Body Diversity and Its Impact on Fashion Advertisement: A Survey

Abstract

This survey paper critically examines the impact of body diversity, with a focus on plus-size representation, on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in the fashion industry. It highlights the increasing representation of diverse body types in advertisements and its influence on Generation Z consumers, who prioritize inclusivity and authenticity. The study explores the exposure effect of plus-size models on consumer perceptions, mood, and body dissatisfaction, emphasizing the role of women's empowerment in reshaping societal norms. The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of current representation strategies and their effectiveness in enhancing brand perception, particularly among Generation Z. It identifies challenges such as societal biases and industry practices that hinder effective plus-size representation, and highlights opportunities for brands to engage inclusively with consumers through digital platforms and authentic marketing strategies. The survey underscores the need for continued research into the intersectionality of plus-size identity and the psychological impacts of diverse representations. By addressing these areas, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of body diversity's implications for consumer behavior and brand strategy, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable fashion industry.
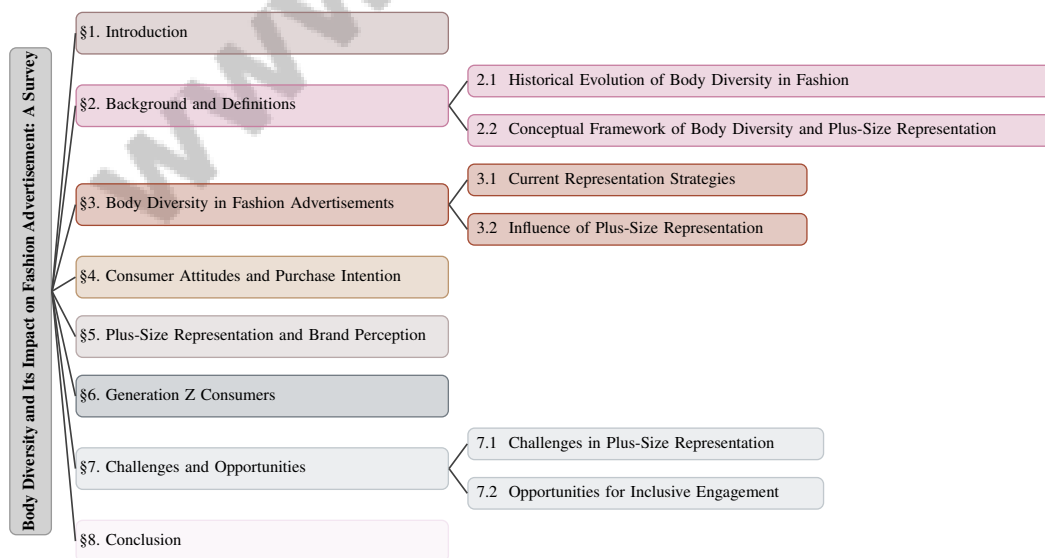
1 Introduction

Figure 1: chapter structure

1.1 Objectives of the Paper

This survey critically examines the impact of body diversity, particularly plus-size representation, on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. This analysis is vital in light of shifting societal standards of beauty and inclusivity, as evidenced by the rising visibility of diverse body types in fashion advertisements. The study investigates the exposure effect of plus-size models on body dissatisfaction and mood, exploring how these elements shape consumer perceptions [1]. Additionally, it seeks to develop a nuanced understanding of diverse representation in advertising, addressing consumer demand for inclusivity and the challenges brands face in maintaining authenticity amid varying perceptions [2]. The research also explores the relationship between women's empowerment and positive female representation in fashion advertising, aiming to bridge the knowledge gap regarding the effects of these portrayals on societal perceptions and self-esteem [3]. By focusing on body diversity's impact on societal norms, especially concerning plus-size Black women, the paper highlights the broader implications of such representations for the acceptance of diverse female bodies [4]. Through these objectives, the survey aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of body diversity in fashion advertising and its implications for consumer behavior and brand strategy.

1.2 Structure of the Survey

The survey is organized to thoroughly examine body diversity in fashion advertising, emphasizing its effects on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, particularly among Generation Z. The paper begins by outlining the research objectives and significance, establishing a foundation for a detailed exploration of the interconnected dynamics within the fashion industry. The background section provides definitions and historical context, tracing the evolution of key concepts such as body diversity and plus-size representation [5].

Subsequent sections analyze the current state of body diversity in fashion advertisements, evaluating representation strategies and their influence on consumer perceptions [3]. Attention is directed toward consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, focusing on how diverse representations in advertisements shape consumer identity and behavior [6]. The role of plus-size representation in brand perception is also explored, comparing various brand strategies and their marketing implications [7].

Particular emphasis is placed on Generation Z consumers, highlighting their values and expectations for inclusivity and the influence of digital platforms on their behavior [8]. The survey discusses the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating body diversity into fashion advertising, offering insights into effective strategies brands can adopt to engage inclusively with their audiences. Findings indicate a gradual improvement in the representation of diverse body types, ethnicities, and ages in recent fashion advertisements, while persistent gaps remain, especially in the portrayal of older and plus-size women. By addressing these gaps, brands can better align their advertising efforts with the growing consumer demand for authenticity and diversity, ultimately empowering women and enhancing their brand image [9, 3, 2]. The conclusion summarizes key findings and suggests avenues for future research, aiming to deepen the understanding of body diversity's impact on consumer behavior and brand strategy. The following sections are organized as shown in Figure 1.

2 Background and Definitions

2.1 Historical Evolution of Body Diversity in Fashion

The evolution of body diversity within the fashion industry reflects a dynamic interplay among societal norms, media portrayals, and consumer behavior. Historically, fashion advertisements primarily showcased a narrow range of body types, aligning with societal beauty standards that idealized slim and youthful figures [10]. This trend was notably evident in the marketing strategies of influential brands like Calvin Klein, which have significantly shaped gender roles and beauty ideals. The late 20th and early 21st centuries marked a shift towards inclusivity, driven by advocacy for body positivity and diversity. Campaigns began to challenge conventional beauty paradigms by featuring a broader spectrum of body sizes and shapes [8], with plus-size models playing a pivotal role in this transformation by addressing consumer demands and confronting the stigma associated with plus-size clothing [6].

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The emphasis on inclusivity has expanded to encompass diversity in age, beauty, gender, and race [2], aiming to represent the varied identities of consumers and fostering a more inclusive fashion landscape. Nonetheless, the authentic representation of diverse body types remains a challenge, with ongoing debates about the depth and genuineness of these portrayals [3]. Beyond fashion, the recognition of plus-size individuals' anthropometric characteristics in workplace design highlights the broader societal implications of body diversity [11]. This historical evolution reflects a continual process of redefining beauty standards to embrace a more inclusive representation of human bodies.

2.2 Conceptual Framework of Body Diversity and Plus-Size Representation

The conceptual framework for body diversity and plus-size representation in the fashion industry challenges entrenched beauty standards favoring slender physiques. This framework emphasizes the critical need for inclusivity in media portrayals, supported by studies showing increased diversity in female representations within fashion advertising [8, 3, 12]. Such representation empowers women and contests societal norms regarding femininity and beauty. The rise of body-positive movements on digital platforms further underscores efforts to promote acceptance and challenge sizeism, fostering authentic depictions of women's bodies.

This framework advocates for the inclusion of diverse body types, particularly plus-size women, in fashion advertising to reshape societal perceptions and enhance inclusivity. Including plus-size models not only broadens audience appeal but also confronts fat stigma and the lack of realistic portrayals in mainstream media, which can negatively impact psychological well-being. Consumer perceptions of various body sizes reveal the complexities of shifting societal norms and the potential for these representations to positively influence attitudes [9]. Feminist fat studies highlight resistance against conventional body image standards, underscoring the need for authentic portrayals that empower individuals and enhance self-esteem through relatable media representations [13, 5].

Additionally, the framework addresses physical and psychological barriers faced by plus-size individuals, such as accessibility challenges at fashion events, emphasizing the broader societal implications of body diversity [14]. These challenges necessitate design adaptations to accommodate diverse body dimensions, supported by anthropometric studies focusing on workplace design for plus-size workers [11]. The language used by plus-size women in fashion blogs plays a crucial role in identity construction and challenging negative perceptions of fatness, contributing to a nuanced understanding of body diversity.

From a marketing perspective, understanding plus-size representation is vital for brands seeking to enhance their appeal and align with consumer expectations for genuine and inclusive advertising practices [15]. The categorization of advertising photography based on inclusivity and authenticity highlights the importance of diverse body representations [8]. By integrating these elements, the conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of body diversity and plus-size representation in fashion, emphasizing its significance in shaping consumer experiences, media portrayals, and identity formation [6].

3 Body Diversity in Fashion Advertisements

The fashion industry is experiencing a transformative shift towards body diversity in advertising, driven by changing consumer preferences and a cultural push for inclusivity. This evolution highlights the demand for genuine brand messaging and the need for companies to align with the diverse values of consumers, particularly Gen Z, who prioritize equity and representation in their purchasing choices [8, 16, 7, 2, 3]. As brands increasingly recognize the significance of diverse body types in their campaigns, it is crucial to examine the specific strategies they employ to achieve this representation.

To illustrate these strategies, Figure 2 presents a hierarchical structure of body diversity strategies in fashion advertisements. This figure highlights current representation strategies and the influence of plus-size representation, categorizing the evolution of strategies, media representation, barriers to inclusivity, psychological and societal impacts, empowerment trends, consumer perceptions, and narratives in fashion blogs. Additionally, Table 1 provides a comparative overview of current representation strategies and the influence of plus-size representation in fashion advertisements, illustrating their impact on psychological aspects and consumer perceptions. Such a comprehensive

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overview underscores the multifaceted approach brands must adopt to foster inclusivity and effectively resonate with their audience.
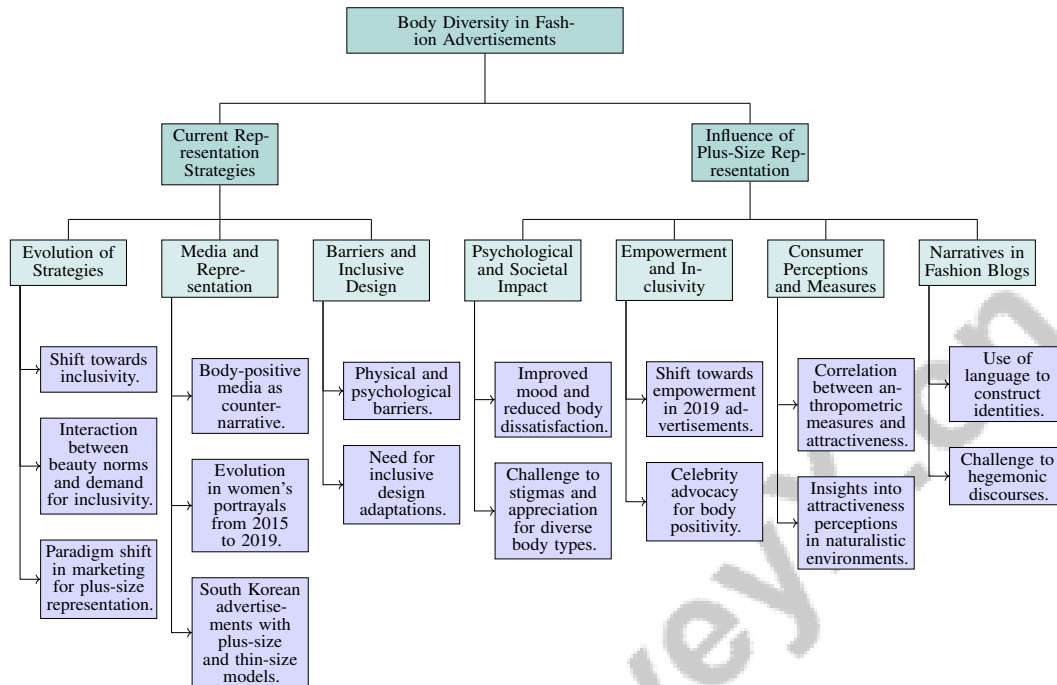

Figure 2: This figure illustrates the hierarchical structure of body diversity strategies in fashion advertisements, highlighting current representation strategies and the influence of plus-size representation. It categorizes the evolution of strategies, media representation, barriers to inclusivity, psychological and societal impacts, empowerment trends, consumer perceptions, and narratives in fashion blogs.

3.1 Current Representation Strategies

Fashion brands have significantly evolved their strategies for depicting diverse body types, reflecting a broader societal shift towards inclusivity. Analyzing these strategies reveals a complex interaction between traditional beauty norms and the increasing demand for inclusive portrayals [5]. Critical discourse analysis underscores the necessity for a paradigm shift in marketing practices to represent plus-size individuals and challenge entrenched stereotypes about fat bodies [6].

Recent research emphasizes the importance of body-positive media as a counter-narrative to mainstream media, which often perpetuates negative stereotypes about larger body sizes [16]. This approach is essential for fostering a more accepting media landscape. An analysis of advertisement images from 2015, 2016, and 2019 shows a gradual evolution in women's portrayals, indicating a trend towards more varied and realistic representations [10].

In South Korean fashion advertisements, contrasting stimuli featuring both plus-size and thin-size models illustrate ongoing efforts to diversify representation strategies [17]. This dual approach caters to a broader audience while challenging the conventional emphasis on thinness as the ideal, promoting body positivity and acceptance [12].

Furthermore, categorizing barriers into physical and psychological dimensions highlights the necessity of representation in fashion events, emphasizing the need for inclusive design adaptations that accommodate diverse body sizes [14]. This is critical for ensuring fashion events are accessible and representative of a varied consumer base.

Research indicates a significant shift towards diversity and empowerment in fashion advertising, positively influencing women's self-perception and societal roles [3]. By adopting inclusive representation strategies, fashion brands can enhance their brand perception and engage authentically with their audience, contributing to a more inclusive fashion industry.

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3.2 Influence of Plus-Size Representation

The inclusion of plus-size individuals in fashion advertisements plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing brand image. Studies show that exposure to plus-size models can improve mood and reduce body dissatisfaction, demonstrating the positive psychological impact of inclusive representation [1]. This effect extends to broader societal understandings of beauty, as evidenced by a Vogue cover analysis, which illustrates how plus-size representation can challenge stigmas and foster appreciation for diverse body types [4].

Figure 3 illustrates the influence of plus-size representation in fashion, focusing on its psychological impact, media representation, and consumer perceptions, highlighting key studies and findings in each area. The portrayal of women in 2019 advertisements as independent and diverse signifies a notable shift towards empowerment and inclusivity, reflecting a broader trend in the fashion industry to embrace body diversity [10]. This shift is further supported by celebrity figures advocating for body positivity, reshaping public perceptions and promoting acceptance of plus-size bodies in fashion and media [18].

Moreover, the correlation between anthropometric measures—such as Waist-to-Hip Ratio (WHR), Waist-to-Stature Ratio (WSR), and Waist-to-Bust Ratio (WBR)—and attractiveness rankings of plus-size models underscores the complexity of consumer perceptions regarding beauty standards [19]. These measures provide insights into how naturalistic environments influence attractiveness perceptions, suggesting that plus-size representation can challenge conventional norms.

Qualitative evidence from fashion blogs enhances our understanding of plus-size representation's influence on consumer perceptions. Bloggers use language to construct identities and challenge hegemonic discourses, contributing to a more inclusive narrative around body diversity [20]. This narrative empowers individuals and enhances the brand image of fashion companies that embrace diversity, positioning them as leaders in the movement towards inclusivity and authenticity.
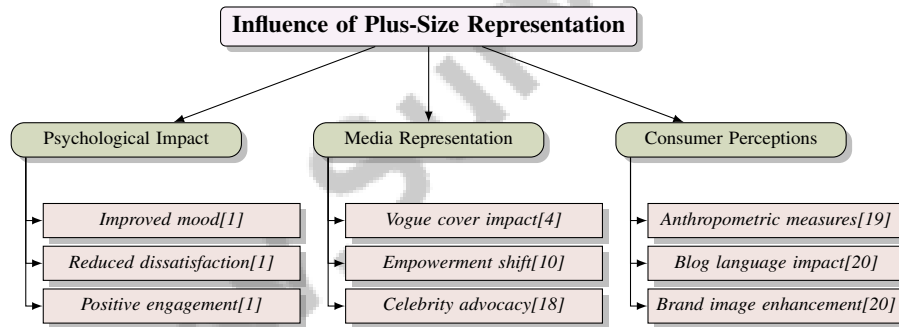

Figure 3: This figure illustrates the influence of plus-size representation in fashion, focusing on its psychological impact, media representation, and consumer perceptions, highlighting key studies and findings in each area.

Feature	Current Representation Strategies	Influence of Plus-Size Representation
Representation Strategy	Inclusive Portrayals	Plus-size Inclusion
Psychological Impact	Body Positivity	Reduced Dissatisfaction
Consumer Perception	Enhanced Engagement	Improved Brand Image

Table 1: This table presents a comparative analysis of current representation strategies and the impact of plus-size representation in fashion advertisements. It highlights key aspects such as inclusive portrayals, psychological effects like body positivity, and consumer perceptions including enhanced engagement and improved brand image. The table underscores the multifaceted approach required for effective and inclusive representation in the fashion industry.

4 Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intention

The relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase intentions is crucial for understanding identity formation in the context of fashion advertising. Insights into consumer perceptions of body

diversity highlight the need for inclusive marketing strategies that translate into actionable purchase intentions. The following subsection explores how consumer attitudes influence identity formation.

4.1 Consumer Attitudes and Identity Formation

Body diversity in fashion advertisements significantly influences consumer attitudes and identity formation, particularly for plus-size individuals. Research shows that plus-size portrayals can challenge traditional beauty norms and foster inclusivity, impacting consumer identity and attitudes [4]. Despite advancements, gaps remain, particularly for older and plus-size women, necessitating continued efforts towards genuine empowerment [3]. Advertising evolution is vital for promoting body positivity and countering narrow beauty ideals rooted in patriarchal structures.

Social factors are pivotal in the identity formation of plus-size individuals, who navigate societal expectations and stereotypes. Fashion blogs and social media serve as platforms for identity negotiation and empowerment, where individuals critique mainstream portrayals and advocate for body acceptance [6, 9, 16, 12]. These spaces enable the reclamation of identity and resistance against hegemonic beauty ideals.

Figure 4 illustrates the impact of body diversity on consumer attitudes and identity formation, highlighting the role of social factors and the benefits of plus-size representation in challenging beauty norms and promoting inclusivity. Plus-size representation in fashion events and advertisements enhances consumer satisfaction, emphasizing inclusivity's importance. By challenging conventional beauty norms, these representations promote broader societal acceptance of body diversity. Efforts to improve diverse representation in fashion advertising aim to redefine beauty standards and empower women, though challenges persist in representing underrepresented groups and avoiding unrealistic ideals [3, 2].
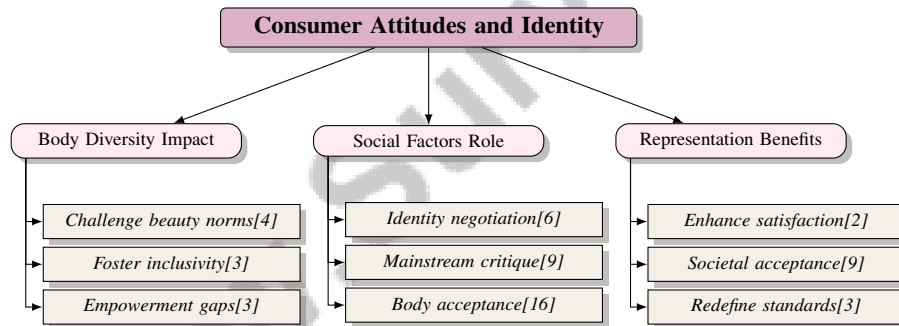

Figure 4: This figure illustrates the impact of body diversity on consumer attitudes and identity formation, highlighting the role of social factors and the benefits of plus-size representation in challenging beauty norms and promoting inclusivity.

4.2 Purchase Intentions and Visual Information

Visual representation in fashion advertising significantly impacts consumer purchase intentions by shaping perceptions and decision-making. The inclusion of diverse body types in visual media is crucial for meeting consumer expectations for inclusivity and authenticity. Approaches like M IND, which utilize multimodal methods to extract purchase intentions from Large Vision-Language Models (LVLMs), highlight the importance of integrating textual and visual information to align with consumer mental states [21].

This underscores the need for fashion brands to adopt inclusive visual strategies that authentically reflect diverse consumer identities. Recent studies indicate a rising demand for diverse representation in fashion advertising, where visibility of varied body types, ethnicities, and ages not only empowers women but aligns with consumer expectations for authenticity. Brands face challenges related to perceived authenticity and diverse appreciation levels among consumer groups [3, 2]. Advanced technologies analyzing consumer behavior can help brands tailor strategies to enhance engagement and drive purchase intentions.

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Incorporating diverse visual representations fosters positive consumer attitudes and brand loyalty, as consumers engage more with brands that reflect their values. As the fashion industry evolves, integrating diverse and positive visual representations in advertisements will be essential for influencing purchase intentions and promoting women's empowerment, while addressing societal perceptions of beauty and gender roles. This approach can enhance market success by appealing to a broader audience and aligning with rising consumer demands for authenticity and inclusivity [3, 2].

5 Plus-Size Representation and Brand Perception

5.1 Comparative Analysis of Brand Strategies

Analyzing brand strategies for plus-size representation reveals significant differences in consumer reception and effectiveness. Brands like Forever 21 exemplify inclusive advertising by featuring diverse body types, contrasting sharply with traditional methods that predominantly showcase slim models. This shift responds to growing consumer demand for diversity, enhancing brand perception and influencing purchase intentions positively [4].

Plus-size fashion blogs serve as pivotal platforms for identity construction and empowerment, challenging societal norms and mainstream beauty standards. These blogs foster community and self-acceptance among marginalized groups by reclaiming stigmatized terms, promoting a more inclusive narrative that resonates with diverse consumers. This movement not only counters marginalization but also advocates for equal representation, impacting societal perceptions of beauty and identity [22, 12, 2].

Including diverse body types in advertising fosters acceptance and sets industry standards, leading to increased consumer engagement and event attendance. Authenticity in marketing is underscored by public awareness campaigns that combat stigma and promote body diversity [4].

This analysis underscores the impact of inclusive advertising on consumer perceptions and brand success. Prioritizing diversity and authenticity enhances brand appeal and contributes to a more inclusive fashion industry, promoting broader acceptance of body diversity and empowering women through varied representations. Despite progress, challenges remain, particularly in representing older women and plus-size individuals. Addressing these gaps enables brands to reshape societal norms and foster a culture that values all forms of beauty [9, 18, 3, 2].

To illustrate the hierarchical structure of brand strategies focusing on inclusive advertising, the role of plus-size fashion blogs, and their societal impact, Figure 5 provides a visual representation. This figure highlights key elements such as diverse body representation, identity construction, and societal norm reshaping, further emphasizing the interconnectedness of these factors within the broader context of brand strategy and consumer engagement.
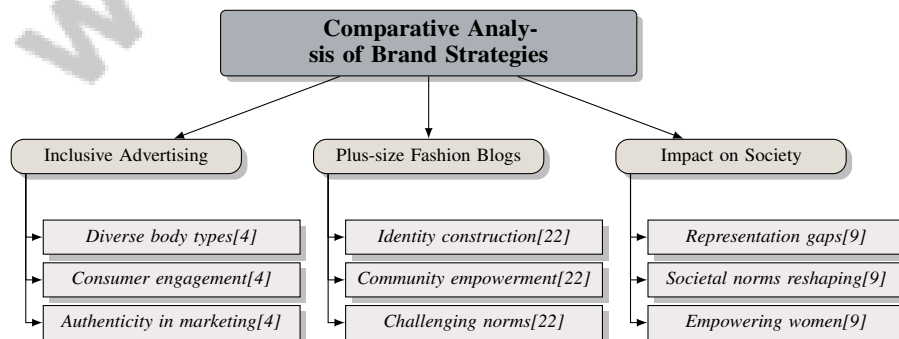
Figure 5: This figure illustrates the hierarchical structure of brand strategies focusing on inclusive advertising, the role of plus-size fashion blogs, and their societal impact. It highlights key elements such as diverse body representation, identity construction, and societal norm reshaping.

5.2 Brand Perception and Marketing Strategies

Integrating body diversity into marketing strategies is crucial for shaping brand perception and gaining a competitive edge in the fashion industry. Brands that showcase diverse body types are perceived as more inclusive and socially responsible, enhancing reputation and fostering consumer loyalty. This strategic alignment with societal values addresses the diverse identities and preferences of modern consumers [4].

Marketing strategies emphasizing authenticity and inclusivity resonate strongly with Generation Z, who prioritize these values in purchasing decisions. By featuring a variety of body types, brands build relatability and trust, essential for strong consumer relationships [17]. Using plus-size models challenges traditional beauty standards and promotes body positivity, positioning the brand as a leader in diversity and inclusivity [1].

The effectiveness of these strategies is amplified on digital platforms and social media, where consumer engagement is high. Brands leveraging these channels to promote body diversity achieve greater visibility and interaction, strengthening their market position [8]. Diverse representations in marketing attract broader audiences and encourage consumer advocacy, as individuals are more likely to support brands that reflect their values.

6 Generation Z Consumers

6.1 Generation Z Consumers and Inclusivity

Generation Z, defined by their digital nativeness and progressive outlook, demands inclusivity and diversity from brands, especially in the fashion sector. Their expectations extend beyond preference to a necessity for authentic representation of diverse identities and experiences in both advertising and product lines [7]. This cohort engages actively with brands on digital platforms, seeking meaningful portrayals that reflect their lived realities in a diverse society. They value brands that authentically depict a wide range of identities, including various ethnicities, body types, and gender expressions, emphasizing empowerment and authenticity [7, 3, 23, 2]. Brands that align with these values can foster strong loyalty and advocacy from Generation Z consumers.

This demand for inclusivity is intertwined with Generation Z's acute awareness of social and environmental issues, shaped by their digital upbringing and exposure to diverse perspectives. Their consumption patterns favor brands that not only demonstrate diversity but also prioritize sustainability and social justice [7, 3, 23, 2]. Consequently, brands that integrate these values into their strategies can enhance their appeal and secure a competitive edge.

6.2 Role of Digital Natives and Social Media

Social media and digital platforms significantly influence Generation Z's consumer behavior, transforming interactions with brands and purchasing decisions. This demographic, with its unparalleled access to information, is adept at navigating digital spaces and discerning authenticity in brand messaging [8]. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are crucial for self-expression and community building, facilitating the spread of diverse narratives and aligning with Generation Z's expectations for authenticity in advertising. Brands that leverage these platforms to showcase diverse body types and inclusive messages are more likely to engage Generation Z, who favor brands reflecting their values and social consciousness [17].

Moreover, the interactive nature of social media empowers Generation Z to actively participate in brand storytelling, fostering dynamic relationships with brands. This participatory culture enables them to influence brand strategies, demanding greater transparency and inclusivity in marketing practices. Brands that effectively engage Generation Z on social media can strengthen their market presence and cultivate a loyal consumer base advocating for their values and products [7].

7 Challenges and Opportunities

7.1 Challenges in Plus-Size Representation

The representation of plus-size individuals in fashion advertising faces significant challenges due to entrenched societal biases and industry norms. Prejudices against larger body sizes and their limited visibility in mainstream fashion media impede effective representation [22]. In places like South Korea, prevailing beauty standards that idealize thinness further hinder the acceptance of size-inclusive advertising [17].

Internalized societal beauty standards complicate identity formation for plus-size individuals, perpetuating stigma [12]. This stigma is exacerbated by weight bias and negative commentary on social media, which undermine the authenticity of body positivity movements [1]. Moreover, the commercialization of body positivity and the authenticity of celebrity role models present additional challenges for researchers and brands aiming for genuine inclusivity [18].

From an industry perspective, inadequate marketing practices and a lack of inclusive design in fashion events and public spaces exacerbate the limited representation of plus-size individuals. Physical barriers, such as insufficient seating and facilities, along with psychological barriers from underrepresentation, further marginalize this demographic [14]. Methodologically, research often lacks ecological validity, relying on controlled settings and small samples, limiting the applicability of findings to larger populations [19].

Current studies also fall short in representing all demographics, particularly older women and plus-size individuals, and fail to challenge unrealistic beauty standards [3]. Traditional discourses that marginalize non-conforming bodies continue to dominate aesthetic standards, presenting ongoing challenges [4]. Addressing these challenges requires efforts to dismantle stereotypes, promote inclusivity, and adopt comprehensive research methodologies that better represent the diverse plus-size population.

7.2 Opportunities for Inclusive Engagement

The evolving fashion advertising landscape presents significant opportunities for brands to engage consumers through inclusive strategies that emphasize diversity and authenticity. The intersectionality of plus-size identity across media contexts offers a promising avenue for future research, enabling nuanced and representative portrayals [6]. This approach can inform advertising strategies that resonate with a broader audience by acknowledging consumers' multifaceted identities.

Blogging has become a vital platform for plus-size women to build community and identity, showcasing the empowering potential of digital spaces for marginalized groups [22]. Brands can leverage this empowerment by collaborating with bloggers and influencers who advocate body positivity and inclusivity, thereby enhancing consumer engagement. Aligning with voices challenging traditional beauty norms allows brands to connect authentically with audiences seeking representation and relatability.

Inclusive advertising strategies that prioritize diverse body types not only enhance consumer engagement but also foster a sense of belonging and acceptance among audiences. Research shows that such approaches empower marginalized groups, as evidenced by increasingly positive portrayals of women in fashion advertising, encompassing a wider range of body types, ethnicities, and ages. This representation resonates with consumers, fostering authenticity and relatability while challenging conventional beauty standards. Brands adopting these inclusive practices may experience heightened consumer loyalty and positive brand perception, leading to increased sales and market success [8, 17, 12, 2, 3]. By showcasing diverse body sizes and shapes, brands can challenge societal beauty norms, promote a more inclusive narrative, and encourage consumer advocacy.

8 Conclusion

This survey underscores the significant strides made in the representation of plus-size women in fashion advertising, while also highlighting persistent challenges in achieving widespread acceptance and accurate portrayal of diverse body types. The expansion of the plus-size market presents opportunities, yet barriers remain, necessitating more inclusive approaches to enhance consumer

experiences. Beyond advertising, these challenges extend to broader societal contexts, underscoring the importance of ergonomic considerations in various environments to accommodate diverse body dimensions.

The research emphasizes the positive impact of body-positive media consumption in fostering self-representation and community, effectively challenging fat stigma and promoting a more inclusive narrative of body image. As societal perceptions of body diversity evolve, there is a pressing need to reconsider urban planning and societal norms to better include plus-size women.

Future research should focus on developing effective marketing strategies that embrace body diversity and explore the psychological impacts of representation in advertising. Expanding the portrayal of fat women across different media genres and examining the intersectionality of fatness with other identities are crucial steps toward advocating for body positivity and acceptance. Additionally, the intersection of technology and consumer behavior, especially among Generation Z, offers promising avenues to investigate emerging trends in ethical consumption and the role of social media in shaping advertising representations.

Furthermore, gaining insights into the perspectives of plus-size women and analyzing advertising strategies across various sectors will be vital for advancing inclusive representation. Addressing these areas will deepen the understanding of body diversity and its implications for consumer behavior and the broader fashion industry.

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