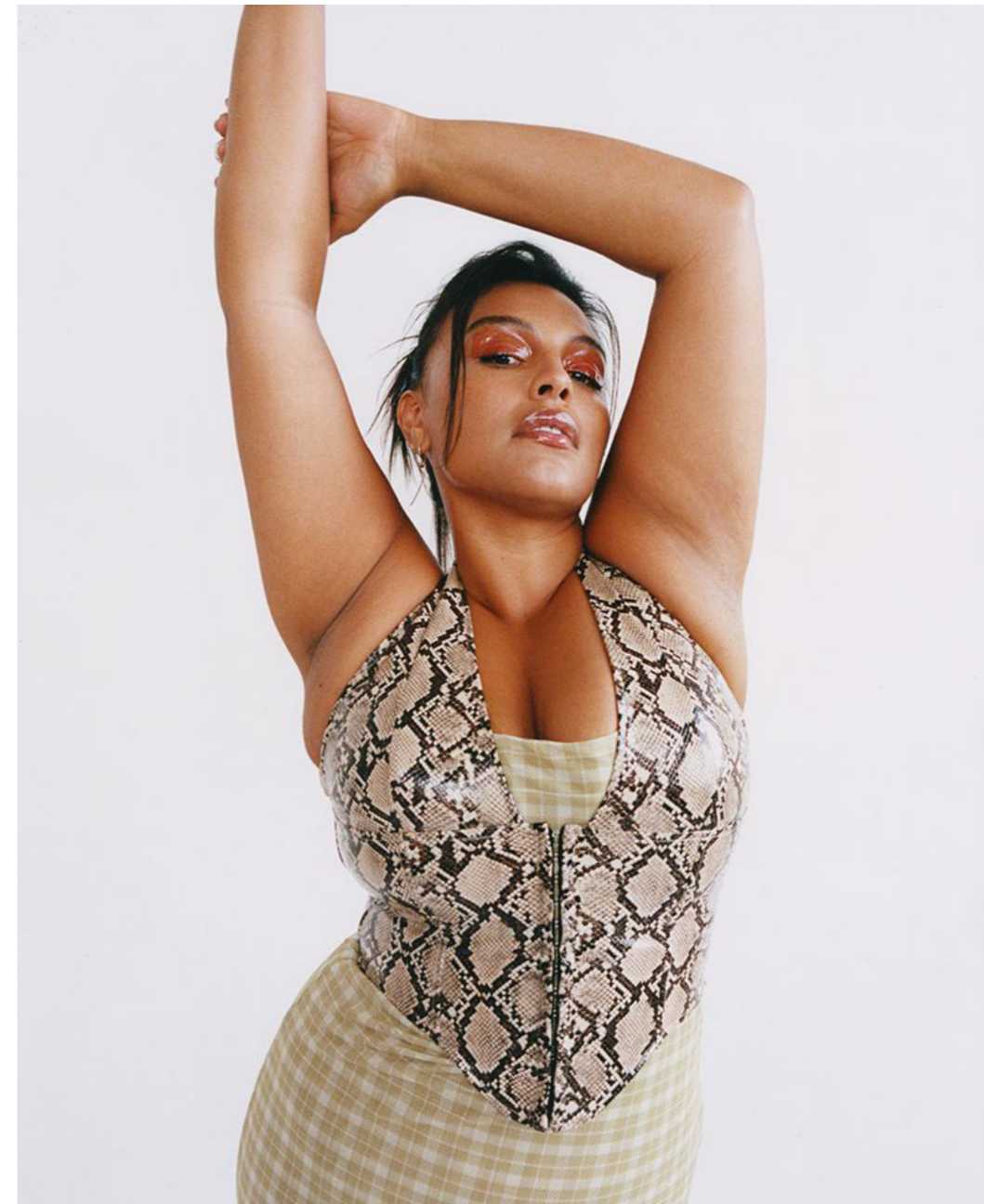# SOCIETAL BEAUTY IDEALS AS A WOMAN: THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

Illustrated Report 70%
Final Project ARTD3066
31116256

Figure 2: Sicher, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this illustrated report is to examine the societal body ideals which exist in society and their connection to women's mental health. To gain an understanding of this, research into subjects such as the Male Gaze, social media and evolving consumer attitudes have been explored. Academic research on psychology and mental health has been taken into consideration in order to understand how the fashion industry is related to this key issue.

The result of the report has outlined that societal beauty ideals are still a prominent issue in contemporary society, despite some innovators attempting to positively alter the fashion landscape. The evidence suggests that in order to succeed in the ever-changing market, it is essential for brands to modernise their values to fit the contemporary consumer and create a customer journey which has a positive impact on the individual and wider society.

INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry plays a key role in the creation of societal body ideals. For instance, the portrayal of extremely thin bodies seen throughout the industry is considered the "tyranny of slenderness in contemporary society" (Volonté, 2019, p.18). The media has promoted sexualised imagery which conforms to the Male Gaze and has distorted how society views women. Consumers internalise distorted media and develop an innate sense of societal norms which impacts how they engage with consumerism as body dissatisfaction can lead to impulse buying (Cai, 2021).

The cycle of absorbing body ideals and focusing your purchases on ways to achieve them can become significantly mentally challenging. Studies show that the constant shift in female body ideals has led to an increase in anxiety, disordered eating and body dissatisfaction (Yu, 2011; Owen, 2013). Whilst some may argue that fashion is a fantasy, the industry has undeniably escalated the subconscious expectations which are negatively impacting women's mental health.

Gen-Z is challenging traditional beauty standards and is neglecting brands which are not embracing a diverse and inclusive future. Much of what is changing in the fashion industry can be credited to the body-positive movement on social media (Morgan, 2020). For fashion to sustain, contemporary values must be taken into account in order to preserve mental health and create a positive consumer experience. Attitude is the key area where change is needed most however, technology and media also have the power to transform the current customer journey into one which is inclusive for all.

Figure 3: Hoorn, 2021

The thin ideal has been at the forefront of the fashion industry for decades and although we are witnessing progress to a diverse and inclusive future, this beauty expectation is instilled in much of society. Exposure to imagery portraying the thin ideal increases many self-esteem issues such as body dysmorphia, eating disorder symptoms and a negative mood (Hawkins, 2010).

Despite beauty standards having various definitions throughout different cultures, the anxiety experienced by women in relation to their appearance is found to be a "global phenomenon" (Calogero et al, 2007, p.259). They also reported that 67% of women reported feeling negatively about their physical appearance which causes them to withdraw from activities beneficial to their wellness, indicating how the enforcement of beauty ideals can result in a negative effect on wellness and livelihood.

Societal beauty ideals have constantly evolved throughout time and have arguably been increasingly prevalent for women. In the Western world, during the Golden Age of Hollywood, it was preferred for women to be full-figured (see Appendix A) which widely differs from the beauty standard of the 90s, also known as "Heroin Chic" (see Appendix B), demonstrating the speed of which body trends occur. Constantly

being expected to conform to societal beauty ideals in order to be accepted and praised can have a detrimental impact on female wellness. Issues with body image are not considered a mental health condition, however, they can negatively impact mental health, associated with issues such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders as well as possibly impacting psychological development (Danylova, 2020).

Due to the overwhelming pressure of achieving said beauty ideals, cosmetic surgery has surged in popularity and is now considered a norm by the majority. The amount of cosmetic procedures in the US has increased from around 1.6 million procedures in 1997 to over 5.5 million in 2020 (Statista, 2020). Social media has a significant impact on the normalisation of cosmetic surgery, resulting in vulnerable and young individuals internalising this and so being impacted by a modern standard of beauty. Foreo found that 61% of women suffer from "compare and despair" syndrome and compare their appearance with those on social media regularly (Cole, 2021). This illustrates that beauty ideals are still a major issue in contemporary society.

IDEALS

Figure 4: Jacquemus, 2020

"Gen Z's rejection of 'sexiness' might seem revolutionary, but it's been a long time coming." (Vogue, 2019)

INSIGHTS

"Today, your authentic identity has to hit all the different customer touchpoints." (BoF, 2021)

Gen Z has collectively initiated a cultural shift as consumers, searching for brands that are advocating for their common values. Merve Manastir suggested that this collective is "spending as an expression of their identity; consuming as a measure of ethical concerns." (Business of Fashion, 2021). Gen Z has a powerful influence over brands; according to McKinsey & Company (2019), this group makes up 40% of global consumers and their buying power is worth "approximately $150 billion" in the United States alone. These purchase decisions are driven by their interest in environmental and social issues and have ignited a movement of change in the fashion industry.

An authentic customer experience has become a vital expectation from consumers. Gen Z individuals want to engage in fashion which is working to create a greater change, seeking brands that represent a diverse and realistic demographic of individuals. 97% of Gen Z consumers use social media as their key source of shopping inspiration and "they want to see different products and then a real story behind those products and the brand itself" (Business of Fashion, 2021; Forbes, 2021). This conveys why social media strategy is crucial for brands to connect with their audience, relate to their needs and desires, and portray the essence of the brand.

Concerning body ideals, Gen Z is searching for an authentic representation of women. Seeing women of all shapes and sizes, embracing "imperfections", body hair and so on is the modern revolution of what it means to be sexy. The young women of today "are being exposed to a different mode of beauty, one that hasn't been distorted by out-of-touch marketing executives or corporate leads trying to appease the male gaze" (Vogue, 2019). Early adopters, such as Savage X Fenty and Girlfriend Collective, have already used their brand presence and marketing tools to embrace what it is to be a contemporary woman whilst creating an inclusive environment.

Throughout the Covid-19 experience, 75% of consumers tried new shopping behaviours whilst switching between brands. This "restlessness" is due to individuals not being able to find brands that reflect their values (McKinsey & Company 2021). As we transition into a post-pandemic world, the digitisation of the consumer experience is still present. Brands can now innovate an immersive, body-inclusive experience in-store and online; virtual fitting rooms and AI-powered body measuring technology are examples of how brands can create a relaxing and comfortable experience for all consumers within the community.

Figure 5: Tyler Mitchell, 2019

Figure 6: Nadine Ijewere, 2020

SOCIAL
COMPARISON

Festinger (1954) discussed the concept of Social Comparison and proposed "that people have an innate drive to evaluate themselves, often in comparison to others" (p.118). Cultural factors such as attitudes and values, accelerated by the media and so on, impact self-esteem and how body expectations are acted upon. Upward social comparison is arguably the most frequent way society engages in comparison. Social media has driven this by giving us constant insight into the lives of individuals with great influence, such as the Kardashian family.

The desire to improve our social status behaves as a form of motivation which in turn encourages consumers to purchase products which will help them to achieve their desires. Research conveys that social comparison leads to negative psychological well-being (Lee, 2020). This signifies the damaging cycle which is taking place, whereby individuals act upon innate pressures to conform to body ideals by engaging in consumerism, ultimately achieving gratification.

The Male Gaze theory was first introduced by filmmaker Laura Mulvey in 1975. The concept is described as "the manner of treating women's bodies as objects to be surveyed, which is associated by feminists with hegemonic masculinity, both in everyday social interaction and in relation to their representation in visual media" (Oxford Reference, 2022). Throughout the history of film and art, women have been impacted by misogyny and the Male Gaze which has resulted in them being objectified (see Appendix C), which has trickled down into society and impacted how women behave and present themselves.

Women who are affected by the Male Gaze, subconsciously or not, are at risk of "self-objectification" and this can have a very negative impact on their quality of life (Calogero, 2004). Furthermore, studies show that "objectification is one of the earliest forms of sexism that girls experience" which emphasises the importance of media enforcing positive values (Gervais et al, 2011, p.14). Through advertising, children and adolescents are being exposed to Male Gaze enforcing media that is potentially causing the development of issues with body image, self-esteem and eating disorders (Morris et al, 2003).

The Female Gaze (Mulvey, 1975) originated in the film industry but can also be applied to fashion in order to understand the shift in attitude that has occurred. The Female Gaze is a feminist theory in response to the Male Gaze and surrounds the portrayal of women, focusing on emotions, sensuality and atmosphere (see Appendix D). Fashion photography has immense power in the industry through its direct connection with consumers and female artists are slowly breaking into mainstream photography and art. This seeks to "empower women through their approach to the female body, youth, race, ageing and a celebration of the essentially imperfect nature of female beauty in daily life." (Business of Fashion, 2017).

"It's emotional and intimate. It sees people as people. It seeks to empathize rather than objectify"

(Telfar, 2018)

THE GAZE

Figure 7: Cooke & Kin, 2021

Figure 8: Deanna Templeton, 2015

Charlotte Jansen, author of Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze expresses that selfies and social media are transforming the way that women can engage with art and feminism. The art of the selfie allows women to control their image and the way it is represented when it was previously controlled by someone else (Jansen, 2017). Viewing women through the Male Gaze is unlikely to appeal to today's female consumers since more women are embracing this newfound individuality and confidence.

"It's about seeing the world in a completely different way. The female gaze is a vision of a world where identity is fluid, and we relate to each other and ourselves in many different ways." (Jansen, 2017)

Gen-Z accounts for 60% of streetwear consumers (Strategy&, 2019) and current fashion trends involve women wearing oversized clothing which doesn't necessarily fit their figure, suggesting fashion is moving to a more androgynous environment. This generation has moved past the post-feminism era and is exploring gender and sexuality in new ways which have created a free-spirited and open-minded consumer. Businesses should take the opportunity to market to this audience base as "a new gender reality has been unfolding and expanding rapidly, and businesses have a true opportunity to lead and grow rather than simply comply" (Harvard Business Review, 2020). The fashion industry should embrace the Female Gaze through messages and products in order to authentically connect with Gen Z who cares deeply for diversity and representation (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has undeniably become a cultural phenomenon, particularly for Gen Z which is the first "digital generation" with 65% of them checking Instagram every day (Business Insider, 2019). It has significantly contributed to digital and technological advances happening in the fashion industry and has transformed the way individuals engage with consumerism. However, it is argued that social media can have a detrimental impact on mental health - particularly regarding the enforcement of body ideals for women.

Cheryl Tan, director of the Singapore Mental Health Film Festival, stated that in society we subconsciously compare ourselves to others based on physical appearances (Female Mag, 2020). This is how fashion correlates with our emotional state. The industry has a reputation for perfection which is conveyed on social media through runway imagery, editorials and influencer marketing. Influential platforms that release such media are allowing the audience to strive for a false narrative and perfection that doesn't exist. This can evidently create a mentally challenging situation.

Through absorbing "perfect" imagery through social media, individuals can experience body dissatisfaction and this has been seen to lead to various eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and binge eating disorders (Rizwan et al, 2022).

"You've got young, evolving minds where it's all about belonging to the tribe – and if you don't quite fit in, then feelings of isolation can grow."

(Dazed, 2018)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (Bulmer and Katz, 1974) depicts that an individual chooses to engage with the media that best suits their needs conveying that engaging with media is a goal-oriented activity with a positive outcome. However, this theory does not recognise the power of media in contemporary society and the subconscious effect it can have on those who consume it.

Figure 9: For Love & Lemons, 2022

"If acceptance, openness and education are fundamental to solving one of the industry's — and world's — most prevalent and disturbing problems, then perhaps it's high time that fashion becomes less show and more talk." (Female Mag, 2020)

Figure 10: Josefine HJ, 2022

Exposure to thinness has been increased through the influx of social media influencers (see Appendix E), due to this encouraging appearance-based social comparison, a negative impact on body image is occurring (Tiggemann, 2015). Influencer marketing is a key strategic component for fashion companies and is shown to be on the rise (Forbes, 2021). Studies show that since "ordinary women" consider themselves to be more similar to influencers than traditional fashion models, these individuals engage in social comparison which leads to experiencing envy (Chae, 2018). The negative impact of envy on mental health can be detrimental, causing the development of depression and affecting psychological resilience (Xiang, 2020).

Fashion influencers typically conform to the thin ideal and western beauty expectations, those who are "overweight" or differ from this body type are perceived as less admirable (Jans, 2022). This conveys the weight stigma which exists in contemporary society. Influencers alongside other media outlets can contribute to this stigma by promoting the thin ideal. Selensky (2021) found that after viewing AerieReal or Dove Real campaign, the study participants experienced improved self-esteem and mood. In contrast to feeling negatively about themselves and their bodies after watching a Victoria's Secret campaign, indicating the power held by brands to initiate a positive or negative experience for their consumer.

Despite the negative impact social media and influencers can have on mental health, it does highlight its impact and how this is a potential opportunity for it to go in a positive direction. Brands and publications have access to a platform where they can voice their values to their audience and purposefully release content that does not conform to the Male Gaze or the thin ideal. 85% of Gen Z surveyed in 2021 stated that their self-esteem was affected by social media (Dazed, 2022), highlighting how prevalent this issue is.

There has been an increase in social media influencers who are working to change the fashion landscape. Individuals who do not conform to the thin ideal have committed to sharing unedited images of themselves and sharing "imperfections" in order to create a body-positive digital environment. Fashion brands need to take the opportunity to work with influencers who are breaking traditional norms as it is likely that these influencers will engage Gen Z with the brand, as they search for an authentic consumer experience.

Fashion models are considered a high-risk group concerning eating disorders, one of the most direct mental health impacts that the fashion industry has caused. Individuals who suffer from an eating disorder are prone to have a decreased quality of life and impaired daily functioning (Sheehan, 2015). Often, models who achieve thinness are rewarded with professional success and this creates a desire to continue to lose weight in order to access this positive reinforcement through psychological reward (Preti, 2008). Girls who are prone to developing eating disorders are typically more assertive and aggressive (Mitotto, 2003) which can benefit those who choose a career in modelling due to it being extremely competitive.

"There's 54 percent who were told to lose weight and that they wouldn't be able to find more jobs if they didn't. It's not just about feeling that you have to lose weight; it's that if your livelihood depends on it." (Ziff, 2017)

Supermodel Bella Hadid has built a highly successful career in the modelling industry and has become a celebrity in her own right, demonstrated through her Instagram following of 51.6M (Instagram, 2022). She is recognised for her identifiable style but also her tall frame and thinness, and recently has discussed her past struggles with anorexia nervosa in an interview with Vogue. She stated that body dysmorphia and mental health issues have followed her throughout her career, explaining that stylists have negatively spoken about her body due to her not fitting in sample sizes (Vogue, 2022). This demonstrates that regardless of shape, size or even success in the fashion industry, individuals are still negatively impacted by body ideals.

Multiple luxury fashion houses are introducing a diverse cast of runway models, including individuals of all genders, ethnicities, ages and sizes. Despite this portraying an improvement in how we have experienced the unrealistic standard of models in the past, the idea of a "token diversity casting" cannot be ignored. Furthermore, it should be noted that the plus-size bodies seen on runways, often have a very similar physique. There appears to be a desirable way to be plus-size (InStyle, 2019). This can be extremely disheartening and harmful, not only for the models who fit outside of this aesthetic but also for consumers who cannot find themselves on the runway.
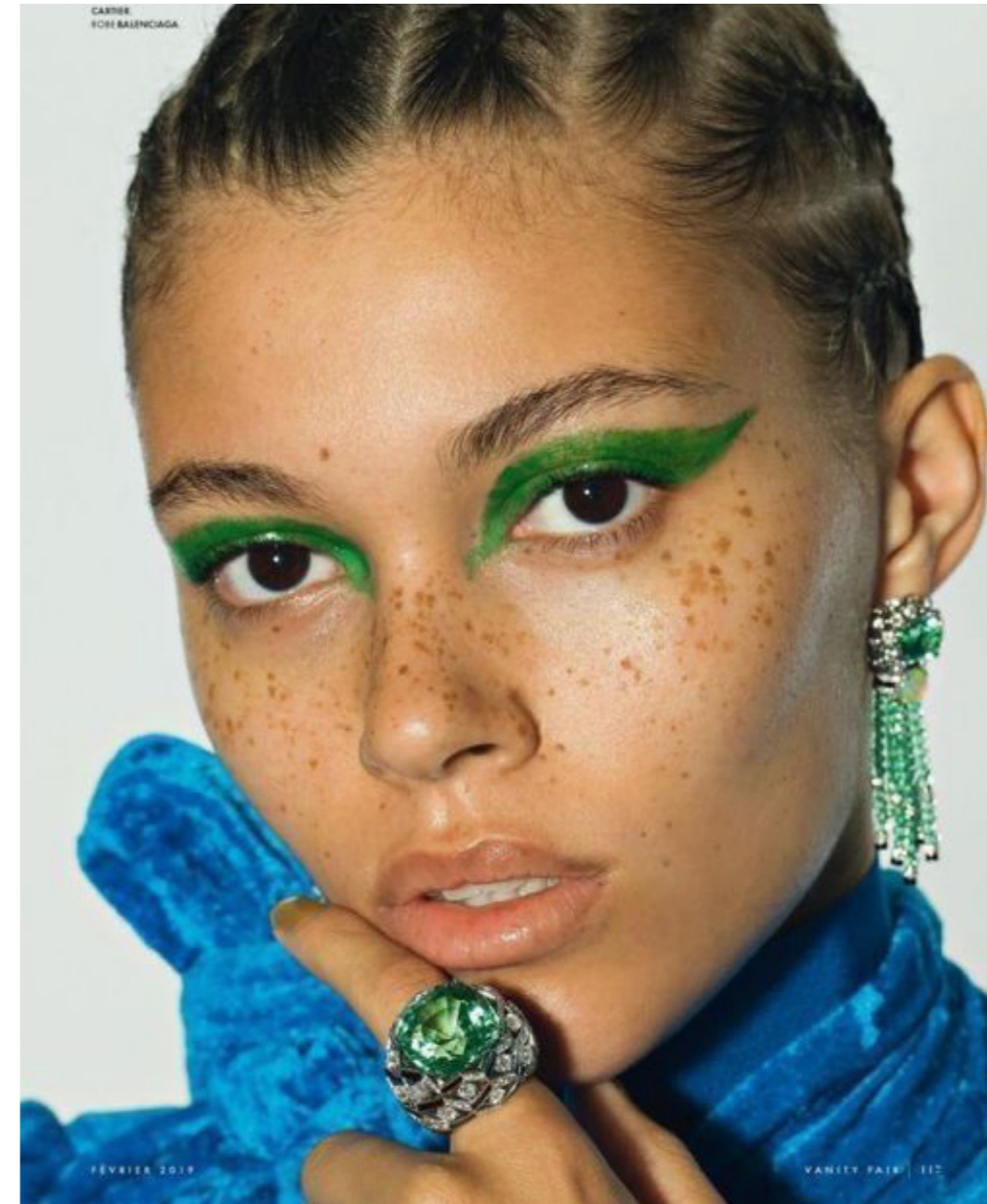
MODELLING

Figure 11: Jacquemus, 2020

Figure 12: Grazia, 2020

"I know what it's like to be the token and it wasn't a good feeling to have to always be the only black model in a show of 70 girls."

(Naomi Campbell, 2020)

Whilst fashion companies are using diversity as the face of their brand, change needs to be implemented deeper. Business of Fashion analysed 18 UK public fashion companies and as of April 2022, 13 of 18 had "One Ethnic Minority" on their board of directors and only 7 of 18 had 40% of women on theirs (BoF, 2022). These figures represent the true inequality behind the face value of brands, consumers will struggle to feel represented in the fashion industry unless a systematic change takes place.

The contemporary consumer will fail to engage to their full potential, there is an opportunity for marketing strategies to ignite change in society if the industry banishes "diversity-washing". 70% of consumers feel that trusting a brand is more important today than in the past (Forbes, 2021), which expresses why brands must honestly promote their values to create a meaningful connection with their audience.

MARKETING

Figure 13: Gilford, 2019

Brands are responsible for exploiting insecurities to market their product to their target audience, presenting a solution to issues they have highlighted in their advertisement. Hallam (2018) indicates that advertisers focus on "something that we feel we lack" and in return provide a cure. Appearance-related self-esteem issues are beneficial to consumerism due to an individual's innate desire to achieve expected beauty ideals. This fuels the Male Gaze and the thin ideal by insinuating that the thinness and conventional beauty equal success (Forbes, 2011).

The inclusive consumer is on the rise, 2 out of 3 Americans have stated that their social values shape their shopping habits (McKinsey & Company, 2022). So brands need to adjust their marketing strategy and business operations to consider values such as diversity, sustainability and inclusivity in order to make a positive social impact. Gen Z wants to engage with brands that understand them illustrating the importance of conveying a sense of inclusivity in marketing (Business of Fashion, 2020). A cultural shift has occurred due to the direct connection between a brand and their audience due to digital platforms, customers are demanding authenticity in advertising (Forbes, 2021). Therefore pressure to progress with body normalisation and inclusivity within marketing is rising.

"It's our responsibility to think deeply about how we build our products as there is a good connection between representation and mental health." (Ta, 2021)

Figure 14: Billie, 2019

Fashion marketing images influence self-image and dieting habits through psychological pressures. Furthermore, individuals are able to absorb the underlying messages from advertisements to fuel their illness if they are suffering from an eating disorder (Parekh et al, 2003). Billie is the first razor brand to "show hair" (Billie, 2018) in their brand imagery, portraying body normalisation and feminism as core brand values. The launch of their campaign Project Body Hair (see Appendix F) exists to celebrate female body hair and made an effective impact on social media, engaging consumers in a conversation surrounding the Female Gaze and women's right to make choices about their bodies. This is a revolution in comparison to traditional marketing for razor products, which typically portrays thin-ideal-conforming, hairless models (see Appendix G) and prioritise beauty ideals over displaying the effectiveness of their product.

In an interview with Vogue (2020), popstar Lizzo discussed that she feels the body positivity movement has been commercialised and has become distanced from real inclusivity, suggesting that it is now a "cool" trend which has excluded minority groups for whom the movement was originally created.

According to Business of Fashion (2020), 63% of Gen Z consumers prefer to see real people in advertisements. Studies also imply that inclusive advertisement portraying models with a diverse range of body types has a positive effect on consumer attitude and purchase intention which results in improved brand performance (Joo, 2021). Despite this, 47% of Gen Z consumers report that in today's marketing, they do not feel represented (Business of Fashion, 2020). Despite the progress that has been made regarding body ideals and inclusivity, in order to make a positive impact on mental wellness as well as benefit financially from an engaged consumer audience, not enough is being done.

Savage x Fenty is a lingerie brand which represents key values of diversity and inclusivity (see Appendix H), marketing their product to all genders and "bodies" (Savage x Fenty, 2022). In a society which is beginning to embrace body inclusivity, Savage x Fenty is setting a new standard in the fashion industry for diversity in runways and campaign castings. They are creating a radical Paradigm Innovation, where the consumers' mental model around their products is completely changed (Bessant and Tidd, 2015).

The Diffusion of Innovation Model (see Appendix I) conveys how innovative ideas or practices are absorbed by society at different speeds and patterns (Rogers 1962). In this context, Savage x Fenty is an 'Early Adopter' due to their innovative approach to inclusivity in the lingerie market, representing all body types, individuals with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community and more. Forbes (2021) illustrates that when individuals can recognise their own personal traits in messages from brands, they are more likely to respond, emphasising the importance of portraying authenticity as a brand value.

"And so her Savage x Fenty shows and campaigns have been from the beginning a clever celebration of difference. showcasing women of different weight. height. cultures and races: women who are plus-size. pregnant. women who have stretch marks and cellulite."

(Vogue Australia 2019)

CASE STUDY

Figure 15: Savage x Fenty, 2021

Figure 16: Savage x Fenty, 2021

The company now has a value of $3 billion (Business Insider, 2022) and this success rate is arguably due to their prioritisation of authentic representation and their Gen Z targeted marketing mix. Savage x Fenty uses emotion, storytelling and cultural relevance marketing to engage their target demographic.

Their show is an integral segment of the brands marketing strategy which gains high levels of traction on social media due to celebrities and supermodels often being cast amongst the diverse range of models. This show is made accessible through the streaming platform Amazon Prime and the runway is enhanced with musical performances and brand aesthetic set design (Vogue Australia, 2021), emphasising their value of accessibility.

The brand acquired 153% year-over-year surge in Earned Media Value (EMV) from June 2020 to May 2021, garnering $331.0M EMV (LinkedIn, 2021), as a result of their influencer marketing. Savage x Fenty works with both micro and macro influencers and has developed their social media presence by reposting user-generated content, creating a hyper-connected community between the brand and the audience.

Savage x Fenty makes the modern consumer feel accepted and included in the fashion industry, resulting in a positive impact on mental wellness. It is vital for brands to rapidly integrate inclusivity into their values and execute this through marketing in order to weaken the negative effect of beauty ideals and the Male Gaze on women. Ardelet et al (2015) state that consumers desire personal connections with fashion brands. Savage x Fenty creates this connection by allowing their customers to feel accurately represented through diverse body representation in their marketing.

The brand has delivered a 'Disruptive Innovation' (Christensen, 1995) (see Appendix J) to the market due to its unapologetic approach to authentic inclusivity. This is more appealing to the Gen Z consumer and behaves as an alternative to competitors, such as Victoria's Secret who have arguably become "tone-death" and outdated in the modern lingerie market (Business Insider, 2021).

Figure 17: Falquez, 2020

POLITICAL

Covid-19 caused a slowness which allowed individuals to ask questions and explore the current way of life that existed pre-pandemic. There is an opportunity for a "social reset" which involves openness and the prospect of evolving fashion into a human process.

ECONOMICAL

The pandemic has resulted in a dramatic shift in consumer behaviour and decreased spending power. According to McKinsey and Company (2021), the impact of said consumption shifts will be felt for some time and continue to affect consumer choices even after the pandemic is over.

SOCIAL

Gen Z is known to be the most progressive and accepting generation. Using the power of social media, these individuals are revolutionising activism and clearly prioritising issues such as diversity and feminism (Spiers, 2019). This cultural shift should impact the way in which brands market and promote their common values regarding these issues to their audience.

TECHNOLOGICAL

Many retailers have introduced innovative technology to their brick-and-mortar stores as well as their e-commerce sites in order to enhance the customer journey. There is an opportunity for size technology to drastically improve and according to Forbes (2021). It is predicted that the global virtual fitting room market will grow from $3 million in 2019 to $6.5 million by 2025.

LEGAL

The NHS has experienced a 41% increase in eating-disorder-related hospital admissions for individuals aged 17 and under (Gregory, 2022). In response to this, the UK government has proposed the 'Digitally Altered Body Image Bill' which requires social media influencers and brands to be transparent in regards to the use of image altering software.

ENVIRONMENTAL

The modern consumer is aware of issues surrounding sustainability and is demanding authenticity; "a recent survey found that 75% view sustainability as "important" or "very important" (Business of Fashion, 2021). Typically, sustainable fashion brands have a limited size range, in 2020 less than 20% of eco-conscious products cater for plus-size individuals (Marci, 2020). This results in consumers turning to fast fashion brands for purchases, posing an environmental issue.

THE PATH TO PURCHASE

Using the AIDA Model to illustrate how consumers move throughout their purchase experience, comparing a traditional fashion brand with a hypothetical inclusivity-focused fashion brand.

Traditional Fashion Brand

A: Awareness

Uses traditional marketing to attract the target audience, consisting of brand imagery which is influenced by the Male Gaze and promotes current beauty ideals. Potentially losing the interest of the Gen Z audience who is focused on values such as authenticity and inclusivity.

I: Interest

Currently, the main method used by brands to generate interest is through social media. Although every brand has a different approach to their social media presence, ultimately, this is another method to visually story tell what the consumer could achieve if they consume their product.

D: Desire

Brands create desire by promoting beauty ideals through brand imagery and advertising, this is internalised by the consumer and results in experiencing a desire to achieve said ideal through purchasing the product offered by the brand.

A: Action

The last step of the path to purchase involves the consumer not only purchasing the product being offered, but also the ideology behind it. This is potentially the most harmful stage since the consumer is accepting the beauty ideals being enforced and this begins the cycle.

Figure 18: Author's Own, AIDA Model Adapted from Hanlon (2021), 2022

Inclusivity-focused Fashion Brand

A: Awareness

Brands are using their social media platform as well as other marketing strategies to voice their messages on diversity and inclusivity, demonstrating to their consumer base that they are actively working to create positive change in the fashion industry.

I: Interest

Using captivating imagery in their advertisement to visually promote their common values to their audience. Demonstrating that the brand cares about societal issues, such as lack of diversity, and creates a relationship between the brand and consumer.

D: Desire

The consumer has understood that the brand aligns with their values and decides that they want to engage. Desire is experienced when the consumer feels positive towards the brand breaking away from traditional, patriarchal norms.

A: Action

The action takes place when the consumer decides to purchase. By engaging with the brand, positive messages are being absorbed and the consumer feels accepted and morally good about their purchase due to their common values. This emotional experience will encourage the consumer to purchase again and potentially become a loyal customer, slowly implementing positive change in society through the consumer's action.

It is critical for the fashion industry to stop providing power to societal beauty ideals. As shown in this report, the mental health impacts experienced by women can be extremely damaging and the fashion industry still participates in the promotion of beauty standards, particularly targeted at women. Due to the longevity of the Male Gaze and the thin ideal in society, the issue has become deep-rooted and so will be hard to shift, but not impossible. Brands must develop a key focus on consumer attitude and not only adapt their marketing strategies, but also create change in their head offices. The need for women in positions of power is essential, for the viewpoint and life experiences of women to be ingrained in the cycle of a brand to change the fashion landscape over time and decrease the impact of damaging beauty ideals.

This report highlights the area of opportunity within the fashion industry for brands to create a positive impact on their consumer base. With the rise in demand for inclusivity, it is becoming crucial that the pace of change increases if fashion brands wish to continue to succeed in their market sector. It is inevitable that as Gen Z progresses, their current values and attitudes will gain more power in the market alongside their buying power. As previously discussed, the demand for inclusivity and authenticity throughout the fashion cycle is going to increase and 'diversity-washing' is becoming

far less tolerated. This demonstrates that a change in consumer attitude is changing and women, in particular, are using social media to engage with activism, brands should respond by ensuring the values mentioned are enforced throughout their entire company process - from production to final product.

Fashion brands have a moral responsibility to create a positive and sustainable future. This involves female empowerment and pushing for diversity which can be illustrated through the messages behind branding and marketing. To support this report, a proposed solution will be provided through a mock-up of a female-targeted, sustainable swimwear brand. The brand will have a key focus on inclusive sizing at an accessible price point, in response to an issue highlighted in the PESTLE analysis provided. The proposal will illustrate a debut collection as well as a creative campaign surrounding to support the launch, including a highlight on a social media community created to empower and support all women. This creative outcome will behave as an example of how current fashion brands can use values of inclusivity and authenticity to their advantage, resulting in a positive customer experience and an engaged consumer base.

CONCLUSION

Figure 19: For Love & Lemons, 2022
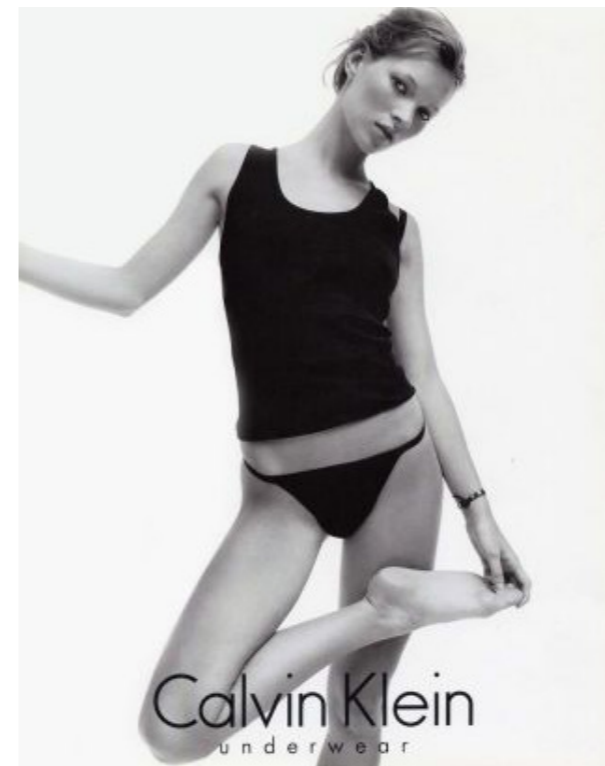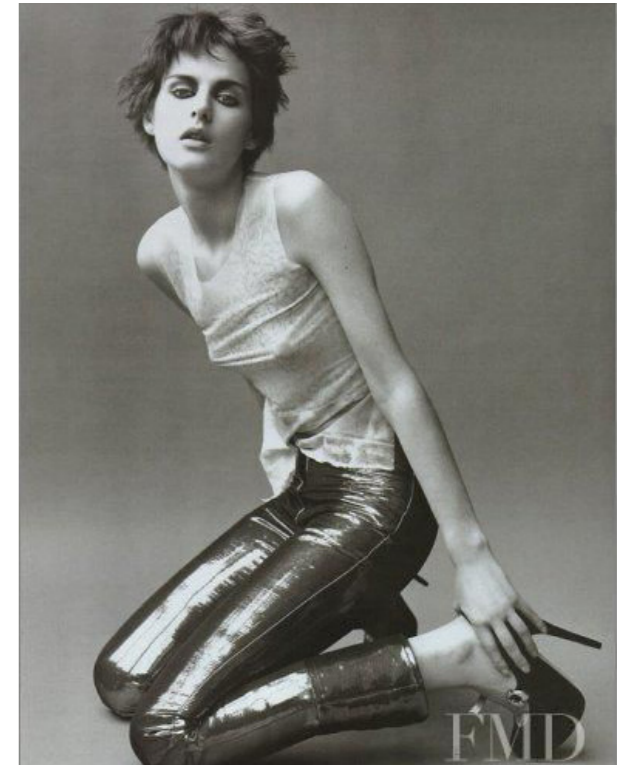
APPENDICES

Figure 20: Sicher, 2022

APPENDIX A

Example imagery illustrating the Golden Age of Hollywood standard of beauty.

APPENDIX B
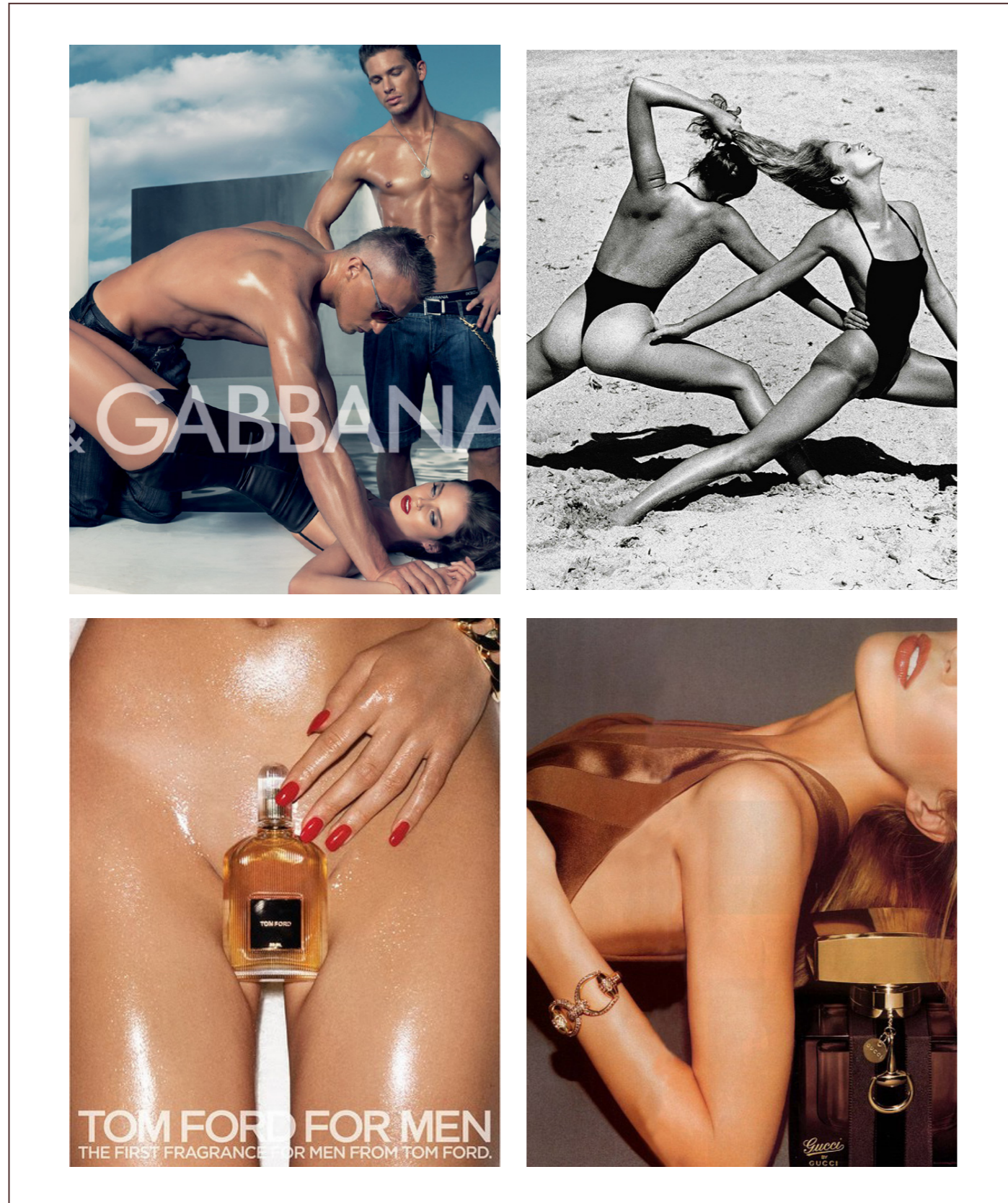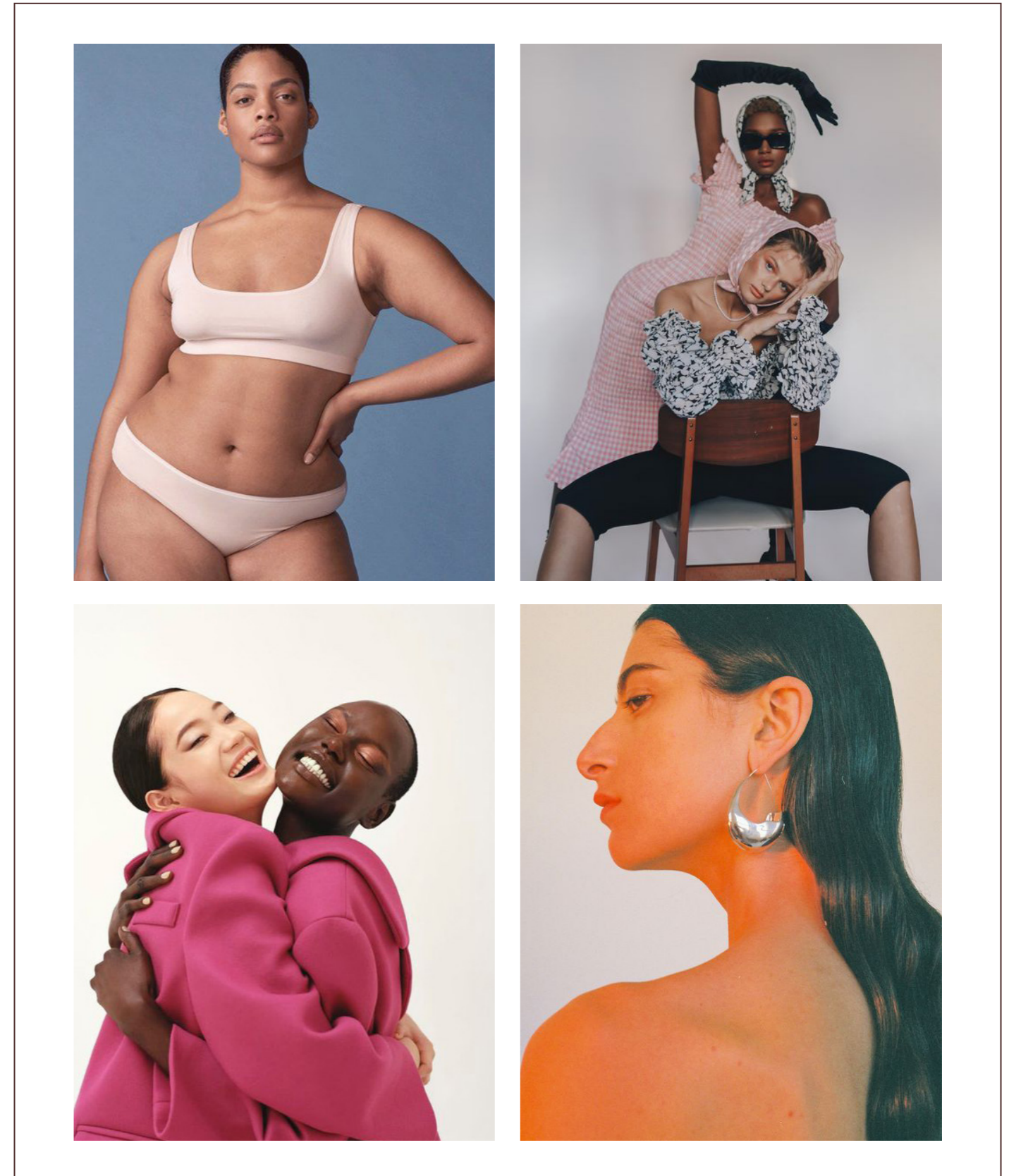
Example imagery illustrating 'heroin chic' body-type.

APPENDIX C

Example imagery of fashion photography impacted by the Male Gaze.
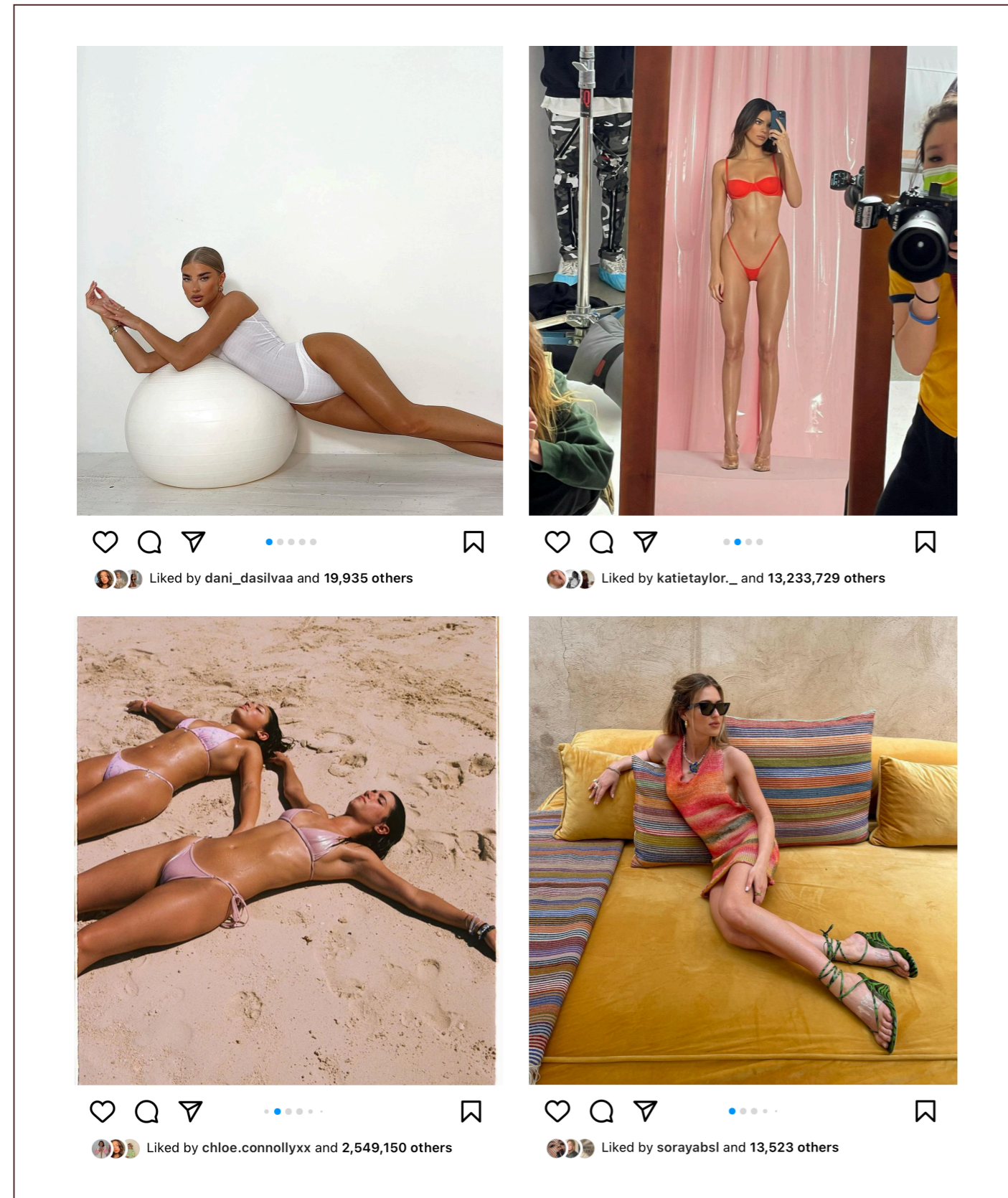

APPENDIX D

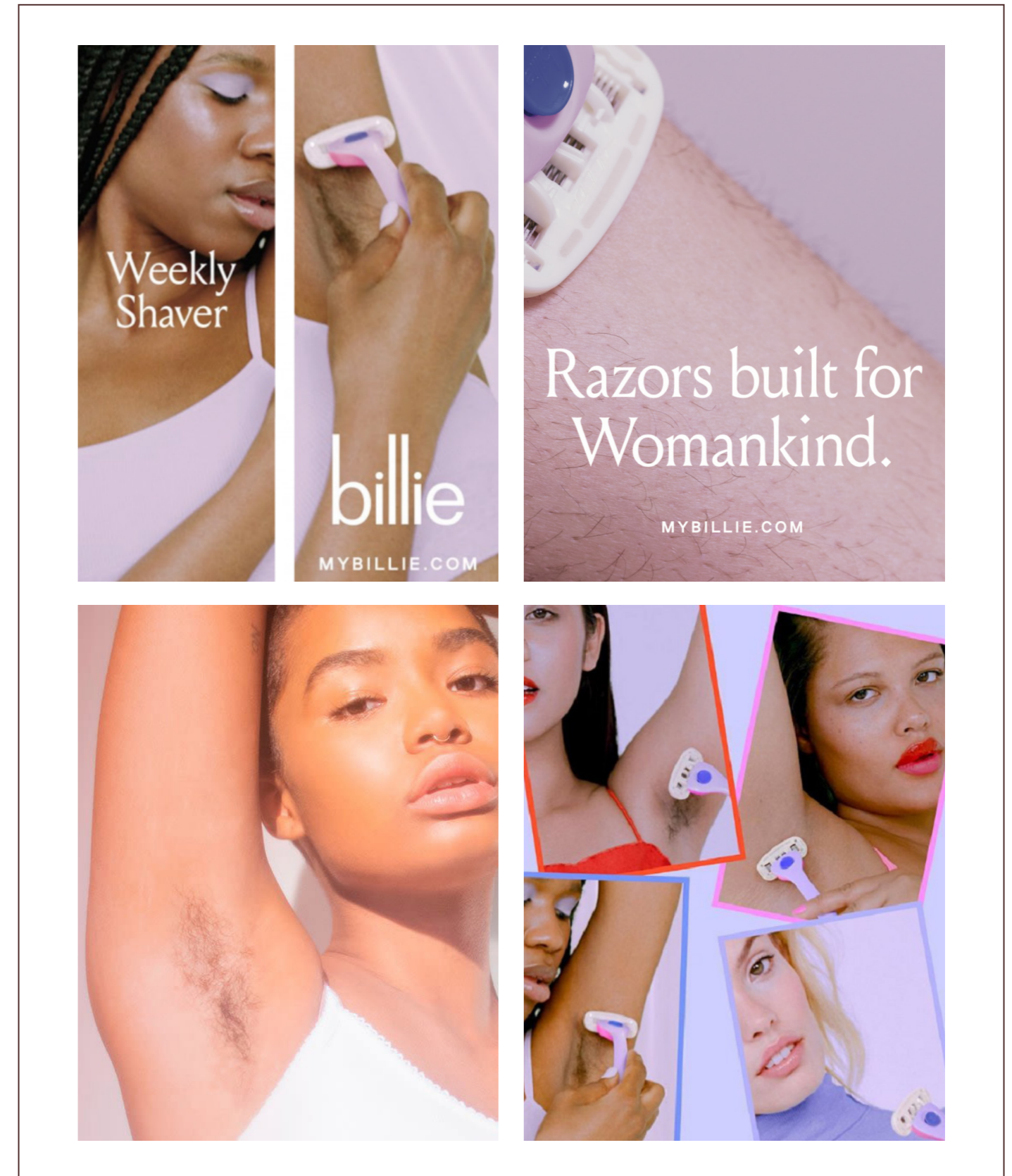Example imagery of photography influenced by the Female Gaze.

APPENDIX F

Example imagery of how social media influencers promote thinness.
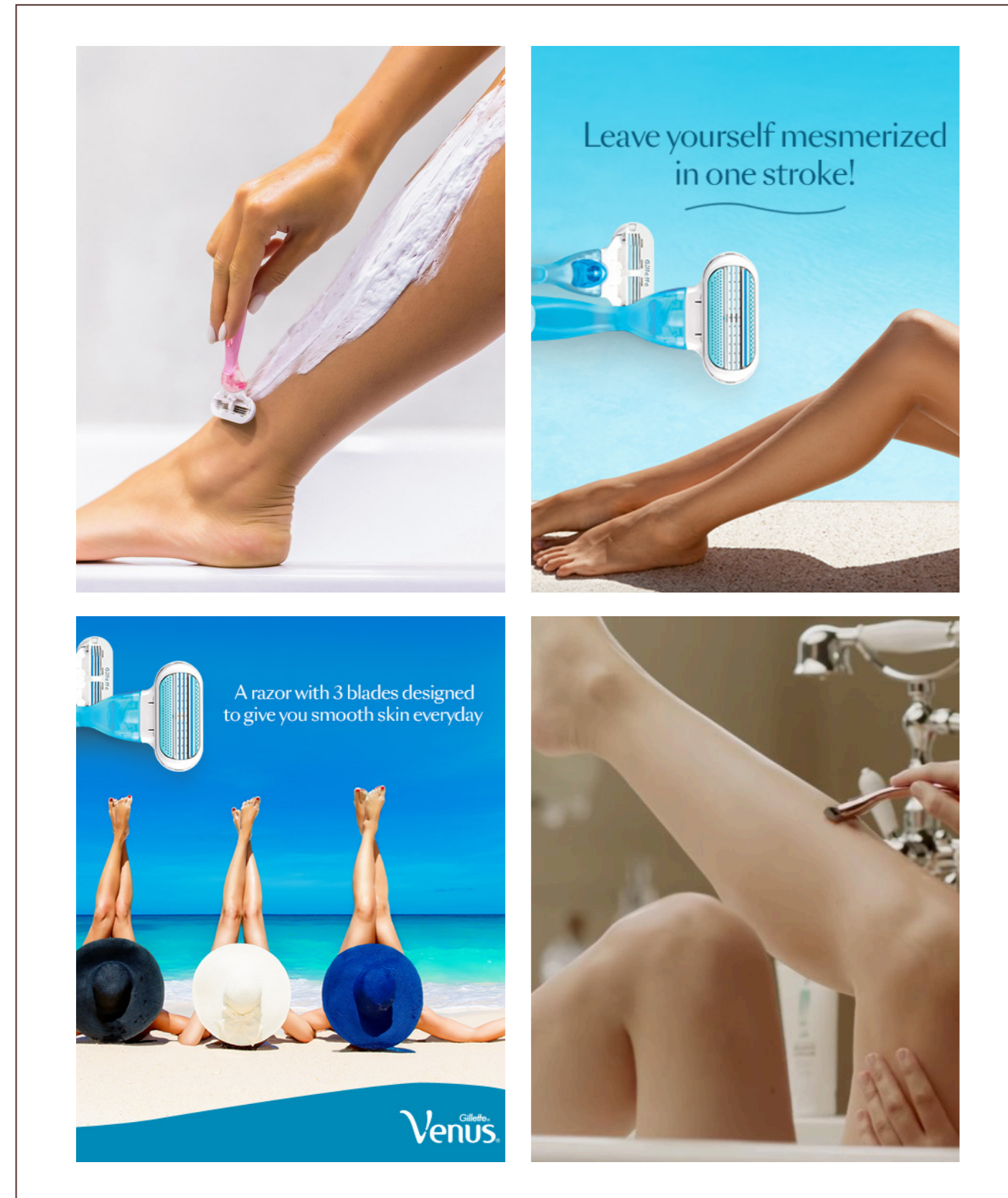

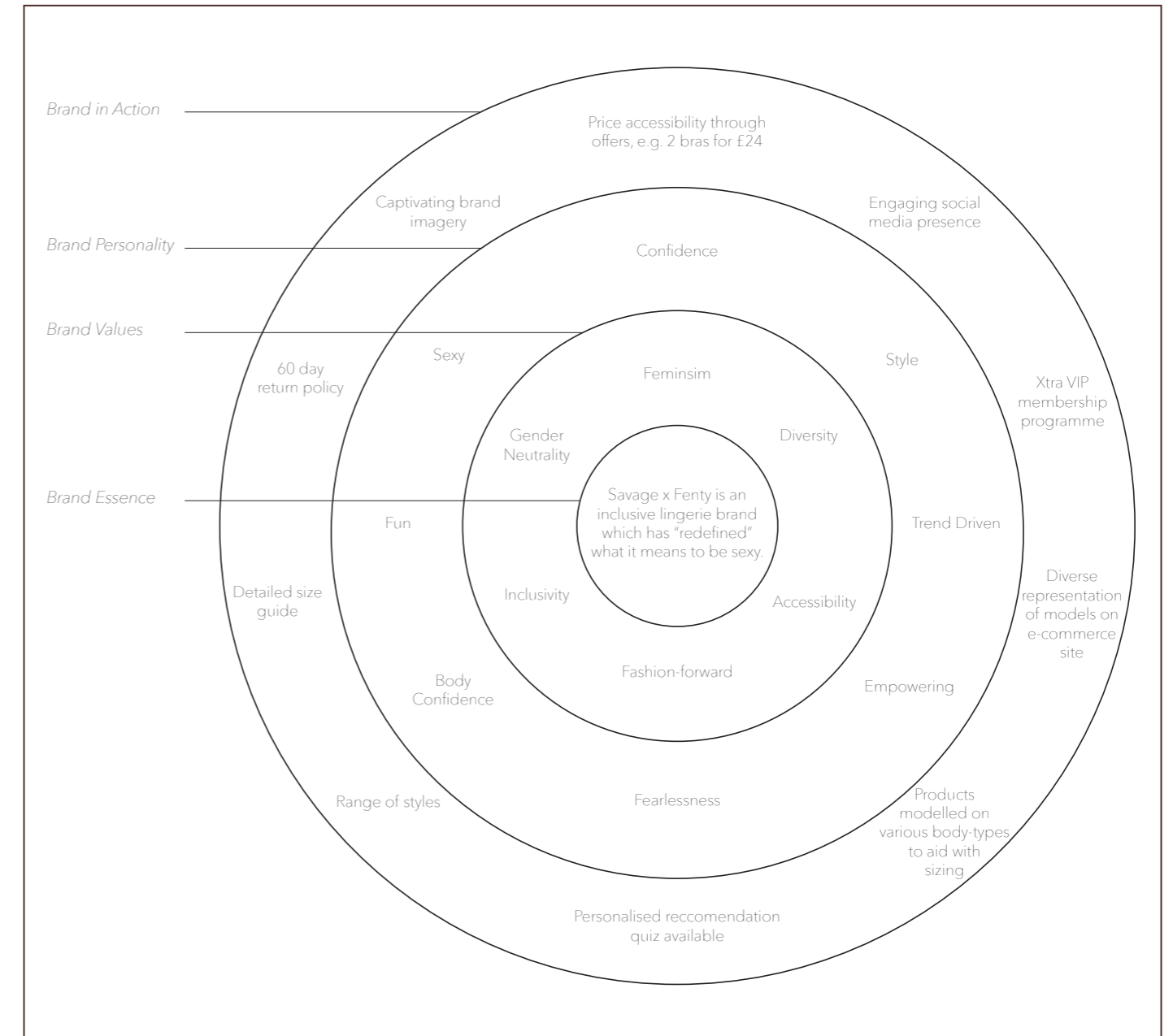# APPENDIX F

Billie Project Body Hair

APPENDIX G

Example imagery of mainstream razor brand advertising.
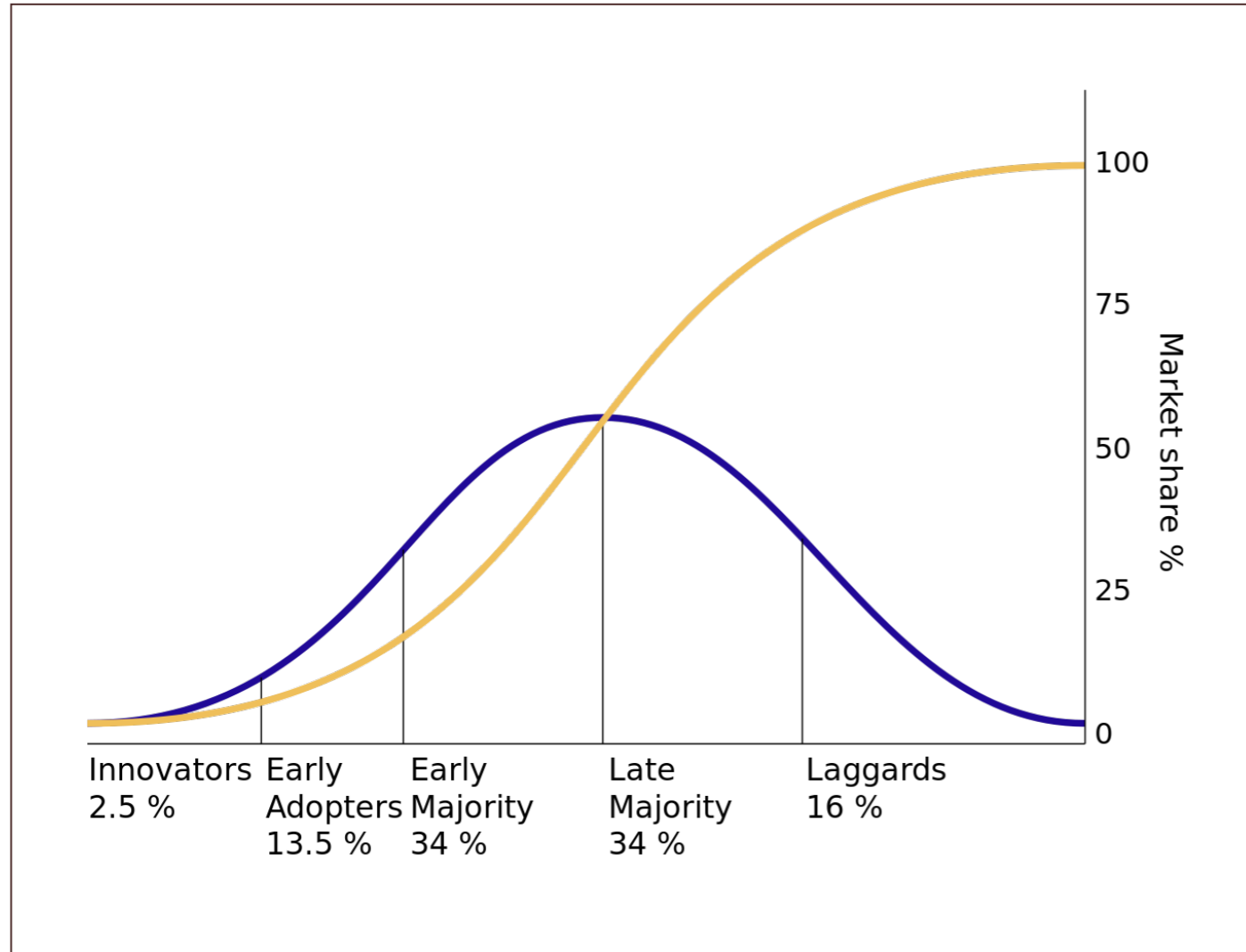

APPENDIX H

Author's Own, Savage x Fenty Brand Onion.

Brand in Action

Brand Personality

Brand Values

Brand Essence

Price accessibility through offers, e.g. 2 bras for £24

Captivating brand imagery

Engaging social media presence

Confidence

60 day return policy

Sexy

Feminsim

Style

Xtra VIP membership programme

Gender Neutrality

Diversity

Savage x Fenty is an inclusive lingerie brand which has "redefined" what it means to be sexy.

Fun

Trend Driven

Detailed size guide

Inclusivity

Accessibility

Diverse representation of models on e-commerce site

Body Confidence

Fashion-forward

Empowering

Range of styles

Fearlessness

Products modelled on various body-types to aid with sizing

Personalised reccomendation quiz available

APPENDIX I

Diffusion of Innovation Model (Rogers, 1962).

APPENDIX J

Disruptive Innovation Theory (Christensen, 1997).
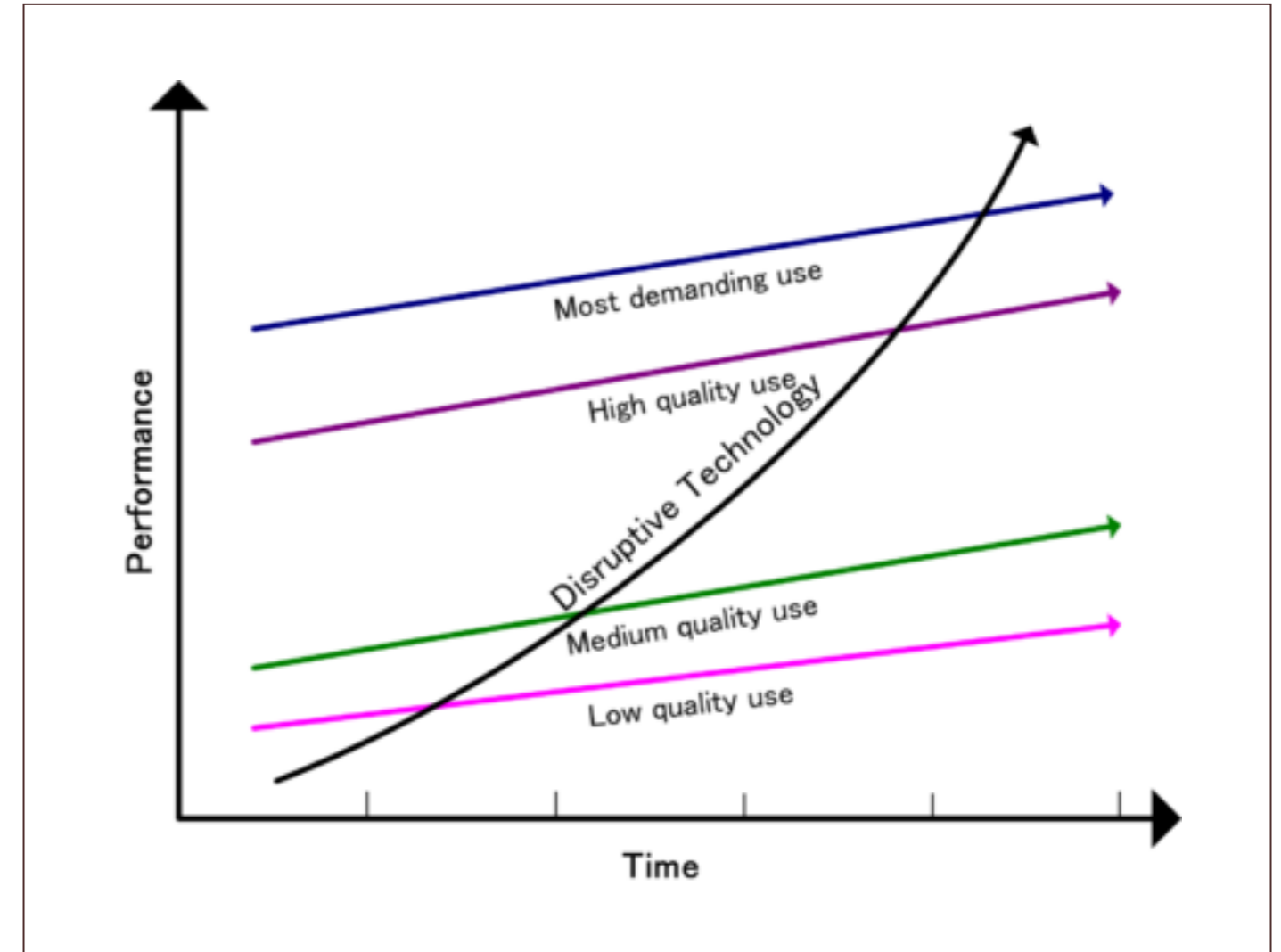
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Figure 21: Brydie Mack, 2021

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Figure 18: Author's Own, AIDA Model Adapted from Hanlon (2021), 2022

Figure 19: For Love & Lemons. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CaYohJCLe1G/?igshid=NWRhNmQxMjQ=

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