We believe there is a causal link between stereotypical advertising and lack of women’s confidence and perceptions of self-beauty. Traditional advertising frequently photoshops their images to create unrealistic standards of beauty. Women using these images as comparison to judge their own beauty are setting themselves up for failure.

To test this theory, we designed an experiment using randomization inference and discrete choice conjoint analysis. Subjects recruited from Mechanical Turk are shown a 30 second video advertisement. The treatment group’s video contains nonstereotypical models while the control group’s video contains stereotypical models. Assignment of treatment is blocked by gender and evenly split within each block. We are currently keeping men’s responses as a control scenario for comparison.

After treatment, subjects will rate their personal views on beauty and confidence then indicate their preference between a series of paired fake advertisement. The pairs will be similar except one (control) will feature a stereotypical model while the other (treatment) will feature a nonstereoptyical model. Personal views and basic demographic characteristics will be used as covariates for our randomization inference analysis; advertisement preference will be the results.

Using conjoint analysis experimentational design provides us the benefits of simulating a realistic choice and estimating real and hidden drivers which may not be apparent to the subjects themselves. Randomization inference allows us to determine the causal effect of treatment: does showing realistic models in advertisement improve women’s perception of beauty?

Completed work includes

* Developed our survey and conjoint tasks
* Collected sample feedback to test data collection output and survey stability
* Clearly defined our process and task division
  + Ashton: Mechanical Turk setup, analysis, and data cleanup
  + Olivier: Power calculations, analysis, and data cleanup
  + Lisa: ad designer, Qualtrics survey creation, writing, coordination

Current work includes

* Determining if the treatment effect is great enough to be observed
* Calculating sample size necessary for sufficient power
* Setting up our analysis pipeline using the sample data.

Future work includes

* Grant request (both official reimbursement request and email to professor with details)
* Submit survey to Mechanical Turk for test and for real data collection
* Perform actual analysis
* Write up paper and presentation

Requested advice

* What suggestions do you have for measuring a stronger treatment effect?
  + Showing a video ad that calls out beauty is biased in advertising?
  + Adding more conjoint analysis questions?
  + Updating the conjoint analysis pairs to be more extreme?
* Do you think keeping men’s responses would be an interesting comparison?