulates in their advertisements and catalogs. In other words, the participants felt that Model 1 was a poor "match" for advertising Victoria's Secret products. Also, participants repeatedly brought up the fact that Model 1 was wearing high heels on the bed, a prop that contributed to her sex appeal and unrealistic portrayal of women.

Summary

Overall, female participants did not react positively to Model 1. Many seemed offended by her pose and unrealistic nature, and several noted that models like Model 1 gave men the wrong impression of what women really look like. There were a few differing responses, however. One female participant from Focus Group 1 said she was "always trying to get (her) hair blonder!" and therefore liked Model 1 because she had very blonde hair. A few respondents did not seem offended by Model 1 and mostly seemed apathetic, citing reasons like "she just looks like a model" and that they had seen this kind of model "since the beginning of time."

Male participants had positive reactions to Model 1, including the fact that she was "sexy" and "attractive." Some of the participants said she was beautiful and very close to their ideal woman. Other participants said she was beautiful but different than their ideal woman because they preferred brunettes or women who were not as "skinny." However, all of the men agreed that Model 1 was "nice to look at" and that they liked seeing models like her in advertisements.

Responses to Model 2

Model 2 was the second Sexy/Sensual model shown. She had long brunette hair, had on a lot of make-up, was wearing a sheer black camisole, and was shown from the waist-up. Some of the descriptors that female participants repeatedly gave Model 2 were “edgy,” “confident,” “seductive,” “naturally” beautiful, “mysterious,” “sexy,” “bad-ass,” “empowering,” and other words that suggested Model 2 was inspiring. Conversely, when male participants described Model 2, they repeatedly used descriptions such as “provocative,” “attractive,” “bitchy,” and “intimidating.”

The female participants did not feel they could relate to Model 2, but she was slightly more similar to some participants than Model 1. For example, some participants said Model 2 looked more “natural” than Model 1, and since they believed they themselves were natural, Model 2 was more like them. This suggests that more of a “natural beauty” is ideal, as opposed to over-done and unrealistic portrayals of women.

When asked how Model 2 made them feel, many male participants said that although she was beautiful, she was “intimidating” and explained they felt this way because of her facial expression, specifically her intense stare. As with Model 1, one male participant said that, based on Model 2’s appearance, she was “out of my league.” Another participant explained that she made him feel badly about himself, most likely due to her attractive appearance and her perceived personality.

When asked what celebrity Model 2 was like, the most common response from males and females was “Angelina Jolie.” Participants said Model 2 was similar to Angelina Jolie because, as Kristine (FG) explained, “She’s kind of the same way. Like, (Angelina Jolie’s) not really conservative, but you never really see her flaunting herself too much. She’s sexy though.”

Other celebrities mentioned by females were Kate Moss, Eva Mendes, and Victoria's Secret models Giselle Bündchen and Adriana Lima. In relation, the females thought Model 2 was more like a Victoria's Secret model than Model 1. One woman also suggested Model 2 looked like a model in an Express fashion ad. Male participants named celebrity Elizabeth Hurley in addition to Angelina Jolie as similar to Model 2.

The body language and nonverbal cues females demonstrated when seeing Model 2 for the first time was mostly admiration in the sense that the participants were in awe of her beauty and assumed personality, which was thought to be bold and strong. Some female participants seemed intrigued; others maintained the same state of boredom they exhibited when seeing Model 1. The male participants' body language suggested that Model 2 intimidated them. Many males had raised eyebrows and open mouths, indicating a somewhat surprised reaction and a bit of intimidation.

Resulting categories

Female participants had mostly positive reactions to Model 2, while male participants had mostly negative responses. The responses have been divided into themes and are discussed below.

Mysterious, intriguing: Several female focus group participants and an interviewee said Model 2 looked mysterious. Both focus groups brought up the idea that she left a little to the imagination, which the participants seemed to appreciate and respect. The mysteriousness of Model 2 stemmed mostly from her "dark eye make-up" and her facial expression:

The first thing you look at is her face. Her eyes make her look mysterious. –Wilma (FG)

She looks mysterious. I think she looks sexy. –Laney (IV)

I think it's like that saying, like she 'leaves something to the imagination.' –Violet (FG)

Again, participants used such words to suggest that mysteriousness, edginess, and rebellion were good qualities for an advertising model to possess, as it provided inspiration for female viewers to tap into this part of themselves. Several male participants also thought Model 2 seemed mysterious and used the word “intriguing” to describe her. Jesse (FG) explained, “She looks like she’s inviting a challenge.”

Participants also believed that Model 2 looked smarter and more intelligent than Model 1, which contributed to her mysterious and intriguing nature. Her assumed intelligence was correlated with her darker hair. For instance, one participant explained,

Yeah, I like the darker hair. She seems like she’s different than Model 1, that she may be deeper based on the picture. –Justin (FG)

Attractive, sexy, naturally beautiful: Female participants felt that Model 2 possessed more natural beauty and sexiness than Model 1. While participants in both female groups explained that Model 1 looked like she was pushing her sexuality, Model 2 seemed to naturally exude sexuality. One participant explained:

Well, (Model 1) is, like, radiating sexuality. This one, it’s more implied, but it’s not in-your-face sexuality. It’s understood. She’s not trying to be overly sexy. –Laurie (FG)

Another participant expanded on the idea:

She’s trying to look good, to be sexy. But she’s not over-exposing herself. I think we can all relate to that because we all want to look hot, but not over-exposed. –Ari (FG)

Because the participants had already analyzed Model 1, they began to make comparisons between the two models in terms of how natural or unnatural the models looked:

She is still really beautiful, but she’s like, a lot more laid-back. –Analiz (FG)

And you can see her face actually. She’s pretty. The first girl, I mean you could tell she was pretty but like, it was very like, fake. But this one has a pretty face. –Lynn (FG)

Her hair isn’t like, perfect. Like that other girl, it was so obvious that her hair was like done by someone. And this one, it’s more relaxed and more natural. –Katelyn (FG)

I feel like the first one was like a Barbie doll. And this one is a real person. –Rachelle (FG)

The male participants agreed that Model 2 was attractive, using words such as “pretty” and “beautiful” to do so. A few participants also thought that Model 2 was “provocative;” however, not as much so as Model 1. Lonnie (FG) said Model 2 did not “look as slutty” as Model 1. Again, this idea of extreme sexiness equating to sexual permissiveness surfaced when comparisons between Models 1 and 2 commenced; that is, Model 1 was presumed to be more sexually permissive than Model 2 based on her appearance, pose and facial expression.

Eye-catching, seductive (females only): While female participants thought Model 2 was sexy, they also thought she had a seductive nature about her that made her eye-catching. Within the theme of seduction, Model 2 was described as a “temptress” and a “tease,” and looked like she should be uttering the words “come hither,” as one participant added.

Another word that was frequently used to describe her was “focused,” as if she was focused on a certain goal or the person looking at the ad. Many female participants suggested that her intense, focused gaze seduced the viewer-- male or female-- to look at the ad, thus drawing them in. Lynn (FG) explained, “I would stop and look at it- I mean she definitely catches my attention.” Unlike Model 1, the model’s seductive nature was thought to be seductive and attractive to both males and females:

She appeals to both men and women: men love her, women want to be her. –Kristine (FG)

And they aren’t turning people away: like whoever is using her in an ad is smart because women aren’t disenchanted by this woman and men are attracted to her, so it’s a good male and female advertisement. –Ari (FG)

These responses explained that a model must have a unique or otherwise-interesting quality about her to make her catch and keep consumers’ gazes.

Inspiring, empowering, confident (females only): Model 2 was seen as someone to aspire to because of both her physical qualities and the personality she was presumed to have.

One participant explained Model 2's physical qualities like this:

I think she inspires you, but it's not unrealistic that you could look like her. She's thin, but she's not ultra skinny. Her makeup's not over-extreme- we all do our makeup more when we go out, we could try to do our hair like that. I mean, she's not so far-fetched that you couldn't look like her. –Nikki (FG)

Although the participants saw Model 2 as highly beautiful, she provided inspiration that was reasonable and feasible. This appealed more to the participants than Model 1's beauty, which was seen as unattainable, far-fetched and fake.

Model 2 also represented things that women wanted to be in terms of personality traits, rather than in terms of solely the physical qualities she possessed. She was repeatedly described as “confident,” “edgy,” and a “bad-ass.” It is important to note that the tone in which these words were spoken was positive, rather than negative, which was the biggest difference between the descriptions given for Model 1 and Model 2. Participants used these words to explain how Model 2 made women feel empowered and brought to light some of the personality traits women want to have:

I think this model represents the edginess that a lot of women want to have, you know, what we want to be. –Alice (FG)

She looks like a bad-ass. And a lot of people can't find that part of themselves to be like that in public. –Kristine (FG)

I think she shows the empowerment of women. –Ari (FG)

Another female focus group participant also described Model 2 as “a rebel,” and another described her as someone who would “skip class.” This theme of empowerment and confidence was thought of as attractive and sexy to women, and was not considered provocative or offensive. Although nearly all the males saw these attributes as negative, one male participant,

Chase (FG) echoed the rebellious idea brought up by the females and explained that Model 2 “probably rides a motorcycle and has a tattoo.”

Intimidating, scary, bitchy (males only): Whereas females discussed how Model 2’s facial expression made her seductive, empowering, confident and eye-catching, males found her facial expression intimidating. They felt that she looked like she had “an attitude,” said she looked “scary,” and several participants described her as “bitchy.” These participants explained their reactions:

She just looks like she’d scare me! She looks like she would be a complete bitch, to me at least. I don’t like bitchy girls. –Jake (FG)

She looks very intimidating. Like she’s about to bite somebody’s head off. –Al (FG)

Another participant felt that Model 2’s facial expression conveyed a clear message:

She looks like she’s more critical, or discerning. It’s clear that she knows she’s out of my league, with the look on her face. She looks a little bitchy. –Jesse (FG)

There were several other reasons male participants cited for Model 2’s intimidating nature. One participant said she looked like she was “high maintenance” and two participants said she looked “smart,” as in she looked like she could outsmart them. Overall, females found Model 2 empowering, while males found her fearful due to the power she exuded.

Summary

The female participants liked Model 2 more than Model 1, mostly because Model 2 did not look as “done-up,” looked more “natural” and was “empowering.” Moreover, the female participants nearly all agreed that Model 2 appealed to both men and women, but for different reasons. However, some female participants said that Model 2, like Model 1, just looked like a normal model, and a few participants mentioned that Model 2 was “still not that relatable.”

Male participants had an overall negative reaction to Model 2. They were intimidated by Model 2’s facial expression and said she looked “scary.” Other negative descriptions of Model 2

included “dark,” “angry,” and “edgy.” However, one participant, Mike (FG), had a positive reaction to Model 2 and said, “She makes you feel good, I like her better. She looks like she’s smiling a little, so she looks happy to see me or something.”

Responses to Model 3

Model 3 was the first Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model shown. She had shoulder-length blonde hair, minimal make-up, and was wearing a cotton bra and underwear. She was shown from the knees-up, with her back slightly turned to the viewer. Model 3 brought up similar repeated descriptors from the female and male participants. They described her as “normal,” “real,” “average,” “natural,” “old,” and “awkward.” Female participants also repeatedly called Model 3 “relatable.” In addition, males described Model 3 as “approachable” and “pretty” but not sexually attractive.

The male participants’ body language suggested that Model 3 made them feel comfortable but unexcited; when asked how she made them feel, the participants said they did not have any feelings in particular because she was “pretty” but not like their ideal woman. One focus group participant, Mike, said, “There’s not really a feeling I’m getting from this. I’m not attracted to her.” Model 3 was said to be more similar to female participants than either Model 1 or 2. She was described as being a “normal person” and “just a regular girl.” Accompanying such lackluster responses was a lack of excitement exhibited by the participants; for instance, most females leaned back in their seats, almost as if Model 3 bored them or they didn’t have to scrutinize every detail of Model 3 because she was similar to them.

When asked what celebrity Model 3 was like, both female focus groups produced “Renee Zellweger” as a response. Participants said Model 3 reminded them of Renee Zellweger in the *Bridget Jones’ Diary* movies, and described the character Bridget Jones as a normal woman who was not skinny and was a little “awkward.” Other celebrities mentioned were Cameron Diaz,

Michelle Pfeiffer, and Christie Brinkley. Females also said Model 3 looked like a model for “Jergens Age-Defying Lotion,” “Aveeno,” or “Dove.” Males named celebrities Calista Flockhart (namely her role in the television show *Ally McBeal*) and Michelle Pfeiffer as similar to Model 3 because of physical characteristics. Martha Stewart was also named because some male participants said Model 3 looked like a mother or someone who would be cooking, cleaning, and partaking in household projects. Many males said she did not remind them of any celebrity in particular.

Resulting categories

Participants had a mixed reaction to Model 3, saying both positive and negative things about her. The responses have been divided into themes and are discussed below.

Natural, normal, real: This was the most prevalent theme throughout the discussion of Model 3 for both the males and females. Participants said she looked like a “typical,” “normal,” and “average” person; others said she was “nothing special.”

Females from both focus groups and interviews described her as more “real” and “natural” and “less airbrushed” than the first two models, and also said she was “not perfect.” Participants consistently said she did not look like the stereotypical model, as Amy (FG) explained: “She looks like a regular girl, not a model.”

Similarly, male participants made comments about how Model 3 looked like a “real person” and that she looked “natural.” Two male participants also said she did not look like a “traditional model.” However, some female participants caught on to what this type of model or advertisement was trying to do; for example, one female participant said, “It looks like an ad that is trying to portray a normal person.”

Other participants commented on her body type, size and weight, which were discussed in relation to her assumed age. Participants had both positive and negative reactions to Model 3's body:

I think she looks real. She looks good though. Obviously, she's not 16 but her body looks good. –Kristine (FG)

It looks like her metabolism went up at a normal rate. (*laughing from group*)
–Katielyn (FG)

Many male participants also thought Model 3 was larger in size as compared to Models 1 and 2. The participants did not think this was a bad thing for women in general but hinted that it was not the greatest trait for an advertising model to have.

The participants' responses and body language pointed to the idea that a model with normal body weight, average looks, and a natural appearance bored them. This was illuminated by a few female participants who explained that Model 3 looked like themselves or someone they knew, which did not excite them because it didn't show anything new, stimulating or inspiring. This idea is discussed more deeply below.

Relatable, approachable: Nearly every female participant suggested that Model 3 was relatable, meaning they thought she was quite similar to them in terms of her level of physical attraction. Some male participants also felt that her “real” image made her easier to relate to. For instance,

She's got a little bit of weight on her. The position she's in doesn't flatter her. She's not fat, but she's not like a traditional model...I mean she just looks like she represents people-- average women-- better than the smaller ones. I think she's easier to relate to. –Jake (FG)

In regards to her personality, the females thought Model 3 was “approachable,” calling her “friendly,” “fun,” “bubbly,” “playful,” and “down-to-earth.” One participant said, “Her personality is showing. The more I look at her, the prettier I think she is.” A female participant added that Model 3 looked more respectable and said

I think (advertising) portrays women like we're all supposed to be some really sexy girl, and this is more like, yes, you can be sexy, but you don't have to shove it in everyone's face. You can look approachable and respect yourself. Guys can respect you like this.
–Laurie (FG)

The male participants also felt that Model 3 was more approachable than the previous two models. They described her as “less intimidating,” and said that her facial expression and natural appearance made her appear easier to talk to. Males also explained that Model 3 looked more approachable because of her assumed good personality. Participants described her as “light-hearted,” “down-to-earth,” “easy-going,” and “warm.” Some participants explained:

She definitely looks like she has more of the personality traits that I'm attracted to in a woman. Fun, happy, easy-going. –Jesse (FG)

I mean, I guess I like that she looks happy and like she's having fun. And that's what I like to see. I like to see girls have fun. She looks like she's laughing, she's having a good time.
–Mike (FG)

The male participants agreed that a good personality is a must-have in their ideal woman. Several participants also noted she had a “nice smile” that made her seem more attractive.

The “relatable” and “approachable” tags given to Model 3 showed that the participants would have probably liked Model 3 as a person; however, this liking did not provide a correlation for liking of a female model in an ad. This is due to the preference for an advertisement to show the ideal rather than the reality.

Old, family-oriented, motherly: Although this was a common theme among all participants, the male participants in particular believed Model 3 looked and seemed older than the other models. One participant said he thought Model 3 was “in her mid-thirties,” while the others were “in their twenties.”

Many remarks about Model 3's age were related to the idea that she looked like a “Mom,” as several participants stated. One male participant said she looked “family-oriented,” like she

should be taking care of her children and husband. A female participant said Model 3 looked like she would have children at home. Blaine, a male interviewee, explained,

Her facial expression, her undergarments- what she's wearing- and her pose make her look more modest and motherly than the other models.

Several male participants agreed that she reminded them of a young Martha Stewart and said they pictured Model 3 to be in an ad for food, cleaning items, or household ads. The thought that Model 3 was mature and maternal was seen as a negative quality. The male participants explained that were turned off by Model 3 mainly because of these associations.

The females also saw "old" and motherly as damaging qualities because women in their early twenties-- like the participants-- are not inspired by mother-like figures in their mid-thirties. Therefore, these descriptions produced the idea that mothers or motherly types are not sexy or inspiring for this demographic.

Uninspiring, boring (females only): In responses from female participants, two sets of descriptions stemming from the belief that Model 3 was boring and uninspiring suggested that if a model does not catch your eye, she will not inspire you either. Some of the descriptions about how boring and uninspiring Model 3 was included the fact that she wasn't wearing much, if any, make-up, her hair looked "weird" and she had "roots." They also described her pose as "awkward" and said she was "covering" and "guarding" herself to suggest that she lacked confidence.

Another important element to note is that Model 3 was deemed as boring for use in an advertisement by many female participants. When asked if they liked Model 3 in the context of an ad, several female focus group participants responded immediately in this exchange from the first focus group:

Lynn: The other ones, it's like, 'Oh, I want to look like this.' But this one, I mean, I already look like that.

Taylor: I feel like the damage is already done. You already kind of know that they're trying. They've used the skinny models, and now people are trying to use these models to appeal to more people...

Amy: I'd have to say that if it had always been like this, since the beginning of time, it would be better. But it hasn't been that way.

Lynn: Yeah...The other look is more appealing.

Analiz: There's nothing about her that like pops out at you. There has to be something to catch your eye, you know?

The premise that a model must be eye-catching and inspirational was repeated throughout the focus groups. Since Model 3 was seen as common and boring, she did not possess any qualities that made her stand out in an advertisement.

Pretty but not sexually attractive (males only): Nearly all of the male participants felt that Model 3 was a "pretty" or "cute" woman. However, not one participant said she was sexually attractive or that they were attracted to her. When discussing how approachable Model 3 looked, Justin (FG) said, "She's definitely more approachable... not that I would approach her!" This shows that males are interested in the fantasy (Model 1) rather than the reality (Model 3).

Other participants went on to say that Model 3 was more similar to their ideal woman in the sense that she seemed more natural than Models 1 and 2, but that she was "not attractive enough" to be their ideal woman.

Summary

Overall, the male and female participants had very similar reactions to Model 3. The participants had many positive things to say about her, including that she looked "natural," "friendly," "relatable," and "approachable." Participants thought Model 3 had a good personality.

Negative comments also abounded, however. Participants said that Model 3 was not catchy in the context of an advertisement because she looked older, seemed like she should have children, and did not look completely comfortable in her own skin by the way she was covering herself. Male participants also added that she was not sexually attractive. In addition, most participants said they had no feelings, either positive or negative, when they saw Model 3.

Responses to Model 4

Model 4 was the last model shown, as well as the last Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model. She had shoulder-length brunette hair, was wearing a white cotton camisole, had on minimal make-up, and was shown straight on from the waist-up. Model 4 produced a mixed reaction from the participants in both of the focus groups, as well as in the in-depth interviews. She was most commonly described by female participants as “cute,” “young,” “friendly,” “wholesome,” “girly,” and “normal.” Like Model 3, Model 4 was described as being “normal” and “average.” However, another school of thought emerged, and some participants claimed that Model 4 was “boring” and said things like “she does nothing for me.” Male participants regularly used words such as “normal,” “pretty,” “cute,” and “approachable” to describe Model 4.

Nonverbal behavior and body language of the female participants for Model 4 was similar to that exhibited during the discussion of Model 3, with many participants looking bored. In contrast to Model 3, however, a lot of participants smiled when they saw Model 4 and appeared to like Model 4 better than Model 3. Males’ body language suggested that, like Model 3, Model 4 made them feel comfortable but did not excite them.

Model 4 was thought to be the most similar to the majority of female participants, with descriptions such as “she looks like she could be one of my friends” and “she looks like the girl-next-door” supporting this belief. When asked how Model 4 made them feel, females responded

similarly to how they responded to Model 3. They said they did not have any strong feelings one way or another and that Model 4 was “just a normal person.”

Nearly every male and female participant thought Model 4 was similar to Jessica Biel. Participants said Model 4 reminded them of Jessica Biel because they were both casual, pretty, and friendly. One female focus group participant said Model 4 was similar to Jessica Biel because, “Jessica Biel is really natural. She works out and she’s thin, but she’s sexy because she’s confident in herself.” A male focus group participant explained that Model 4 was similar to Jessica Biel “before she got on a work-out plan.” Other celebrities mentioned by females were Rachel McAdams, Rachel Bilson, Katie Holmes, and Drew Barrymore. Other celebrities mentioned by male participants were Katie Holmes and Natalie Portman.

Females also said Model 4 was akin to an ad in *Teen People* magazine and ads for low- to mid-level clothing lines. As one participant said,

I picture her modeling lingerie or whatever, sleepwear, in a Dillard’s or JCPenney magazine. But I can’t see her modeling for anything high-end. –Carly (FG)

In terms of the types of products models like Models 3 and 4 would advertise, the female participants did not name anything high-end or in the luxury sector, but instead named brands like Jergens and JCPenney.

Resulting categories

Overall, participants had mostly positive reactions to Model 4; however, the responses were lackluster and the participants seemed bored with her. The responses have been divided into themes and are discussed below.

Cute, wholesome, girl-next-door: Model 4 was frequently described by female participants as “cute,” “wholesome,” “young,” and “girly.” Most said that she was pretty in a normal, everyday sort of way. One female participant described Model 4 as “adorable” and

another described her as “perfect.” The female participants seemed to enjoy that Model 4 was not overtly sexy and that her personality showed. For instance, Kristine (FG), explained, “She’s bringing out personality rather than sex.”

One participant explained their opinion of Model 4’s physical appearance in the context of an ad:

I think this is the type of ad that makes the consumer feel like they are better than the model in the ad. Instead of aspiring to be like them, you think ‘I’m better than that,’ so you have confidence when you see this ad. –Ari (FG)

Mostly, the comments about Model 4’s “cute” appearance were positive. Other unique descriptions of Model 4 that relate to the idea of the “girl-next-door” included “sporty,” “sassy,” and “school girl.”

Similarly, males said that Model 4 looked like a nice and “innocent” person. Participants used words such as “sweet,” “modest” and “conservative” to describe her. The male participants felt that she would be a kind-natured person, and several said she looked like she had a good personality. For instance,

She looks sweet, and maybe there’s more to her. She’s not, like, super-shallow, based on the picture. –Justin (FG)

Relatable, approachable: As with Model 3, the participants found Model 4 to be “natural,” “normal,” and “real,” which, as with Model 3, made her “relatable” to females and “approachable” to males. Females said she looked like a “normal girl.”

Many males said Model 4 did not look like a traditional model. Part of this belief stemmed from her body type, which the male participants thought was larger than that of a normal model. For instance,

She doesn’t look as skinny as your traditional model. She’s not fat though. She looks like she has a little bit of weight on her, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing. –Jake (FG)

I'd say she doesn't look like a model to me. She looks like a normal person. Like, if I saw her on the street, I wouldn't expect her to be a model. She's not all done up, she's not in a glamour shot, she's just kind of standing there with a smile. –Mike (FG)

The participants thought Model 4's natural appearance made her more approachable.

Justin, a focus group participant, explained, "(She's) definitely more approachable. Like you would see her and think, 'I'm going to talk to that girl.'" As with Model 3, male and female participants found Model 4 relatable and approachable, but this again did not necessarily transfer into partiality toward her in the context of an advertisement.

Friendly, good personality: Most participants commented on Model 4's assumed personality, which they perceived to be pleasant. These implied associations of personality were created mostly by the facial expression of Model 4, which was a simple smile. Females in particular called Model 4 "friendly." This idea was brought up repeatedly and in several different ways. First, there were a group of female participants who thought Model 4 looked like someone who could be her friend:

She looks like someone that I would be friends with. Someone who I could talk to and hang out with. –Katielyn (FG)

For the females, there was also the idea that her friendly personality was something to aspire to, rather than her appearance:

She's not someone you aspire to be, but she's someone you aspire to know. She looks like she would be a good friend. –Kristine (FG)

However, some participants also felt that her friendly personality and appearance was a disadvantage for Model 4 in the context of an advertisement:

What does this woman portray? 'You can wear this little get-up and look...friendly?' (*laughing from group*) –Carly (FG)

I mean I feel like that's my best friend. I'm not trying to be like my best friend. –Kristine (FG)

Although “friendly” is a desirable trait in real people or acquaintances, the female participants explained that an advertising model is not someone you can be friends with and therefore should not look like a friend. In other words, a model that looks like a friend also looks like the viewer, which does not provide inspiration for the viewer.

In relation, male participants explained that Model 4 looked like she had a good personality by calling her “happy,” “sweet,” and “warm.” Because of her assumed personality, some males said she was similar to their ideal woman. For example,

She’s happy, and my ideal woman is happy. She looks comfortable with who she is.
–Jake (FG)

However, some participants said that it was difficult to tell what kind of personality Model 4 indeed had due to her rather dull physical position and facial expression.

Boring, mundane: Another theme that developed for Model 4 was that she was “boring.” Many participants felt that Model 4 simply would not catch their attention in an advertisement. Another popular sentiment is that a model must have something eye-catching or intriguing about her, and Model 4 does not have a unique quality that draws the viewer into the ad. One female participant elaborated,

She doesn’t do anything for me. I wouldn’t buy or not buy the product by seeing this ad...There has to be a degree of attraction. She’s not wearing anything eye-catching. I think we all feel that we could look like that. –Kristine (FG)

Pretty but not sexually appealing (males only): The males described Model 4 as “cute” and “pretty.” The participants especially liked her smile and “comfortable” physical stance. However, much like with Model 3, males said she was not sexually attractive and they were not attracted to her.

Many went on to say that their ideal woman would be more attractive than Model 4. However, the participants seemed to appreciate her innocent demeanor and natural appearance,

and because of these things, she somewhat similar to their ideal woman. One participant clarified:

As far as being my ideal woman, her smile is more attractive than anything else. If she was just standing there, I wouldn't find her attractive at all. But since she's smiling, she looks happy and I like that. As far as everything else goes, her body type and length of her hair, it's not really for me, or at least not what I imagine now for my ideal woman. –Mike (FG)

However, the bottom line with the male participants was that their ideal woman and advertising model should be more physically attractive and sexy than Model 4.

Summary

Male and female participants reacted positively to Model 4's appearance and her assumed personality. Most participants said that she looked "cute" and "friendly" and gave her a variety of endearing labels. Nonetheless, both male and female participants felt that Model 4 was not a good advertising model because she was unexciting and had no special qualities about her.

Therefore, no matter how much the participants liked Model 4 as a person outside the context of advertising, once she was placed in an ad, they felt she became boring and unappealing. In addition, male participants did not find her sexually attractive, which they implied that they preferred in an advertising model.

Recognizing Differences between the Two Types of Models

Another idea that recurred as each focus group progresses was how the participants felt that any of the given models could look sexy and/or provocative with the right pose, make-up, hair, and facial expression. One participant explained this idea in relation to Model 3 and the pose she was in versus the pose of Model 1:

If her arms were like over her head or something, she would look more sexy. Her pose just looks more natural rather than seductive. –Katielyn (FG)

Another female participant said something similar about Model 4. She explained Model 4 could easily look sexy rather than wholesome with the right cosmetic adjustments:

I mean, they could have easily put some dark make-up on her, roughed up her hair, and we could have been like, ‘She looks like Model 1.’ –Carly (FG)

Just as the female participants said, male participants also explained that while Models 1 and 2 may have been more beautiful to begin with, their provocative nature was due to their hair, make-up, and pose. The participants elaborated:

The first two models looked more serious. I guess their poses were more provocative. I think they could definitely do that with Models 3 and 4. All they would have to say is, ‘Okay, lose the smile, stand like this, stare at the camera like you want something.’ (*laughs*)... So the feel is different. You know, ‘get on the bed, look this way’ and it could look like a totally different image. –Mike (FG)

I could actually see all them doing (what any of them are doing). I think it’s all in the makeup, hair, pose, all that. –Jesse (FG)

However, the participants did not think that Models 1 and 2 could as easily look as natural and realistic as Models 3 and 4. One male participant explained that although it could happen, Models 1 and 2 could not look natural and real “to the same degree” as Models 3 and 4.

Favorite and Least-Favorite Models

Near the end of the focus group, the participants were shown the four models again at the same time. The participants were first asked to select their favorite model for use in an advertisement. Then, the participants were asked to explain their choice. The participants were also asked to choose their least-favorite model and explain their decisions.

Favorite Model

When asked which model was their overall favorite, many participants immediately said that it would depend on the brand or product at hand, and that it also depended on the publication where the ad was to appear. Although the participants were not prompted to imagine the models in any particular ad for a certain product, both males and females alluded to the idea that the brand or product each model was hypothetically advertising could affect how the model was liked.

However, the female participants ultimately selected Model 2 as their overall favorite model for use in an advertisement, while males chose Model 1.

The females explained that they liked Model 2 because she was eye-catching, empowering, and inspiring. In addition, Model 2 had a “natural beauty” that made her appearance realistically attainable. Participants explained their decision:

She’s empowering. Her attitude and her natural beauty. –Kristine (FG)

She’s almost naturally sexy. She’s not showing much, but her face conveys that. –Carly (FG)

Like when you showed us the four models together, she popped out. She jumped out at me more. –Amy (FG)

Other reasons females cited for choosing Model 2 included the fact that she left a little to the imagination, she was mysterious, and she was striking.

Male participants overall chose Model 1 as their favorite model for use in advertising. They felt that she was the “most attractive” and “hottest” of all of the models. Participants explained their choice:

I think she’s the best-looking one, physically. –Jake (FG)

She’s definitely the most attractive one, even though I’m more partial to brunettes and dark eyes. She’s probably in the best pose- out of all four- that appeals to me. –Mike (FG)

If I’m just flipping through a magazine, Model 1 would catch my eye for sure. –Al (FG)

Participants cited only physical reasons for choosing Model 1 as their collective favorite.

Both females and males said that their next-favorite model for use in an advertisement was Model 4. Females cited mainly aspirational reasons for why they chose Model 2 over Model 4.

Participants explain:

I think when you see advertisements, you don’t want to see someone who looks blah, like the person next door. Like, I would rather see someone who looks like (Model 2) than someone who looks like the girl-next-door...And I guess I would want an advertisement to

like make me want to look like her, make me want to dress like her, make me want to use that (product). Not just some random girl. –Carly (FG)

I mean, I feel like that's my best friend (*points to Model 4*). I'm not trying to be like my best friend. Like, Model 2 is perfect because I want to be like her. –Kristine (FG)

I want an advertisement to show me something I can aspire to. –Laurie (FG)

Basically women lie, because they say they want someone relatable, but that's a lie! Women want to look at people and be inspired. –Ari (FG)

Males liked Model 4 because they felt that Model 4 was “approachable” and seemed like someone who they “would date.” One male participant summed up the distinction between Models 1 and 4:

I'd probably like to date Model 1, but if I had to approach one of them, I'd approach (Model 4). –Jesse (FG)

Louis (FG) said that he would like Model 4 the most if she was in the “same lingerie Model 1 was wearing.” Therefore, the sexiness that Model 1 exuded-- in this case, due to her clothing-- made her more appealing than Model 4. However, one interviewee who liked Model 4 explained,

She looks like someone I could bring home to the parents. That's the kind of girl I want. –Steve (IV)

In both the male and female participants, there were a few choices that differed from the bulk of the participants' preferences. A few female participants indicated their favorite model to be either Model 1 or 3. One focus group participant chose Model 1 because she said she wanted to look like her and loved her hair, as she was “always trying to get” her hair to be blonder. Another female focus group participant chose Model 3 as her favorite model because she said she looked “fun” and “bubbly.” She continued by saying that she just looked “happy” and “content with herself.”

Likewise, a few male participants indicated differing choices from the bulk of the participants' choices for favorite model. An interviewee chose Model 2 and explained,

I mean, I like her intensity. She looks like she's saying, 'Bring it on.' I like a confident woman. –Davis (IV)

A focus group participant also chose Model 2 because he was “intrigued” by her. No male participant selected Model 3 as their favorite.

Least-Favorite Model

When asked what their least-favorite model in the context of an advertisement was, the female participants were split between Model 1 and 3, while the males selected Model 3.

Females explained they disliked Model 1 because she was “fake,” physically “different” from the participants, hard to relate to, and she looked like she was in an ad that would attract a man.

Female participants disliked Model 3 because she somehow seemed “older” than them, she looked uncomfortable or awkward, and she did not inspire them.

The male participants said Model 3 was their overall least-favorite model for similar reasons. They also said she seemed to be older and out of their age range, and suggested that she was “in an ad for a woman's product,” which did not appeal to them. They also found her to be the least physically attractive. Participants explained:

She seems older, like my mom's friend. –Jesse (FG)

I felt that she was the least attractive. I mean, I like that she looks like she's having fun, but she looks older and I don't find that appealing. –Mike (FG)

As with the selection of favorite model, there were a few distinct responses when choosing the least-favorite model. A female focus group participant said her least-favorite model was Model 2, because she looked “scary,” like she was “going to eat someone.” A few female participants said Model 4 was their least-favorite because she did not “do anything” for them and they found her boring.

Only one male participant did not select Model 3 as his least-favorite model. The focus group participant adamantly stated that he did not like Model 2. He said she looked “angry” and there was something about her he did not like.

Summary

The male and female participants tended to react differently in most cases to the models. However, there were some similarities between the genders in relation to specific ideas or comparisons. Below is the summary of responses and findings of the present study.

Summary of Responses to Models

Overall, the female participants in both the focus groups and in-depth interviews recognized that Models 3 and 4, the Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models, were easier to relate with, were more natural, and seemed more similar to themselves than Models 1 and 2, the Sexy/Sensual (SS) models. The females tended to say mostly positive things about the CCG models, especially Model 4, but as a whole, chose Model 2 as their favorite model for use in advertising. Female participants called Models 1 and 2 “aspirational,” while Models 3 and 4 were “relatable.”

The male participants in both the focus groups and in-depth interviews overall found that Models 1 and 2 (the SS models) were more attractive and sexually appealing, while Models 3 and 4 (the CCG models) were more approachable, more natural, and seemed to have better personalities than Models 1 and 2. The males tended to say mostly positive things about the CCG models, but found them mundane in the context of an ad and did not think they were sexually attractive. Model 2 was seen as intimidating, while Model 1 was seen as shallow. On the whole, however, the male participants seemed to have the most favorable response to Model 1 and were more excited and stimulated by her than the other models. Male participants said that Models 1 and 2 were out of their league, while Models 3 and 4 were approachable. Both male and female

participants also brought up the idea that Models 1 and 2 looked like “regular models” and Models 3 and 4 did not look like typical models.

Comparing the Male and Female Participants’ Responses

There was a discrepancy between the male and female participants in the responses to the models, especially when choosing their favorite and least-favorite models of those shown. The male and female responses were similar in a few aspects, however, as indicated above. Points of differentiation and similarity have been further discussed below.

The comparison begins with the central phenomenon of each gender, which is the favorite model choice. The analysis then moves to discuss supportive themes that help explain the central phenomenon. Proposed theories for each of the genders and a theory comparing the genders are discussed in Chapter 5.

The female participants had a very strong negative reaction to Model 1, whom male participants chose as their collective favorite. Female participants called Model 1 “provocative,” “sexy,” “trashy,” “slutty,” “stupid,” and “fake,” all of which had negative connotations. The female participants concluded that Model 1 was someone who would be in an ad targeted “toward a man.” They found her pose to be especially male-oriented. On the other hand, male participants liked her pose and called it “appealing.” The male participants also said Model 1 was “provocative,” “sexy,” “sexually appealing,” and “attractive,” all of which were said with positive intonation.

Both the male and female participants found Model 2 to be “provocative,” “sexy” and “attractive.” However, there was a discrepancy in the ways the genders perceived her facial expression, stance and assumed personality. For instance, females said Model 2 was “empowering,” “confident” and “seductive,” while the male participants called her

“intimidating” and “bitchy.” The female participants chose Model 2 as their favorite of the models, while several male participants chose her as their least favorite.

Model 3 was seen across the board as “natural,” “real,” and “normal.” Both sets of participants also thought she looked older than the other models and that she was “like a mom.” Males and females alike did not believe Model 3 was a “traditional model.” However, the females were harsher on Model 3 than were the males. For example, the female participants called her pose “awkward,” while the males said she looked like she was having fun. Females saw through Model 3’s big smile and au naturale appearance, and said she was in an ad that was “trying” to appeal to normal women. The male participants said she had a “nice smile” and looked like she was “down-to-earth,” “light-hearted,” and “warm.” However, despite the warm descriptions, the females and males both chose Model 3 as their least-favorite model for use in advertising. Both males and females explained that of the four models, Model 3 would appeal to them the least of the in an advertisement.

When discussing Model 4, male and female participants had similar responses and said she was “cute,” “natural,” and not a typical model. Female participants called Model 4 “girly,” “wholesome,” “young,” and said she was like the “girl-next-door.” Female participants said she reminded them of one of their friends, and that Model 4 is the kind of girl you hope to know as a person. Male participants described her as “approachable,” “natural,” and “pretty” but not sexually attractive. Collectively, the females said Model 4 was their second-favorite model, as did the males.

An important note is how both the female and male participants classified the models. Both genders placed Models 1 and 2 in the same group, and placed Models 3 and 4 in a different group. Both sets of participants recognized that Models 1 and 2 were similar in some ways as

were Models 3 and 4. For instance, when a male focus group participant first saw all four models together before analyzing each model individually, he said

Well, the two on the left are in provocative poses, while the two on the right are in nice, sweet poses. So that probably has something to do with the product they're selling. –Jesse (FG)

Female participants called Models 1 and 2 “aspirational,” while Models 3 and 4 were “relatable.”

Male participants said that Models 1 and 2 were out of their league, while Models 3 and 4 were “approachable.”

Proposed theories, implications of findings, suggestions for marketers and advertisers, limitations of the study and proposals for future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

As discussed in Chapter 4, this study produced a discrepancy between the male and female participants in responses to female models. The results point to the generation of several proposed theories, which are explained below.

Proposed Theories

After analyzing the collected data, the researcher proposes several theories to explain how certain models appeal more than others to the men and women in the study. The theories below explain and answer the research questions.

I. How do Sexual/Sensual (SS) models and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG) models appeal to men and women? Overall, the males and females in the study reacted differently to the models. These differences, along with a few similarities, point to a cross-gender theory that explains how both of the genders perceived models in this study.

The females found one SS model (Model 1) to be slutty, trashy and stupid. The other SS model, Model 2, the female participants found to be sexy, attractive, and empowering, and they chose her as their collective favorite. The females found one of the CCG models (Model 3) to be old, motherly, awkward, yet cute and natural, while the other CCG model (Model 4) was said to be friendly, cute, sweet, yet boring. The females in the study said that although they like models that are “relatable” and similar to themselves or their friends (CCG models), they do not want to see this type of model in advertisements. They would rather see a model that inspires them (SS models).

The males in the study reacted favorably to Model 1 (SS) due to her “sexy” and “beautiful” appearance and reacted somewhat negatively to Model 2 (SS) due to her presumed “attitude” and “intimidating” personality. The male participants found Model 3 (CCG) to be old and motherly,

yet happy and fun, while they found Model 4 (CCG) to be cute, natural and sweet. While most of the males in the study reacted somewhat positively to Models 3 and 4, they also do not like to see a “normal” woman (CCG models), but rather, a woman who inspires them in the context of an advertisement (SS models).

Therefore, both the males and females in the study prefer female models that contain an element of inspiration and/or aspiration for them, albeit this works in different ways for each gender. The women in the study want to be inspired for their own personal appearance, whereas the men in the study want to see a woman they aspire to date. This is best explained by Kristine (FG), who said Model 2 was the best choice because “she appeals to both men and women: men love her, women want to be her.” Although the men in the study did not choose Model 2 as their collective favorite, many thought she was eye-catching, sexy and attractive, which are all things that the males believed advertising models should possess.

II. What model characteristics appeal to men? The men in the study prefer to see models who are similar to the type of woman they would like to date, not a woman that they could actually picture themselves dating. In other words, the male participants prefer to see women they aspire to date rather than women who they would date in reality. Although some males explained that Model 1 was not very similar to their ideal woman, many others suggested that they would like to “date her” but they thought she was out of their league.

The males in the study overall agreed that a female model must be “sexy” or even “seductive.” They enjoy seeing models like that because they inspire a kind of sexual or relational fantasy for them. This is what Model 1 did for the male participants and thus was the reason that she was selected as their favorite. In addition, the males in the study felt that models

that are not viewed as sexy are also not inspiring. Therefore, it is concluded that sex appeals work in advertisements for the males in the study, where appropriate.

It is also important to point out that some males in the study said they liked an advertising model to be smiling, a sign of submissiveness which relates to the idea that males want to be dominant (Goffman, 1979). Many said that Model 1 would be “even better” if she had a smile on her face. For example, Justin (FG) explained,

I noticed that both the kind of provocative pictures, neither one was smiling. But I feel like sometimes a smile attracts me more.

Therefore, if Model 1 had been smiling, she may have received even higher praise from the male participants. In fact, a smile was one major point of liking for Models 3 and 4 and a point of disliking for Model 2 among the male participants in the study. Rather than a full-out smile, Model 2 had more of a mysterious smirk. This contributed to the overall dislike of Model 2 by the male participants, even though they found her attractive and sexy. The males deemed Model 2’s smirk and facial expression intimidating, scary and bitchy. Therefore, the use of an empowering female model is not effective in an ad directed toward men.

III. What model characteristics appeal to women? Women in the study, on the other hand, prefer models that are realistically aspirational. That is, the women in the study want to see models that possess a type of beauty or appearance that is attainable or closer to their own personal reality. Female participants found Model 2, their collective favorite, sexy, naturally beautiful, mysterious, and empowering. These were all qualities that the participants aspired to have.

Female participants also explained that a model that is “relatable” is a good thing, as long as she is not “completely normal.” In other words, females enjoy models that are not

unfathomably beautiful, thin, or “perfect,” as one interviewee said. They want someone who they can aspire to look like, but that particular look, body type, or beauty must be attainable.

Female participants also agreed that there had to be something “eye-catching” about a model, and that she had to have some “level of attraction.” The female participants felt that Model 2 jumped out at them because of her dramatic stare, make-up, pose, and beauty. The women in the study thought that the CCG models (Models 3 and 4) were likeable and natural but explained that these models did not possess an element of uniqueness or some eye-catching quality.

While some females in the study found Model 1 sexy and attractive, she was also described as “slutty” and “trashy.” Therefore, it is concluded that over-the-top sex appeals do not work in advertisements directed toward the women in the study. However, more subdued and understated sex appeals do work for the women in the study, as indicated by the positive response to Model 2. The women in the study overall agreed that an advertising model should be sexy but not overtly sexual, over-the-top or fake. Female participants liked that Model 2 was modestly dressed but still sexy. The female participants cited that this idea of “leaving a little to the imagination” was prevalent in both Models 2 and 4 and was something they desired in an advertising model. Carly (FG) explained,

Models 2 and 4 leave something to the imagination...Models 1 and 3 are just all there. What you see is what you get.

Female participants said that they preferred the face of a model to show, as were the faces of Models 2, 3, and 4. Female participants mentioned several times that they did not like how part of Model 1’s face was covered. This, they said, placed the emphasis on the body of the model, which does not make a model more appealing to women. The women in the study prefer to see more face rather than a scantily clad body.

IV. Are certain models more appealing to men and/or women both in an advertising context and out of an advertising context, or are certain models only appealing when in an advertisement or out of an advertisement? Somewhat of a surprise was the way the participants in the study found certain models to appeal to them but only out of an advertising context. The females in the study found one SS model (Model 1) to be slutty, trashy, skanky, and stupid. They did not like Model 1 as a model alone or in an advertising context. The women in the study found Model 2 to be sexy, attractive, and empowering, and they chose her as their collective favorite in the context of an ad and also had positive reactions to her as a stand-alone model.

The women in the study found Model 3 to be old, motherly, awkward, yet cute and natural. They explained she probably had a good personality. They chose Model 3, along with Model 1, as their collective least-favorites in the context of an ad; however, they had somewhat positive reactions to Model 3 out of an advertising context and called her fun, happy and friendly.

Model 4, on the other hand, received a good amount of praise from the women in the study, who said she looked friendly, could be one of their friends, looked cute and seemed like she had a sweet personality. Despite these terms of endearment, the women in the study explained that Model 4 was boring in an advertisement. This relates to the idea that the women in the study like to see aspirational models.

The men in the study said Model 1 was their collective favorite for an advertising model due to her sexy and attractive appearance; however, they explained that she was probably shallow and unintelligent as a person. Model 2 was also said to be attractive, but the male participants said they did not like her as a model or in the context of an ad due to her presumed bad attitude and personality.

The men in the study had overall good things to say about the CCG models (Model 3 and 4). Although they said Model 3 was their least-favorite model collectively, they said she looked approachable, fun and happy. Similarly, the male participants found Model 4 to be cute, sweet, approachable, and similar to the type of girl they would actually date. However, the men in the study explained that models like Model 3 and 4 did not “do anything” for them in the context of an ad, suggesting that the men in the study, like the women in the study, prefer to see an aspirational model in an ad. Therefore, while they reacted somewhat positively to Model 3 and very positively to Model 4, the males in the study still chose Model 1 as their favorite model for use in an advertisement.

The researcher has proposed a theory that states that for both the men and women in the study, the type of model that would appeal to them as an individual or person may not necessarily appeal to them as an advertising model. Therefore, an advertising context can change the way a consumer perceives a model and should be taken into consideration.

Now these proposed theories are discussed in relation to the previously explained body of literature and theoretical framework below.

Findings in Relation to Body of Literature and Theoretical Framework

The results of the present study both contradict and support prior research. For instance, Tsai and Chang (2007) found that both male and female adolescents (ages 18 to 19) preferred averagely or normally attractive models over highly attractive models. Contradictorily, the perceived highly attractive models, the SS models, were found to be more effective for the age range (18-24) and participants in the present study. Although the age range was wider and older in the present study, the researcher believed the Tsai and Chang (2007) study would provide a correlation. However, the researcher concluded that for both male and female participants in the

study, SS models were better liked and participants explained they would be more eye-catching and more effective than the averagely attractive, or CCG, models.

Another point of appeal for advertising models for both males and females is the assessed match between the model and the product. Participants described this as a “logical connection” between a model and the product or brand, known as the Beauty Match-Up Hypothesis (Solomon et al., 1992). According to Solomon et al. (1992), the Beauty Match-Up Hypothesis states, “perceivers distinguish multiple types of good looks, and that in advertising, certain beauty ideals are more appropriately paired with specific products than with others” (p. 23). Although the participants were not prompted to imagine the models in any particular ad for a certain product, both men and women alluded to the idea that the brand or product each model was hypothetically advertising could affect how the model was liked. Participants suggested that if Model 1 was advertising lingerie, the advertisement would be more effective than if she was advertising a fast-moving consumer good, such as soap, shampoo or toothpaste. Similarly, a participant said that if Model 3 was advertising a fast-moving consumer good the ad would be more effective than if she was advertising underwear. Therefore, the present study upholds the findings of Baker & Churchill (1977), Solomon et al. (1992), and Bower & Landreth (2001) to suggest that the model and the product in an advertisement should “match-up” in order to be the most effective.

The participants in the study explained that some models are better paired with high-end products or, alternatively, fast-moving consumer goods or low-end brands or products. Female participants especially spoke of the type of products each model may advertise. For instance, Model 1 was suggested as a lingerie model, while Model 2 was suggested as a fashion model for clothing brand Express. In terms of the types of products models like Models 3 and 4 would

advertise, the female participants did not name anything high-end or in the luxury sector, but instead named brands like Jergens, JCPenney, Aveeno and Dove. This reflects an idea that more natural-looking models can sell some products better than highly-attractive models, while highly-attractive models are better used for premium products. Linda Wells, editor-in-chief of *Allure* magazine, explained about natural-looking models:

The products they're selling are mass market, so the [realistic] positioning makes sense. It pulls them away from the crowd. I don't think it would be effective if they were selling [premium] items. Christian Dior isn't going to show real women-- that is an aspirational brand, and it is priced aspirationally. (Branch & Ball, 2005)

Therefore, it is not a new idea to use more natural, ordinary women to advertise fast-moving consumer goods or brands for the average consumer. However, for luxury or aspirational brands, an aspirational model is almost always used, and this idea was reflected by the female participants who recognized this trend.

Solomon et al. (1992) also suggested there were six types of highly attractive models that could be suitably matched to communicate certain brand images. Goodman et al. (2008) concluded that these six beauty types actually condensed into two overall categories, Sexual/Sensual (SS) and Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door (CCG). These were the two model types that were used in the present study. Goodman, Morris and Sutherland (2008) found that the CCG models were more likable than the SS models. Although the present study also found that Models 3 and 4 (the CCG models) were overall more likable (because they were described in overall more positive terms) than Models 1 and 2 (the SS models), the participants agreed that the CCG models would not be more effective in the context of an advertisement. The researcher concluded that although certain models may be more likable by themselves (i.e., not in an advertisement), this liking does not absolutely translate into liking of an ad or to a more effective ad.

Bower (2001) and Christy (2006) found that highly attractive models (HAMs) are not positively related to women's purchase decisions. Bower (2001) explained that women are not positively influenced to make a purchase by a model that makes the viewer feel inadequate. While Model 2 generally received positive reviews from the female participants, Model 1 often elicited responses about how thin or how "fake" she was. Female participants made remarks about Model 1 that pointed to the idea that she made them feel overweight or less than ideal, which supports Bower's (2001) findings. Christy (2006) had similar results and suggested that advertising that appears offensive to female consumers can adversely affect purchase decision. Female participants in the study called Model 1 "slutty" and "trashy" and said she was like a *Playboy* model, all of which were negative descriptions. Highly sexy models have been shown to be offensive to female audiences due to their provocative nature and often-unprovoked emergence into females' media touchpoints (Christy, 2006). However, the females in the study had positive reactions to Model 2, whose sexuality was subdued compared to Model 1's sexuality. This supports Christy's (2006) findings that overtly sexual models are seen as offensive, whereas moderately or naturally sexy and/or attractive models are not offensive. Therefore, if a model appears to be naturally sexy, it is more accepted by female audiences as opposed to models that appear to force or fake their sexual nature.

Past studies indicated that sexual appeals used in advertising were more effective with male viewers than with female viewers (Parker & Furnham, 2007; Sengupta & Dahl, 2008). The present study supports these findings, since Model 1– the most sexually provocative of the models– was found to be the collective favorite of the male participants.

Participants spoke of Model 1 as unintelligent, largely due to her hair color. Females said she looked like a "dumb blonde" and one female said she did not look like she was "educated.

This inference based on hair color reflects the long-time American myth that blondes are unintelligent (Loftus, 2000). Similarly, participants felt that Model 2 looked more intelligent than Model 1, due in part to her darker hair color. On a related topic, male participants felt that Model 1 must be unintelligent because she was so beautiful and sexy. This reflects the idea that many males believe a female cannot have both brains and beauty, so to speak. This “double bind” is the suggestion that females are merely bodies or wombs, not brains or intelligence (Jamieson, 1995).

Model 2 was considered beautiful and attractive by most of the participants. Important to note is that her beauty was seen as attainable to the female participants. Realistically attainable beauty is something that women see as within reach for themselves rather than beauty that is perfect and flawless (Lippert, 2006). Although the participants saw Model 2 as highly beautiful, she provided inspiration that was reasonable and feasible. This appealed more to the participants than Model 1’s beauty, which was seen as unattainable, far-fetched and fake. Similarly, the participants’ descriptions of Model 3 and Model 4’s “natural” appearance points to a trend in the media, where this type of beauty is becoming more widespread. More attainable and natural types of beauty are in vogue, as demonstrated by television shows such as ABC’s *Ugly Betty* and advertising campaigns such as Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty” (Lippert, 2006).

Social Comparison Theory was presented as the theoretical background for the present study. Social Comparison Theory suggests that individuals feel compelled to compare themselves with other people and with social standards (Festinger, 1954). Participants in the present study actively compared themselves with the models, although males and females made comparisons in different ways. To start, the female participants spoke of a feeling of inferiority when seeing beautiful celebrities or women in the public eye. This inferiority that females

experience is a result of upward comparison of Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954). Thus, by making an upward comparison of themselves to women in the public eye, the female participants experience dislike for their own bodies or appearances.

The female participants compared themselves to each model, some of which was prompted and some of which was not. For example, the female participants were asked how each model was similar and dissimilar to them, leading to a discussion of how they related to each of the models. However, some of the comparisons were not prompted, such as comparisons of body weight and size. Particularly with Model 1, women said they were not as “skinny” or “small” as the model, but that Model 1’s body was what men preferred. The women in the study explained that Model 1 was what men wanted women to look like or even what women wanted to look like. For example, a female focus group participant explained, “(Model 1’s) what women want to be. But very few actually look like that.” This aspirational idea suggests a comparison between not only their own bodies but social standards as well. Social Comparison Theory states that individuals feel compelled to compare themselves with other people and with social standards for improvement purposes (Festinger, 1954).

Conversely, Models 3 and 4 made the female participants feel better about themselves because they believed they were better than these models. This idea of one as “better than” the model is a result of downward comparison between oneself and another (Festinger, 1954).

Men made comparisons between themselves and the models in terms of what kind of woman they aspire to date. Again, some of these responses were drawn out by the moderator by asking how each model was like their ideal women, and some responses were not prompted by the moderator. For example, males said Model 1 was similar to the kind of women they would want to date, but as one participant said, Model 1 was out of his league. Similarly, males said

that Models 3 and 4 looked more approachable and were the types of women they would date in reality but would rather date Model 1. Therefore, males compared themselves to the type of woman they could date in actuality the type of woman they would want to date ideally. The male and female responses support Social Comparison Theory.

However, Social Comparison Theory does not explain all of the responses by the participants. Other existing theories are related to this study's findings and will be introduced in an effort to more thoroughly explain the responses.

Social Cognitive Theory explains that most of consumers' social behaviors are learned by watching others' behaviors and applying these learned experiences to future behaviors (Bandura, 1994). Essentially, this theory explains how images in advertising and media can influence consumers and how this affects their perceptions. Social Cognitive Theory applies to both women and men, as both genders learn from the world around them and apply this to future actions. The present study saw this by participants' comments on how Models 1 and 2 looked like "regular models" and hinted that they were used to seeing models such as this. This may explain why a few participants said they were emotionally unaffected by the SS models.

Throughout the study, the female participants discussed how a particular model provided inspiration for them and in some cases discussed how they wanted to be more like a certain model. The idea of a model providing inspiration to the viewer is related to Active Audience Theories. These theories relate to the ways that viewers or consumers actively use the media, including advertisements, and in many cases, the media are their main source of information about social processes and imagery (Stacey, 1991). Stacey (1991) explains that cinematic films can produce many identificatory fantasies and practices that relate to the visual viewpoint

women have when seeing models or actresses in cinema, advertisements, and so forth, and help explain how the females in the study reacted to the models.

Most commonly, female participants indicated the fantasies of “the desire to become,” or the desire to be more similar to the star; “devotion and worship,” which occurs when a star is seen as other-worldly that can only be admired from afar; “pleasure in feminine power,” which occurs when a star’s personality or behavior is admired or even envied by spectators; and “identification and escapism,” which occurs when the spectator takes pleasure in the escape from reality when she sees a beautiful star that is believed to be better than reality (Stacey, 1991). In addition, women indicated the extra-cinematic identificatory practice of “copying and consumption,” which occurs when one copies a star’s appearance by consuming cultural products such as clothing or a hairstyles in order to become more like the star (Stacey, 1991).

The fantasy of “desire to become” was the most common fantasy indicated by the female participants. One female focus group participant explained that she didn’t want to look like an “average woman” when showering, and instead wanted to look like “Reese Witherspoon showering.” The idea of a model providing inspiration to the viewer is related to “the desire to become,” or the desire to become more like the star. In this case, the participant explained that she wanted to look like Reese Witherspoon in the shower, either by her actions or by her appearance or both, which reflects this cinematic fantasy. Therefore, Reese Witherspoon served as the role model that contributed to this participant’s construction of ideals of feminine attractiveness (Stacey, 1991). Another participant explained that Model 1 inspired her to exercise more. Again, this relates to the “desire to become,” as the participant explained that Model 1 provided inspiration to get “in shape” (Stacey, 1991).

Model 1 was described by many female participants as having a type of beauty that is unrealistic or altogether unattainable. This is described by Stacey (1991) as the cinematic fantasy of “devotion and worship,” which occurs when a star is seen as something immortal that can only be admired, never attained. Although in this case, the women did not come forth with positive descriptions of Model 1, she was still viewed as a woman who had unachievable features.

Model 2 was seen by most female participants as confident and empowering. Her assumed personality was strong and was described by several female participants as something women was to be, but cannot always find within themselves. This theme of empowerment and confidence was thought of as attractive and sexy to women, and was not considered provocative or offensive. This relates to the cinematic fantasy of “pleasure in feminine power,” which occurs when qualities of power and confidence offer pleasure to female spectators because they are qualities they themselves lack and desire (Stacey, 1991).

Models 3 and 4 were described as being “normal” people and just “regular girl(s).” As such, the female participants found Models 3 and 4 uninspiring, boring and mundane for use in advertisements. They explained that a model has to be eye-catching, and a model that looks like a normal, average or regular woman is not eye-catching. This points to the idea that fantasy is better than reality, as explained by the cinematic fantasy of “identification and escapism” (Stacey, 1991). That is, females take pleasure in the escape from reality when they see a beautiful star that is believed to be better than reality (Stacey, 1991).

Female participants also spoke of engaging in the “copying and consumption” identificatory practice. The “copying and consumption” cinematic practice occurs when one copies a star’s appearance by consuming cultural products such as clothing or a hairstyles in

order to become more like the star (Stacey, 1991). The female participants discussed the idea that advertising models often serve as an inspiration for hairstyles, clothing, general appearances or an overall look or style. Therefore, Models 3 and 4 did not provide a look or style that the female participants wanted to emulate, since they were seen as uninspiring.

Finally, the Influential Persuasion Knowledge Model developed by Friestad & Wright (1994) suggests consumers in modern society have developed an extensive amount of knowledge about persuasive tactics used by marketers and use this knowledge to manage persuasion attempts by marketers and advertisers. Consumers, therefore, draw negative inferences about persuasive devices that are perceived to be manipulative. This model explains why some participants, specifically the females, felt that Models 3 and 4 were “trying to appeal” to average, normal women. These participants appeared to judge the use of a CCG model in an advertisement as a tactic that was supposed to trick an average woman into liking the ad. In other words, the participants did not feel the advertiser was using an averagely attractive model in the ad because it truly felt the model’s own physical merits would sell the product. Instead, they felt a model such as Model 3 or 4 was used to make everyday women feel better about their own bodies. In this study, however, the female participants outsmarted the hypothetical advertiser and saw through this approach. They concluded that the use of averagely attractive models was only an advertising tactic that did not necessarily appeal to them.

Practical Implications for Marketing and Advertising Professionals

This study’s purpose was to contribute to existing advertising research to help marketing and advertising professionals better select models for use in advertising when targeting women, targeting men, and targeting both women and men. The selection of a spokesmodel for an advertisement is an important process because an advertising model can be linked with the ability to effectively persuade consumers, influence purchase decisions, and create a higher level

of advertiser believability (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007). In general, beautiful people are perceived to have more socially desirable traits, such as a prestigious job, a happy family and marriage, and a more contented social and occupational life (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972). Past research has shown that beautiful advertising spokespersons are also seen as more successful, trustworthy and content, and are more likely to be seen as someone the target audience wants to emulate (Joseph, 1982; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007).

The researcher has concluded that Sexy/Sensual models are more effective for both the male and female participants in this study. However, the females in the study do not like overtly sexual images or the use of blatant sex appeals. The women in the study tend to prefer someone who they aspire to look like, but the goal image has to be attainable. The men in the study tend to prefer someone sexy who is similar to the type of woman they aspire to date; however, many of the men in the study also prefer an advertising model to be smiling.

Another element that is critical is selecting a model based on the product itself. Both male and female participants suggested that the effectiveness of a model intensely depends on the brand or product they represent. A key idea produced by this study was that female participants labeled the SS models “aspirational,” while calling the CCG models “relatable.” This is important to understand when selecting a model for a high-end, glamorous product (where a SS model would be more appropriate) or a fast-moving consumer good (where a CCG model would be more appropriate).

Another interesting trend uncovered by the researcher is that while some models appealed to the men or women in the study just as models alone, consumers may sometimes change the way they perceive a model when the context changes from a stand-alone model to an advertising

model. Therefore, it is important to conduct pretesting of models alone and/or models within the given advertisement to allow for such differences in perception.

These results will help advertisers select a model that most effectively appeals to the target audience. As aforementioned, the model in an advertisement can greatly affect how consumers feel about the ad and brand, and can also lead to their ultimate purchase decision. Therefore, it is crucial that advertisers take great care in choosing an appropriate model for an advertisement, and take into consideration not the target audience, the model's physical traits, and the product at hand.

Limitations

Although this study adds to the body of literature on this topic, there are several points of weakness of the present study. First, the participants used were all current college students between the ages of 18 and 24. This particular demographic almost certainly holds differing ideals from other groups, including other age groups and education levels. Also, only Caucasian participants and models were used, therefore only representing Caucasian ideals.

Secondly, due to the nature of recruitment for the study, it was difficult to have an even number of male and female participants. The researcher was limited to using participants that were recruited from classes at her own university, where a professor offered extra credit to students for their participation. Thus, because the classes from which the participants were recruited were predominantly female, the study had many more female participants than male participants. If money was not an issue, the researcher could have more effectively recruited an even number of male and female participants by paying for participation instead of relying on extra credit points. In other words, the researcher had to take what she could get in terms of participants. However, responses from both the male and female focus groups reached theoretical saturation and the in-depth interviews were found to uphold the focus group findings, therefore

the researcher does not believe the validity of the findings was greatly affected by the difference in number of male and female participants.

Third, the researcher chose the four models that were used as the heart of the study. The researcher's own idea of what constitutes a Sexy/Sensual model versus a Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model inevitably affected the ultimate choice of models. The models were chosen because the researcher felt they clearly fit into the respective category. Although the researcher's committee agreed that the selected models fit into the descriptions of either a SS or CCG model, the researcher's bias undoubtedly came into play. This bias could have been corrected by the use of original photographs done for the purpose of this study, where all of the models were wearing identical clothing. This would have made the models more alike in physical appearance, thus easier to compare. Since there was much discussion about the hair color, pose, and clothing of each model, placing models in identical situations would have eased these points made by participants. Also, the models should have been shown from the waist-up in order to focus more on the facial qualities of each model. A larger number of models would have also helped ease the preconceived notions of the researcher. In addition, the use of a quantitative coding system for each model's facial attractiveness would have ensured that the models were appropriately placed into each category.

Future Research

Future research should add several more of each type (SS and CCG) of model to the discussion. Future research may be improved if the models are as standardized as possible (i.e., same clothing, same hair color, pose, etc.). That way, certain biases, such as males preferring blonde or brunette women, would not get in the way of their assessment of the models.

In addition, the qualitative results of this study may have been further supported by adding a quantitative method, such as a survey, to the research. A survey would provide numerical data

to back up the findings of the focus groups and in-depth interviews and would account for a larger number of participants' opinions and responses.

Lastly, as suggested above, the researcher used only Caucasian college students between the ages of 18 and 24. It would be interesting and insightful for advertisers to understand how the perceptions of female models change or stay the same as consumers age by conducting a cross-comparison of males and females of several different age groups. Also, comparing responses across several different education levels and racial backgrounds could more thoroughly explain consumers' reactions to female models, therefore further helping advertisers to effectively select female models for use in advertising.

Conclusion

The researcher has completed the present study with a conclusion that the males and females in the study prefer an advertising model that inspires them in one way or another. For the females in the study, this inspiration is drawn from the type of appearance the model possesses and whether or not this appearance is the type that she desires for herself. For the males in the study, this inspiration is drawn from the level of physical attractiveness the model possesses and whether or not he desires to date a woman like the model. That said, the effectiveness of a female advertising model also depends on the product she represents and individual viewers' personal tastes and preferences. The researcher has found that in the case of the male participants in the study, sex appeals can effectively catch and hold their attention, which may translate into a positive purchase decision. For the female participants in the study, blatant sex appeals using female models are not effective. The women in the study would rather see a realistically beautiful model that they can aspire to look like.

The researcher feels that the present study has effectively added to the ongoing discussion on whether sex and beauty "sell". Although a qualitative study cannot generalize for a given

population, the researcher has found that for both the male and female participants in the present study, Sexual/Sensual models more effectively and positively attract attention.

APPENDIX A
SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for filling out this form. The information you will be providing will help us to place you in a focus group with people who are very similar to you. All information in this form will remain CONFIDENTIAL. The researcher and her advisor will be the ONLY people with access to this information. After your data has been recorded, these questionnaires will be shredded. We will report some of the basic demographic information in our research report (age, gender, race, year in school), BUT YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE ATTACHED to your information in any way and your name will not appear anywhere in the report.

1. Name: _____

2. Class in which you will receive Extra Credit for participating:

Course Number: _____

Instructor: _____

3. Your Email Address: _____

4. Cell phone or main phone number where you can be reached: _____

5. Please check one or more of the sessions below when you are available to participate.
(You will only participate in one session. All sessions will be in held in Weimer 2008.)

FEMALES: Wednesday, November 5, 6:00 pm
 Wednesday, November 12, 7:30 pm

MALES: Wednesday, November 5, 7:30 pm
 Wednesday, November 12, 6:00 pm

You will be notified by email and/or telephone within the next week if you qualify to participate in this study. Thank you!

I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and separate from my identity and any other identifying marks. I give my consent for my personal information to be used only by the researcher.

Signature: _____

1. Gender:

- Male
 Female

2. Age: _____

3. What *best* describes your racial background? Check only one.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian/White | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander | |

4. Have you lived in the United States for 15 years or more?

- Yes
 No

5. Are you an undergraduate UF student?

- Yes
 No

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions. Your answers will be kept CONFIDENTIAL and will only be used by the researcher. Your contact information will only be used by the researcher if he or she should need further information or clarification. This questionnaire includes some questions about personal information that will be kept confidential and will not be used in conjunction with your name or other identifying marks. Thank you for participating in this study.

1. Name: _____

2. Today's Date: _____

3. Class in which you will receive Extra Credit for participating tonight:

Course Number: _____

Instructor: _____

4. Email Address: _____

5. Cell phone or main phone number where you can be reached: _____

I understand that my responses will be completely anonymous in the final research report and I give my permission for my responses to be audio taped. I give my consent for my personal information to be used only by the researcher.

Signature of participant: _____

1. Age: _____

2. Major: _____

3. Year in School:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior | |

4. Please list your Father's highest level of education completed:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree/4-year college degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high school diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree or higher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> some college | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vocational program | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AA/2-year college degree | |

5. Please list your Mother's highest level of education completed:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree/4-year college degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high school diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree or higher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> some college | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vocational program | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AA/2-year college degree | |

6. Please list your approximate usage of AM and/or FM radio during an average week (Satellite radio *not* included).

- none
- less than one hour a week
- 1-5 hours a week
- more than 5 hours a week

7. Please list your approximate usage of the Internet during an average week, including checking email and using social networking sites.

- none
- 4 hours a week or less
- 5-9 hours a week
- 10-14 hours a week
- 15 hours a week or more

8. Please list approximately how much you *watch* Television during an average week (not including having the TV on when you are not watching).

- none
- less than one hour a week
- 1-4 hours a week
- 5-8 hours a week
- more than 8 hours a week

9. Please list how much you *read* magazines during an average week.

- I do not read magazines
- I usually read a portion of one magazine a week
- I usually read about one entire magazine a week
- I usually read about two entire magazines a week
- More than three entire magazines a week

9a. Which magazines do you read often? Please list:

10. Please list how much you *read* newspapers (including online newspapers) during an average week.

- I do not read newspapers
- I usually read one or more newspapers one day a week
- I usually read one or more newspapers 2-3 days a week
- I usually read one or more newspapers 4-6 days a week
- I read one or more newspapers every day of the week

10a. Which newspapers do you read often? Please list:

11. What best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to say

APPENDIX C MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Introduction and Welcome statement:

Hello and welcome to our Focus Group. My name is _____ and I will be your Moderator this evening. This study is for graduate research for a master's thesis. Assisting me tonight is _____.

Tonight, we'll be discussing your thoughts, opinions, and experiences about women's portrayals in advertising. We are interested in all of your idea and comments and there are no wrong answers, but rather different points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are most helpful.

Before we get started, the restrooms are located _____ and there is soda and pizza, so please help yourself.

Before we begin, let me suggest some things that will make our discussion more productive. Please speak up. Only one person should speak at a time. Think of this as a conversation, with all parties involved- please speak to one another, not just directly to the moderator. Please be courteous and do not talk over someone else or interrupt.

We're tape recording the sessions because we don't want to miss any of your comments. We're on a first-name basis, and in our later reports there will not be any names attached to comments. You may be assured of confidentiality.

As moderator, my goal is to simply listen to the discussion. I will ask questions to the group and sometimes follow-up questions to be sure I have understood what you have said.

Opening Question:

1. Let's start by going around the room and saying your name, your major, and your favorite female celebrity or woman in the public eye.

Introductory Questions:

2. When your friends talk about women in the media, who do they talk about?

Possible Prompts:

What do they say about these women?

What about their personal lives?

What about actresses?

What about musicians and singers?

What about journalists or TV reporters?

What about politicians or political figures?

3. How do these women who are in the public eye make you feel?

Possible Prompts:

How do they influence your life?
How do they make you feel about your body?
How are they are similar to you?

4. What makes a woman in an advertisement appeal to you?

Possible Prompts:

What is your ideal advertising model?
How important is it for a model to be similar to you?
How does a model influence your attraction to an ad?
How does a model influence how you remember or recall a brand?

Transition Question:

Now we're going to look at some models that have been used in advertisements. We're focusing on the models themselves, so each model has been removed from the ad. *All 4 models are displayed on the projection screen.*

5. What is your first impression of the models on the screen?

Key Questions:

6. Now look at Model 1. [First Sexual/Sensual model] *Only Model 1 is displayed on the projection screen.* How would you describe this model?

Possible Prompts:

What celebrity is she similar to?

For female groups:

How is this model similar to you?

How is she different from you?

For male groups:

How is she like your ideal woman?

How is she different from your ideal woman?

7. How does she make you feel?

8. Now look at Model 2. [Second Sexual/Sensual model] *Only Model 2 is displayed on the projection screen.* How would you describe this model?

Possible Prompts:

What celebrity is she similar to?

For female groups:

How is this model similar to you?

How is she different from you?

For male groups:

How is she like your ideal woman?

How is she different from your ideal woman?

9. How does she make you feel?

10. Now look at Model 3. [First Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model] *Only Model 3 is displayed on the projection screen.* How would you describe this model?

Possible Prompts:

What celebrity is she similar to?

For female groups:

How is this model similar to you?

How is she different from you?

For male groups:

How is she like your ideal woman?

How is she different from your ideal woman?

11. How does she make you feel?

12. Now look at Model 4. [Second Classic Beauty/Cute/Girl-Next-Door model] *Only Model 4 is displayed on the projection screen.* How would you describe this model?

Possible Prompts:

What celebrity is she similar to?

For female groups:

How is this model similar to you?

How is she different from you?

For male groups:

How is she like your ideal woman?

How is she different from your ideal woman?

13. How does she make you feel?

14. Now let's look at all four models again, side-by-side. Which model is your favorite?

Possible Prompts:

What about the model influences your decision?

15. Again looking at all models side-by-side, which model is your least favorite?

Possible Prompts:

What about the model influences your decision?

Ending Question:

16. Would you like to add anything else or is there something you think is important that we did not talk about?

After the Discussion:

Thank you for participating in this focus group today. Your responses will help the researcher with their research goals. With respect to anonymity, please do not discuss what was said in this group with anyone who was not a participant of the group. Thanks again for your time.

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Female focus group 1: November 5, 2008											
Name	Age	Major	Year	Father's education	Mother's education	Radio use	Internet use	TV use	Mags. read	Nwspprs. read	Sexual orient.
Lana	20	Advertising	Jr.	some college	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Vogue, Elle, Bazaar	-	Hetero
Annaliz	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree Bachelor's	some college	>1 hr	10-14 hr.	5-8 hr.	Cosmo, InStyle, ESPN	Charlotte Observer, Alligator	Hetero

igator	Hetero	Alexia	21	Advertising	Jr.	degree	AA	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Elle	All
line	No Answer	Rachelle	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Newsweek, National Geographic	Or
	Hetero	Amy	20	Advertising	Jr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	0 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Star, US, People, Cosmo	-
						Bachelor's	Bachelor's				Cosmo, US, SELF, Glamour,	

Female focus group 2: November 12, 2008											
Wilma	21	Advertising	Sr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	5-8 hr.	Cosmo, People	Gainesville Sun	Hetero
Liane	22	Advertising	Sr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	1-4 hr.	Cosmo, People	Gainesville Sun, Alligator	Hetero
Katielyn	20	Advertising	Jr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	1-4 hr.	Cosmo, InStyle	Alligator	Hetero
Alice	19	Advertising	Jr.	High School	High School	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	-	-	Hetero

Times, Pete nes, A Today	Hetero	Mary	18	Advertising	Jr.	Bachelor's degree	AA	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	5-8 hr.	People, Time	NY St. Tir US
igator	Hetero	Dana	21	Advertising	Sr.	Vocational	Master's degree	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	>1 hr.	Newsweek, InStyle	All
A Today, igator, inesville	Hetero	Maddie	20	Advertising	Jr.	AA	High School	>1 hr	15+ hr.	1-4 hr.	Women's Health	US All Ga
	Hetero	Kye	21	Advertising	Jr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	5-8 hr.	Vogue, Elle	-
igator	Hetero	Violet	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree	Master's degree	>1 hr	10-14 hr.	1-4 hr.	Lucky, Allure	All

Ashton	20	Advertising	Jr.	High School	High School	>1 hr	15+ hr.	8+ hr.	Cosmo, Glamour	Alligator	Hetero
Ari	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree	Master's degree	0 hr	15+ hr.	8+ hr.	-	Alligator, USA Today	Hetero
Carly	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree	Master's degree	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	People, Okay, Elle	Alligator	Hetero
Darin	20	Advertising	Jr.	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	1-5 hr	10-14 hr.	1-4 hr.	InStyle, Allure	-	Hetero
				Bachelor's	Master's				Cosmo, US		

Male focus group 1: November 5, 2008

Jake	19	Economics	Soph.	Master's degree	Master's degree	1-5 hr	15+ hr.	1-4 hr.	ESPN, Sports Illustrated, Gator Country	Wall Street Journal, Alligator, Campus Sun	Hetero
Mike	20	Advertising	Jr.	Bachelor's degree	high school diploma	>1 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Men's Health	Alligator	Hetero

Times	Hetero
A Today, igator	Hetero
A Today, igator	Hetero

Male focus group 2: November 12, 2008

Jesse	24	finance	Sr.	some college	some high school	1-5 hr	15+ hr.	8+ hr.	online mags	NY
Justin	21	Advertising	Jr.	high school diploma	high school diploma	>1 hr.	10-14 hr.	5-8 hr.	Rider, Sports Illustrated	US All
Lonnie	22	Building Construction	Sr.	high school diploma	high school diploma	1-5 hr	15+ hr.	5-8 hr.	Sports Illustrated	US All

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Male focus group 3: November 23, 2008

										Florida Sportman, Shallow
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Male interviewees

Davis	22	Finance	Sr.	Bachelor's degree	some college	1-5 hr	5-9 hr.	1-4 hr.	Sports Illustrated	Alligator	Hetero
Steve	22	Accounting	Sr.	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	-	10-14 hr.	8+ hr.	ESPN the magazine	-	Hetero
Blaine	20	Political Science	Jr.	high school diploma	high school diploma	5+ hr.	10-14 hr.	8+ hr.	-	online	Hetero
				vocational	Master's				Maxim, Car		

Hetero

Peter	20	Religion	Soph.	program	degree	5+ hr.	15+ hr.	8+ hr.	& Driver	-
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Hetero

Female interviewees

Layla	23	Education	Sr.	high school diploma	some college	1-5 hr	5-9 hr.	8+ hr.	bridal magazines, Better Homes & Gardens	-
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kristin Larson is a seventh-generation Floridian and was raised in rural Okeechobee, Florida. She graduated from Okeechobee High School in 2003 and entered the University of Florida in the fall of the same year. While at UF, she majored in advertising and minored in agricultural communication. Kristin graduated with her Bachelor of Science in advertising in December 2006, Summa cum Laude.

After taking a few months to work in a public relations agency in Chicago, Kristin returned to the University of Florida in the fall of 2007 to pursue her master's degree in the College of Journalism and Communications. After writing a thesis and completing coursework in advertising theory, planning, management, strategy and research, Kristin received her Master of Advertising in May 2009.

Kristin enjoys traveling, taking photographs, watching Gator football, and spending time with loved ones, friends, and her dog Penny Anne. She plans to work in a Southeastern advertising agency with a career in account services and management.