

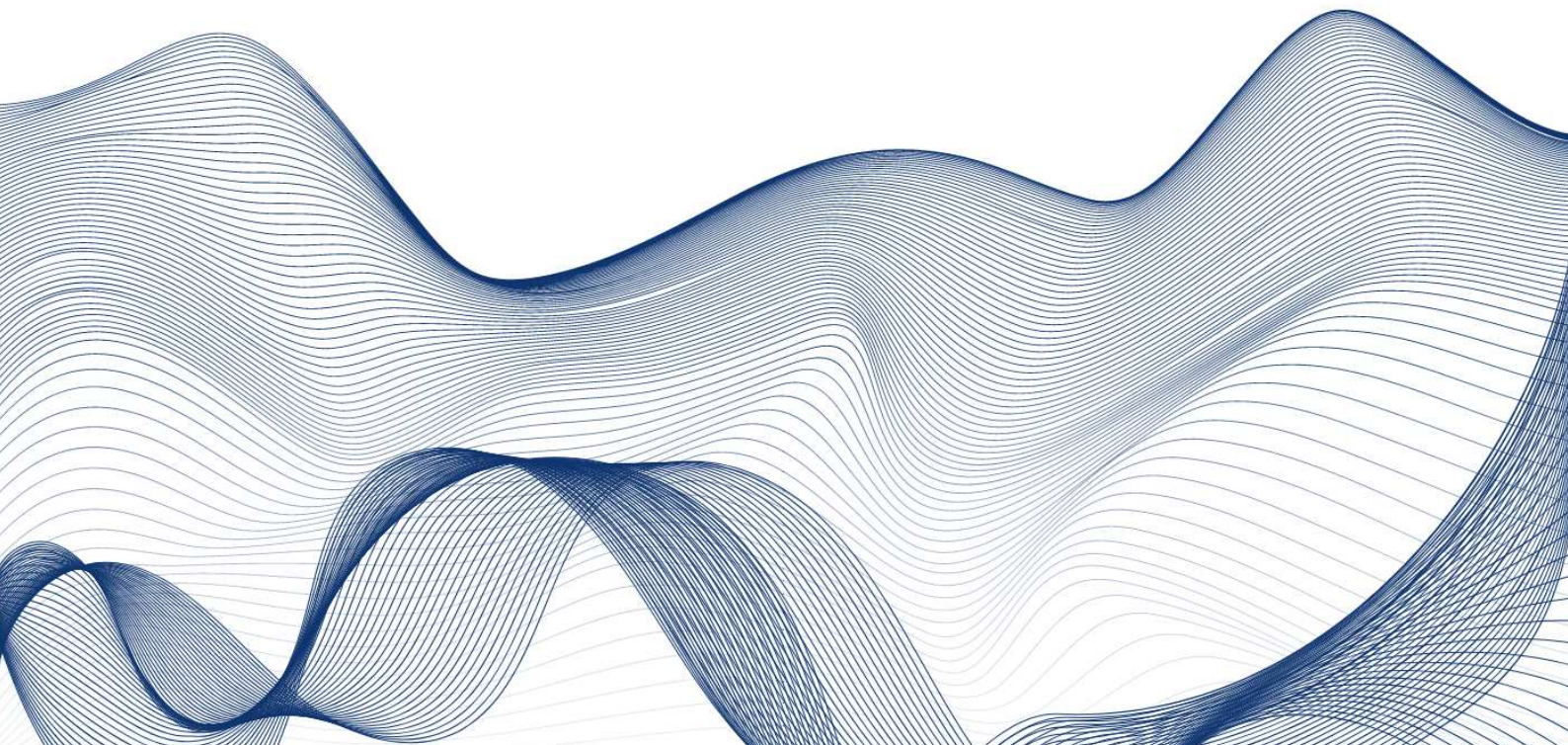
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Shaping Perceptions: The Intersection of Body-Positive Content and Social Media Literacy in Digital Marketing

JESSICA MESCHERITZKI

FIRST SUPERVISOR: DR. T. J. L. VAN ROMPAY
SECOND SUPERVISOR: DR. H. KIZGIN



Abstract

Purpose: This research explores the impact of body-positive comments and active participation on social networking sites (SNS) on users' body image and marketing responses, with a particular focus on the role of social media literacy (SML) in moderating these relationships.

Design/methodology/approach: A between-subjects experimental design was employed, involving 293 participants who passively viewed or actively interacted with branded Instagram content, which featured either neutral or body-positive comments. The study utilized a combination of quantitative measures, including a questionnaire on body image, marketing response, and SML, along with qualitative analysis of user comments, to assess the effects of the stimuli across different levels of participation and SML.

Findings: The findings reveal that body-positive comments positively influence users' attitudes towards purchasing on SNS. Active participation fosters positive body image in users with high levels of SML. However, no significant direct effect of active participation was found on marketing response, and unexpectedly, active participation negatively impacted body image among English-speaking participants. Several main effects of SML were found. The study underscores the importance of SML in enhancing users' SNS experience.

Practical implications: The results suggest that SML training could be a valuable intervention to improve users' engagement with body-positive content, potentially leading to better body image outcomes and more effective marketing campaigns. Educators and marketers are encouraged to incorporate SML principles into their practices to support healthier SNS use.

Originality/value: This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersection of digital marketing, SML, and body image, offering new insights into how users' interactions with SNS content can be optimized to promote well-being and consumer engagement. The research provides a foundation for future studies on the role of SML in moderating the effects of SNS content on users' psychological and behavioral responses.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BAS	Body Appreciation Scale
eWOM	Electronic Word-Of-Mouth
SML	Social Media Literacy
SNS	Social Networking Sites

1. Introduction

Social networking sites (SNS) are integral to daily life for many (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021), with 94.3% of adult internet users accessing the platforms monthly (Kemp, 2024). SNS have evolved into spaces where individuals grow their relationships, express their identities, and acquire knowledge about the world (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; RSPH, 2017). At the same time, global studies reveal complex relationships between SNS and mental health. While self-expression and social connectivity are positive aspects of SNS, significant percentages of users report negative impacts on self-esteem (5 to 19%) and body image (7 to 25%) (Coe et al., 2023). These figures do not include minors, who often exhibit extreme SNS use, with some reported to be using it “almost constantly” (Vogels et al., 2022, para. 5). Much of SNS’ negative impact can be traced to the often unrealistic featured content (Valkenburg, 2022). Although this issue is not unique to SNS and exists in traditional media, SNS allow users to rapidly consume those idealized images in large quantities, often in less regulated environments (Tiggemann & Velissaris, 2020).

The body positivity movement is a response to persistent beauty ideals, aiming to promote acceptance, inclusivity, and a broader definition of beauty (Cohen et al., 2019). This movement seeks to move beyond digitally enhanced portrayals of perfection by showcasing authentic individuals on SNS. Supporters emphasize body appreciation, body love, and inner positivity in their content, showcasing real individuals with diverse body types and highlighting imperfect features like cellulite or blemishes (Cohen et al., 2019; Rodgers et al., 2022; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b). The body positivity movement has gained online popularity since 2014, peaking during the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscores its importance in addressing societal needs during times of stress and heightened digital media usage (Czeisler et al., 2020; Parcell et al., 2023). This rise in content promoting self-care and acceptance signifies a crucial shift in the societal discourse surrounding digital marketing and beauty standards. Since SNS can serve as powerful platforms for health information dissemination and mental health support (Coe et al., 2023), it is vital to understand the dynamics and impact of the movement.

Individuals, content creators, and brands play a crucial role in growing the body positivity movement, as evidenced by the numerous related posts on platforms like Instagram (*Body Positive*, n.d.; *Body Positive Movement*, n.d.; *Body Positivity*, n.d.; *Bopo*, n.d.). Nevertheless, research on body positivity is scarce and results are ambiguous. Some findings hint to positive effects on consumers’ self-perception, mood, and body satisfaction (Dhadly et al., 2023), while others suggest potential links to self-objectification (Vendemia et al., 2021)

or body dissatisfaction (Rupp & McCoy, 2023). Initial study results suggest that exposure to non-idealized images on SNS encourages users to reevaluate societal beauty norms, fostering a more inclusive understanding of beauty. The unexpectedness of body-positive content captures attention, leading to deeper contemplation and engagement with diverse beauty representations (De Lenne et al., 2023; Rodgers et al., 2022). To guide future developments within the body positivity movement, it is essential to understand how these postings impact users' self-view and their responses to branded content.

While social interactivity is a defining feature of SNS (Fatt & Fardouly, 2023), the influence of comments, as opposed to images, on the effectiveness of body-positive content remains unclear. When images and captions are presented together, they can create a more comprehensive and nuanced message (Rietveld et al., 2020). Images capture initial attention and evoke immediate responses, while captions and comments provide deeper context, modifying or reinforcing the initial impression. Moreover, commenting amplifies cognitive processing by activating critical thinking and personal engagement (Rietveld et al., 2020). This active participation fosters social interaction, validation, and attention, increasing the impact and memorability of posts, and potential positive effects on self-view. Participation also brings commercial benefits, as algorithms favor posts with high engagement rates (Ciampaglia et al., 2018). However, there is a lack of research targeting the impact of comments specifically. It is worth investigating how the effect changes when consumers read comments (passive participation) versus write them (active participation).

As SNS continue to shape societal perspectives, their impact on users remains an understudied domain. It is important to investigate the variables that drive established effects to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms. One such variable is social media literacy (SML), which involves critical thinking skills needed to engage on SNS successfully, serving as a lens through which content is understood (Rodgers et al., 2022; Tamplin et al., 2018). The present study aims to bridge the research gap by exploring potential relationships between engagement with body-positive posts and individual body image and marketing response, while considering the role of SML in these relationships. By means of a 2 (comments: neutral vs body-positive) by 2 (participation: active vs passive) by 2 (SML: low vs high) between-subject experiment, this research seeks to answer the following question: *“To what extent do body-positive comments and active participation impact viewers' body image and marketing response, and what is the role of individuals' social media literacy in these relationships?”*

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are interactive digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange user-generated content within personal networks (Perloff, 2014; Tsitsika et al., 2014). Content includes information, knowledge, opinions, photographs, and videos (Park et al., 2015). SNS encompass different types of platforms, including interpersonal communication tools (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), content communities (e.g., Wikipedia), and multimedia platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram) (Kizgin et al., 2019). Unlike traditional media channels, SNS facilitate real-time interaction among users and their content allowing for active participation in digital discourse which fosters connections between users (Perloff, 2014; Tsitsika et al., 2014). This peer-orientation is evident when considering the audience on SNS to be individuals similar to the creators rather than an anonymous mass. These platforms assist individuals and firms in communication and relationship building, thereby fulfilling human needs for socialization (Kizgin et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2015). Unlike face-to-face interactions, SNS interactions are editable, accessible, develop asynchronously, and display limited social-contextual cues (Walther, 2017). Consequently, they carry the potential to uniquely influence communication processes and social dynamics.

2.1.1 Personal Motivation for Using Social Networking Sites

Several motivations, which drive SNS use, incidentally align with human identity needs (Masciantonio & Bourguignon, 2023). Particularly Instagram serves diverse purposes beyond merely sharing personal events or opinions (Kocak et al., 2020). Key motivations include documentation, surveillance of others, creativity, entertainment, and coolness (Kocak et al., 2020; Masciantonio & Bourguignon, 2023; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Documentation involves archiving personal memories and events, like a digital souvenir album. Surveillance includes observing other users, following, liking posts, and staying updated with peers. Creativity describes users' showcasing of talents through filters, captions, and hashtags. Entertainment, the strongest predictor of use intensity, involves using SNS for enjoyment and relaxation (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Coolness is the desire for popularity, self-promotion, and belonging, as reflected in likes, comments, followers, and shares (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). These performance indicators represent social support of others potentially positively impacting users' self-esteem and self-worth (Baumeister & Leary, 2017; Diefenbach & Anders, 2022; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

2.1.2 Commercial Use of Social Networking Sites

From a different perspective, SNS are used to promote and sell products and services (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Mahmoud, 2014). Brands assess campaign effectiveness using performance indicators such as click-through rates, and reach (*Marketing Metrics*, n.d.). However, these metrics do not depict consumer attitudes and behaviors, as they do not adequately reflect the impact on consumers' decision-making processes (Alalwan, 2018; Hall, 2022). Purchase intention offers a more substantial measure of marketing effectiveness since it is a direct determinant of customers' purchasing behavior, as explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). The relationship was also shown in experimental studies (e.g., Romadhoni et al., 2023).

Purchase intention is defined as the likelihood that users are willing to purchase or will plan to purchase a product or service because of the advertising presented by a given medium (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2011). It is shaped by various factors including perceived interactivity, especially on SNS. Interactivity refers to the dynamic communication process on SNS, which allows users to engage with content and other users conveniently, and collect relevant information to make purchasing decisions (Jiang et al., 2010; Sreejesh et al., 2020). Interactivity on an "on-demand basis" (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022, p. 7) transforms users into equal participants in the communication efforts, leading to more personalized and engaging experiences. This engagement enables users to process information more rationally and build brand trust, which subsequently stimulates purchase intention (Salhab et al., 2023; Sreejesh et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Marketing on SNS fosters strong personal and interactive social and parasocial relationships which manifest in captions, comments, likes, and shares. This collective activity, known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), encompasses users' positive, negative, or neutral expressions about a company or its products and services, shared through digital media within their networks. (Romadhoni et al., 2023; Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019). Other users can view, reflect, and act upon these reviews, using them as reference points for purchasing decisions (Onofrei et al., 2022; Salhab et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2020).

eWOM benefits brands by helping spread information about their products and services, while also encouraging sharing among friends and acquaintances (Salhab et al., 2023). Sharing information and connecting with others helps build relationships and loyalty with consumers, while fostering a sense of community around the brand (Pham & Gammoh, 2015; Zhao et al., 2020). In turn, this cultivates trust, which is crucial for purchasing decisions

on SNS (Romadhoni et al., 2023). In addition, comments and posted experiences serve as earned marketing content that resonates with potential customers (Burcher, 2012). This authentic eWOM enhances brand visibility and perceived credibility (Hutter et al., 2013), which increases brand trust and source confidence, thereby raising purchase intention and facilitating information adoption (Dabbous et al., 2020; Onofrei et al., 2022).

2.1.4 Social Media Literacy

Social media literacy (SML) is a multidimensional construct grounded in traditional media literacy, aiming to equip users with the skills needed to engage with SNS healthily, responsibly, and in alignment with personal values (Aufderheide, 1993; Rodgers et al., 2024). Traditional media literacy skills involve accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating media content. Models of SML extend on this understanding by focusing on the interactive nature of SNS, including technological functionalities, machine learning's role in content distribution, opportunities for user-generated content, and the similarities of commercial and non-commercial content (Paxton et al., 2022; Pfaff-Rüdiger & Riesmeyer, 2016; Rodgers et al., 2024). In other words, SML skills enable users to consume content purposefully, employ protective filtering, and interpret content critically (Rodgers et al., 2024).

Given the prevalence of appearance-focused content in most media types and its comparatively harmful effects on self-view and body image (De Valle et al., 2021), it is crucial for users to develop sufficient skills to recognize the unrealistic nature of these images and understand the potential commercial motivation behind the material (Rodgers et al., 2024). In an attempt to address the missing research attention towards appearance-focused content on photo-based SNS, Rodgers et al. (2024) review the empirical understanding of SML and its role in mitigating body image issues. They explain that users are caught in a negative cycle where platforms monitor engagement to suggest related content, while users also actively seek and receive external validation from network reactions through interactions. Effective SML skills can disrupt this cycle by (1) damping the internalization of unrealistic ideals, (2) creating a mental distance from the postings, reducing the likelihood of harmful appearance comparisons, (3) demotivating users from engaging with appearance-focused content, and (4) encouraging users to post diverse types of content with intentions other than receiving external validation.

2.2 Critical View on Instagram Use

Instagram, one of the most popular SNS (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022), is mainly used for sharing photos and videos to gain attention or promote products and services (Alalwan et al., 2017; Yau & Reich, 2019). In its essence, SNS act as levelers, providing opportunities for

authentic online behavior which leads to acceptance and normalization, and positively affects well-being (Reinecke & Trepte, 2014). However, image-based SNS can make users feel inadequate in their lives and bodies (Chou & Edge, 2012). This may be because Instagram users often present enhanced versions of themselves, highlighting positive traits over more authentic representations (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Reinecke & Trepte, 2014; Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). In addition, the availability of filters and editing tools on Instagram makes it easy to post enhanced content, which contributes to the lack of authentic portrayals on the platform. This practice creates unattainable standards for viewers, inducing pressures and desires to look perfect on SNS, especially when confronted with thin ideals (Chua & Chang, 2016; Cohen et al., 2019; Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). In fact, Instagram users tend to score higher on measures of body dissatisfaction, internalization of thin ideals, and self-objectification compared to non-users (Couture Bue & Harrison, 2020).

2.2.2 Body Image

Body image is a multifaceted construct that extends beyond mere concerns about body weight and shape (Grogan, 2021). It encompasses behavioral, affective, and cognitive elements (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b) and can be conceptualized as a fluid mental representation of one's body shape, form, and size, influenced by historical, cultural, social, individual, and biological factors (Slade, 1994). Body image involves both the perception of one's physical appearance and the emotions and attitudes toward the body, shaped by societal standards, personal ideals, and self-acceptance (Rodgers et al., 2022).

Body appreciation is a central element of body image (Linardon et al., 2023; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a), as it represents a person's active acceptance and positive evaluation of their own body. It involves embracing and respecting the physical appearance while purposefully rejecting societal beauty ideals (Avalos et al., 2005). Moreover, body appreciation involves using cognitive processes to protect and promote a positive self-view (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010), and critiquing and resisting unrealistic imagery in the media (Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012; Swami, Hadji-Michael, et al., 2008). Body appreciation is associated with various positive dimensions of psychological well-being, including self-esteem, optimism, proactive coping, positive affect, life satisfaction, and self-compassion. Above this, body appreciation's inverse relationships with negative factors like body dissatisfaction, social physique anxiety, body shame, body surveillance, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals underscore its protective effects against body image-related outcomes (Avalos et al., 2005; Swami, Stieger, et al., 2008; Tylka, 2013; Tylka & Kroon Van Diest, 2013; Wasylikiw et al., 2012).

2.2.3 Social Comparisons

It is unlikely that body image concerns arise directly from SNS use; instead, they are likely linked through social comparisons (Pomery et al., 2012). Social Comparison Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, achievements, and attributes to others (Festinger, 1954). If objective benchmarks are unavailable, people focus on factors like performance, success, and health (Festinger, 1954; Wood, 1989). While individuals evaluate their standing relative to others, their self-esteem, motivation, and emotional well-being are shaped by obtained information (Mussweiler, 2003; Ozimek, Brandenburg, et al., 2023). Social comparisons occur in three forms: upward, with individuals comparing themselves to those seen as superior; downward, where comparisons are made with those perceived as inferior; and lateral, involving comparisons with similar others.

Social Comparison Theory takes on a new dimension in the realm of SNS as users are bombarded with a constant stream of curated content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which encourages them to engage in upward comparisons with idealized images (Cohen et al., 2021; Rodgers et al., 2022). Image-based SNS are particularly dangerous in this respect, because users tend to post and engage with appearance-focused content frequently (Couture Bue, 2020; Engeln et al., 2020; Karsay et al., 2021; Vandenbosch et al., 2022). This content may lead users to internalize narrow beauty ideals and make harmful upward comparisons, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and detrimental effects on mental health (Rodgers et al., 2022; Rousseau, 2023). Given the challenges presented by image-based SNS, it becomes crucial to explore how these platforms can become safe environments for creators and consumers.

2.3 Body Positivity

Body-positive content is becoming increasingly popular on Instagram and has the potential to protect consumers against the negative influences of body postings conveniently through “micro interventions” (Cowles et al., 2023, p. 121; Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2019; Tylka, 2012). By promoting self-acceptance and challenging the dominant beauty ideals, body-positive messages extend user’s conceptualization of beauty and encourages them to create networks of people who respect and appreciate all bodies (Z. Brown & Tiggemann, 2020; Cohen et al., 2019). Involvement in such communities improves body appreciation and reduces user’s vulnerability to body dissatisfaction (Paraskeva et al., 2017). Recognizing the potential dangers of their posts, some influencers have started using their captions to directly discuss body image (Z. Brown & Tiggemann, 2020). This shift indicates a growing awareness

of the harmful effects of idealized images and a turn towards body positivity, suggesting a benefit of more thoughtful and elaborated postings.

2.3.1 Role of Captions and Comments

Captions and comments give context to the pictures and influence the extent to which users idealize the portrayed individuals (H. M. Kim, 2021). They act as bandwagon cues, leading users to align their attitudes toward a post with the sentiment expressed in the comment section (Sundar, 2008; Waddell & Sundar, 2017). Consequently, captions and comments impact body image perceptions either positively by mitigating concerns or negatively by decreasing body appreciation (Cohen et al., 2019; H. M. Kim, 2021). Given the novelty of this research direction, there are some uncertainties. For instance, there is no consensus whether images, captions, comments, or combinations of these elements are required to positively influence body image (Cowles et al., 2023; Tiggemann et al., 2020). Some studies suggest that body-positive captions can enhance women's body esteem more effectively than fitspiration and neutral captions (Davies et al., 2020). However, adhering to the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words," it is plausible that images would carry the most power of the posting (Tiggemann, 2022). Reactions to body-positive content could also be dependent on the style of the image, the sincerity of the caption, and the congruence between the two (Manning & Mulgrew, 2022). To illustrate, body-positive captions from thin creators have been received negatively, because it seemed disingenuous and not credible (Tiggemann et al., 2020). Consumers like and interact more positively with congruent body-positive content compared to thin ideal accounts (Cowles et al., 2023). This suggests that body positivity interventions can be effective in stimulating positive engagement.

2.3.2 Cognitive Dissonance-Based Interventions

Given the protective powers of positive body image, it is important to develop supporting interventions. A promising route are interventions based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) which "are designed to engage participants in counter-attitudinal activities that require them to verbally and behaviorally challenge the thin ideal" (Halliwel & Diedrichs, 2019, p. 361). By challenging a person's self-concept, these interventions are more effective and sustainable in changing behavior towards socially favorable outcomes than educational measures (Nguyen et al., 2022; Stice et al., 2008). For reference, cognitive dissonance-based interventions are associated with reduced negative affect, body dissatisfaction, disordered eating tendencies, and thin-ideal internalization (T. A. Brown & Keel, 2015; Jankowski et al., 2017; Stice et al., 2008). In addition, these interventions can be effectively scaled and integrated into larger systems, making them particularly suitable for

implementation on SNS (Becker et al., 2006). Halliwell and Diedrichs' (2019) outlined eight key intervention activities aimed at enhancing positive body image: “(1) defining and challenging the thin ideal; (2) considering the costs of pursuing the thin ideal; (3) writing letters and engaging in role plays to discourage others from pursuing the thin ideal; (4) identifying and discussing positive aspects of one’s own appearance and character; (5) practicing ways to avoid fat talk; (6) engaging in behavioral challenges; (7) discussing and engaging in social activism to tackle appearance pressures; and (8) a self-affirmation exercise” (p. 364).

2.4 Engagement in Social Networking Sites

Communication is an inherently active process. Consequently, engagement in SNS, which serve as essential channels for concurrent communication, is also inherently active. However, not all behaviors on these platforms are truly active (Ozimek, Brandenburg, et al., 2023; Valkenburg, 2022). Directed one-on-one exchanges are highly active behaviors, whereas behaviors low in activity involve “monitoring the online life of other users without engaging in direct exchanges with them” (Valkenburg, 2022, p. 531). Accordingly, users can also be grouped into active participants and passive consumers. Even though most users will fall somewhere in between, this categorization is helpful for understanding the implications of the different engagement types (Verduyn et al., 2017). Instagram offers various modes of user engagement ranging from passively consuming through browsing to actively participating by creating and sharing original content, liking, commenting, sharing, and engaging in discussions or online communities (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Verduyn et al., 2017). Motivations for active participation include self-expression, maintaining social connections, and influencing others, while passive engagement often stems from information-seeking and entertainment (Kocak et al., 2020; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Active participation has been linked to improved mental health (Meier & Reinecke, 2021), whereas passive consumption was not (Primack et al., 2017). This dichotomy suggests that the mode of SNS use plays a vital role in determining its psychological impact.

2.4.1 Self-Determination Theory in the Context of Active SNS Use

Active participation is associated with positive mental health outcomes, including higher levels of satisfaction and reduced symptoms of depression and loneliness (Meier & Reinecke, 2021). This positive impact can be understood through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, which posits that well-being and motivation are driven by the fulfillment of three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy is experienced by users through the freedom to create and share

content that reflects their values and preferences. The ability to independently decide what to post and how to interact on SNS gives them a sense of control and ownership over their online presence. This autonomy is essential for overall well-being and self-esteem, as it empowers users to express themselves authentically and make meaningful contributions to their online communities (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). Similarly, content creation plays a central role in self-expression and identity formation. Users meticulously construct their online personas through the content they share, which potentially influences their self-perceptions and shapes social dynamics within their virtual communities (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Ballara, 2023). This process of creating and sharing content fulfills the need for competence, as positive feedback and successful interactions validate users' skills and efforts, reinforcing their confidence and contributing to a positive body image (Reinecke & Trepte, 2014; Valkenburg et al., 2017).

In addition, active participation also involves interacting with the content of others, mainly through liking and commenting, fostering a sense of community and facilitating a virtual dialogue (Haimson & Hoffmann, 2016). Sharing on SNS also gives visibility and validation to issues and experiences. For example, marginalized bodies that are often underrepresented gain recognition within body-positive communities (Cohen et al., 2019). This interaction fulfills the need for relatedness as connecting with others and receiving social support satisfies the fundamental human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Burke et al., 2011). Unlike traditional media, SNS uniquely present comments alongside the original post (H. M. Kim, 2021), creating a frame for the post, providing additional emotional and explanatory information, and guiding viewers' perception of the posting (H. M. Kim, 2021; Rietveld et al., 2020). By fulfilling these three fundamental needs, active participation on SNS can enhance users' mental health and body image, highlighting the importance of cultivating supportive and engaging online environments.

2.4.2 Purchase Intention from Active Participation in Body-Positive Marketing

Active participation in body-positive SNS marketing significantly influences purchase intention by fostering support and community, which positively affects the relationships between consumers and peers, brands, and products (Romadhoni et al., 2023; Salhab et al., 2023). Interactions also elicit feelings of happiness and enjoyment which increase buying behavior (Chen et al., 2022). Purchasing on SNS (i.e., social commerce) involves two key elements: the presence of online communities, which enrich social relationships, and interactivity. This allows customers to express themselves and share information with and about brands (Dabbous et al., 2020; Y. A. Kim & Srivastava, 2007; Parise & Guinan, 2008).

Consequently, consumers rely more on information shared by their peers than solely on brand messages during their decision-making process (Chi, 2011; Dabbous et al., 2020). Active participation also shapes users' perceptions of the content, influencing subsequential attitudes and evaluations. This shift underscores the importance of active participation, as consumers trust and are influenced by authentic, user-generated content within these online communities. This highlights the vital role of body-positive marketing strategies on SNS in shaping consumer behavior and brand relationships. By actively participating, users co-create content that is appealing to potential consumers, leading to increased brand trust and loyalty, ultimately driving purchase intentions (Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Onofrei et al., 2022; Rialti et al., 2017).

Active participation is grounded in Service-Dominant Logic which explains that value co-creation occurs through collaborative interactions and integration of intangible resources (i.e., experiences, ideas, feedback). This serves as a competitive advantage (Hao, 2020), as users shape products and services directly, making them more personalized and relevant (Filieri, 2013; Onofrei et al., 2022; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Engagement with user-generated content builds trust and value within the social networks, enhances perceived value and satisfaction with the brand, and increases purchase intentions (Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970; Shaw et al., 2011). This collaborative creation of value not only strengthens the consumer-brand relationship but also leverages the collective knowledge and experiences of the community, resulting in high-quality, trustworthy content that drives purchase decisions (Teichmann et al., 2015).

2.4.3 Passive Participation on SNS

Passive use of SNS, i.e., browsing without actively participating, has been linked to positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, users can experience positive feelings elicited through flow, a state of total immersion in the task driven by curiosity, enjoyment, time-distortion, focused attention, and telepresence (Ozimek, Brailovskaia, et al., 2023). Additionally, passive browsing can induce enjoyment through the Emotional Contagion Phenomenon, where users absorb positive emotions from viewing uplifting content (Lin & Utz, 2015; Valkenburg et al., 2021). However, passive consumption also presents negative outcomes, such as fostering social comparisons and encouraging addictive SNS behaviors (Brailovskaia et al., 2019; Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014; Sun & Zhang, 2021). Verduyn et al. (2015) studied the effects of active and passive Facebook use on subjective well-being. They found that affective well-being declined by five percent after passive use because of increased envy. In addition, passive participation was found to contribute to depressive

symptoms through high social comparisons and low self-esteem (Frison & Eggermont, 2017, 2020; Ozimek, Brailovskaia, et al., 2023).

Passive consumers' purchasing behavior can be influenced by contrasting emotional states, such as enjoyment or depression (Chen et al., 2022). Users feeling joy while scrolling SNS content may develop a heightened urge to make impulse purchases and evaluate the products more positively leading to increased purchase intentions (Ning Shen & Khalifa, 2012; Valkenburg et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2016). Conversely, users can also perceive this urge to impulse buy when they are unhappy or depressed. Their purchasing behavior is then considered a result of lowered rational processing (Raghunathan & Pham, 1999) or means to cope with negative emotions (Chen et al., 2022; Silvera et al., 2008). These opposing mechanisms highlight the complexity of purchasing intentions and underscore the importance of further studies, especially for marketers aiming to leverage SNS platforms for effective consumer engagement and sales strategies.

2.5 The Present Study

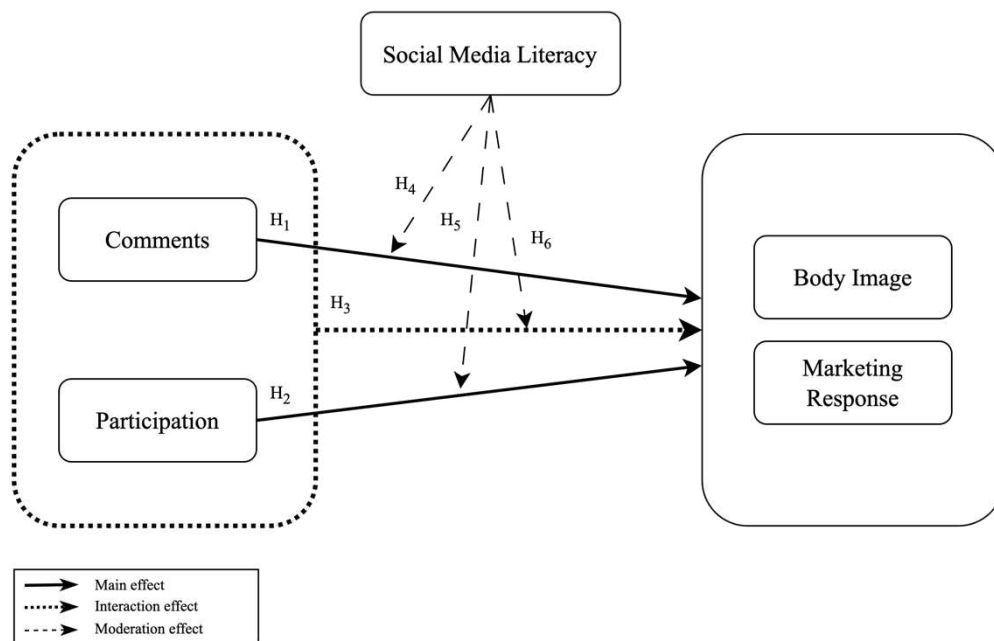
The purpose of the present study is to examine how body positivity, expressed in comments, and active participation influence users' body image and marketing responses, while considering the role of SML in these relationships. Firstly, it is expected that body-positive, as compared to neutral, comments positively influence body image and marketing responses (H_{1a} , H_{1b}). Secondly, it is hypothesized that active participation positively impacts the dependent variables (H_{2a} , H_{2b}). Thirdly, the interaction of the two factors is expected (H_3). Lastly, a moderation effect of SML is expected on all previously described relationships (H_4 , H_5 , H_6). See table 1 and figure 1 for an overview.

Table 1
Overview of Hypotheses

#	Hypotheses
H _{1a}	Body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments will increase body image evaluation.
H _{1b}	Body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments will increase marketing responses.
H _{2a}	Active, as opposed to passive, participation will increase body image evaluation.
H _{2b}	Active, as opposed to passive, participation will increase marketing responses.
H ₃	The predicted effects of body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger for individuals who actively, as opposed to passively, participate.
H ₄	The predicted effects of body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.
H ₅	The predicted effects of active or passive participation on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.
H ₆	The predicted effects of active, as opposed to passive, participation and body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



3. Method

For this study, a 2 (comments: neutral vs body-positive) by 2 (participation: active vs passive) by 2 (social media literacy: low vs high) between-subject experiment was conducted. To this end, eight experimental groups were created to test four different fictional Instagram postings. Participants were asked to fill out a survey to measure the effect of the stimuli on body image and marketing response. The experimental setup and questionnaire remained the

same throughout the six conditions to ensure a high level of reliability. To contextualize the experimental data, comments from the active condition and additional remarks were analyzed.

3.1 Pretest

3.1.1 Procedure

A pretest was conducted to select the comments for the conditions. To this end, a survey on Qualtrics was created which was accessible on all computers and mobile devices. Once participants entered the survey, they were prompted with a brief description of the pretest and its purpose. Then they were asked to give consent and informed that they could withdraw at any time without having to provide a reason. Once informed consent was obtained, participants were prompted with eight sets of comments. Each set corresponded to one category of Halliwell and Diedrichs' (2019) promising interventions to improve body image and included five potential comments. Participants were then asked to sort each set of comments according to their perceived realism. Once all comments were sorted, participants were thanked for their participation. The pretest took approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

3.1.2 Results

Eight participants completed the survey, but one response was deleted because it was incomplete. The data was downloaded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Since each respondent had to rank the comments according to realism (scale 1 to 5), lower numbers represented the most realistic comments, and high numbers represented the least realistic comments. Averages were calculated for each comment to determine the most realistic comments. The pretest led to the inclusion of the comments presented in Table 2. The full list of comments with the averages can be found in Appendix A1.

Table 2

Comments Defined Through the Pre-test

Intervention Activities ^a	Comments
Identifying and discussing positive aspects	Wearing these shorts, all I focus on is how strong I feel. What about you? 🌟💪
Defining and challenging the thin ideal	Real talk: these pics made me rethink what's considered 'ideal'. Real bodies, real confidence. 🍑👏
Discussing and engaging in social activism	Love that this brand is more than just clothing – it's a movement towards diversity and acceptance. Thoughts? 🌍👊
A self-affirmation exercise	These shorts are my reminder to affirm the positive aspects of my body. How do you practice self-affirmation? 🌈💖

Note. ^a Adapted from Halliwell and Diedrichs (2019, p. 364).

3.2 Participants

404 responses were collected, however, 111 had to be excluded from analysis as they were incomplete and therefore not suitable for analysis (less than 90% completeness). 293 responses were included in the analysis. The distribution across languages was nearly even (49.4% English vs 53.6% German). The average age of participants was 27 years ($SD = 6.7$). The majority of respondents were female (58.4%), 38.9 percent were male, one percent identified as non-binary or third gender or trans male. Over two thirds of the research sample are university graduates. Table 4 shows more information about the participants (conditions with identical stimuli are paired). Majority of respondents belong to the demographic that spends a lot of time on social networking sites (SNS). In fact, participants reported to spend 110.6 minutes (about 2 hours) on SNS daily. Table 3 gives an overview of the platforms respondents use regularly.

The sample was randomly distributed across all eight conditions. The distribution was independent of age, $F(7, 181) = 1.170, p = .32$, gender identity, $\chi^2(28, N = 292) = 24.58, p = .65$, educational level, $\chi^2(28, N = 293) = 39.11, p = .08$, and language used, $\chi^2(7, N = 293) = 3.13, p = .87$.

Table 3

Platform Use of Participations

Platform	n	%
Instagram	257	87.7
YouTube	229	78.2
LinkedIn	118	40.3
Facebook	107	36.5
TikTok	81	27.6
Snapchat	74	25.3
Pinterest	63	21.5
X / Twitter	45	15.4
Reddit	39	13.3
Dating apps	39	13.3
BeReal	27	9.2
WeChat	2	0.7
Threads	2	0.7

Note. All platforms mentioned less than twice are excluded from this table.

3.3 Materials

3.3.1 Stimuli

The study tested the effects of body-positive Instagram posts promoting shorts of the fictional athleisure brand “aero” (Figure 2 – 5). All stimuli were designed in English and German to broaden the pool of respondents and create the most comfortable setting for respondents possible (see Appendix B for the German stimuli). Each condition showed a carousel post with three images: the first image showed a curvy female model posing in front of a skyline, the second image showed a female and a male model with regular body types wearing boxing gear, and the third image showed a male model riding a skateboard. The general design of all conditions was the same. They all had the same brand name and logo and equal number of likes. Conditions 1, 2, 5, and 6 had a neutral caption by the brand and neutral comments by fictional users. Conditions 3, 4, 7, and 8 had a body-positive caption from a brand and body-positive comments by fictional users. The body-positive comments are adapted from the cognitive dissonance-based intervention activities proposed by Halliwell and Diedrichs (2019). Some “not-intervention” comments were mixed into the comment sections to increase realism. Postings from the active participation conditions (i.e., 2, 4, 6, and 8) also included a comment bar, indicating the ability to add a comment. This comment bar was absent from the passive conditions.

Table 4*Descriptive Information of the Sample per Condition*

Characteristics	Neutral Comments								Body Positive Comments							
	Passive Participation				Active Participation				Passive Participation				Active Participation			
	Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML	
	1		5		2		6		3		7		4		8	
Condition ^a	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Language																
English	21	44.7	14	45.2	15	42.9	15	40.5	16	43.2	21	52.5	13	44.8	21	56.8
German	26	55.3	17	54.8	20	57.1	22	59.5	21	56.8	19	47.5	16	55.2	16	43.2
Gender																
Male	14	30.4	14	45.2	15	42.9	13	35.1	13	35.1	17	42.5	14	48.3	14	37.8
Female	30	65.2	16	51.6	20	57.1	24	64.9	24	64.9	21	52.5	14	48.3	22	59.5
Third Gender/ Nonbinary	2	4.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.7
Other	0	0	1	3.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.5	1	3.4	0	0
Education																
High School	6	12.8	12	38.7	8	22.9	11	29.7	7	18.9	9	22.5	8	27.6	5	13.5
Vocational Education	2	4.3	1	3.2	3	8.6	1	2.7	0	0	1	2.5	2	6.9	3	8.1
Bachelor's Degree	20	42.6	10	32.3	14	40.0	8	21.6	18	48.6	18	45.0	6	20.7	9	24.3
Master's Degree	18	38.3	5	16.1	10	28.6	13	35.1	11	29.7	10	25.0	13	44.8	17	45.9
PhD/ Other Doctorate	1	2.1	3	9.7	0	0	4	10.8	1	2.7	2	5.0	0	0	3	8.1

Note. N = 293. Participants were on average 27.3 years old ($SD = 6.7$).

a. The order of the conditions is based on the presented design. Two consecutive conditions are visually identical.

Figure 2

Conditions 1 and 5 in English Representing Neutral Comments and Passive Participation

The figure displays three screenshots of Instagram posts from the account @aero.official. Each post features a different model wearing athletic gear. The first post shows a woman in a dark blue sports bra and blue patterned shorts on a rooftop. The second post shows a woman and a man in black t-shirts and blue patterned shorts in front of a 'STREET M... CLUB' sign. The third post shows a man in a green t-shirt and blue patterned shorts on a skateboard. All three posts have 49,326 likes and the same caption: 'aero.official Shop our new shorts collection now! Perfect for the summer 🌞'. The comments are identical for all three posts: 'fit.hannah it's giving gym girl summer', 'serena.miller99 🍌', 'alex.miles who are the models in the second slide?', '84miriammm84 🍌🍌🍌🍌', and '_paulas_journey_ love the popping colors! @aero.official'.

Post 1: A woman in a dark blue sports bra and blue patterned shorts stands on a rooftop with a city skyline in the background.

Post 2: A woman and a man in black t-shirts and blue patterned shorts stand in front of a sign that says 'STREET M... CLUB' and 'SMAC'. The woman's shirt says 'STRONG IS THE NEW SEX' and the man's shirt says 'AEROBY TIGERS'.

Post 3: A man in a green t-shirt and blue patterned shorts stands on a skateboard outdoors.

Common Elements:

- Profile: @aero.official
- Likes: 49,326 likes
- Caption: aero.official Shop our new shorts collection now! Perfect for the summer 🌞
- Comments:
 - fit.hannah it's giving gym girl summer
 - serena.miller99 🍌
 - alex.miles who are the models in the second slide?
 - 84miriammm84 🍌🍌🍌🍌
 - _paulas_journey_ love the popping colors! @aero.official

Figure 3

Conditions 2 and 6 in English Representing Neutral Comments and Active Participation

The figure displays three identical Instagram post screenshots side-by-side. Each post is from the account 'aero.official' and features a different model wearing colorful, patterned athletic shorts. The first post shows a woman in a dark blue top and blue patterned shorts on a rooftop. The second post shows a man and a woman in matching blue patterned shorts in front of a 'STREET M... CLUB' sign. The third post shows a man in a green t-shirt and blue patterned shorts standing on a skateboard outdoors. Each post has 49,326 likes and a comment section with five comments: 'fit.hannah it's giving gym girl summer', 'serena.miller99', 'alex.miles who are the models in the second slide?', '84miriamm84', and '_paulas_journey_ love the popping colors! @aero.official'. A comment input field is visible at the bottom of each post.

Figure 4

Conditions 3 and 7 in English Representing Body-positive Comments and Passive Participation

The figure displays three identical Instagram posts from the account @aero.official. Each post features a different individual wearing vibrant, patterned athletic shorts. The first post shows a woman in a dark blue sports bra and blue patterned shorts on a rooftop. The second post shows a woman and a man in matching blue patterned shorts and black t-shirts in front of a 'STREET M... CLUB' sign. The third post shows a man in a green t-shirt and blue patterned shorts on a skateboard outdoors. Each post includes a caption and a list of comments.

Post 1: **aero.official** Empower your journey, embrace your curves. 🌟 Our size-inclusive workout gear is designed for every body, celebrating strength and confidence at every step. Here's to loving yourself through every squat, stretch, and stride! #InclusivityInMotion #BodyPositiveFitness

Comments:

- fit.hannah** wearing these shorts, all I focus on is how strong I feel 🌟👏 #bodypositivity #diversity 614
- serena.miller99** tbh: these pics made me rethink what's considered 'ideal'... real bodies, real confidence 🌟👏 2,096
- alex.miles** who are the models in the second slide? 71
- 84miriamm84** Love that you're about more than just clothing - it's a #movement towards #diversity and acceptance. NICE @aero.official 🌟👏 10,8k
- _paulas_journey_** These shorts are my reminder to affirm the positive aspects of my body. How do you practice self-affirmation? 🌟👏 3,124

Post 2: **aero.official** Empower your journey, embrace your curves. 🌟 Our size-inclusive workout gear is designed for every body, celebrating strength and confidence at every step. Here's to loving yourself through every squat, stretch, and stride! #InclusivityInMotion #BodyPositiveFitness

Comments:

- fit.hannah** wearing these shorts, all I focus on is how strong I feel 🌟👏 #bodypositivity #diversity 614
- serena.miller99** tbh: these pics made me rethink what's considered 'ideal'... real bodies, real confidence 🌟👏 2,096
- alex.miles** who are the models in the second slide? 71
- 84miriamm84** Love that you're about more than just clothing - it's a #movement towards #diversity and acceptance. NICE @aero.official 🌟👏 10,8k
- _paulas_journey_** These shorts are my reminder to affirm the positive aspects of my body. How do you practice self-affirmation? 🌟👏 3,124

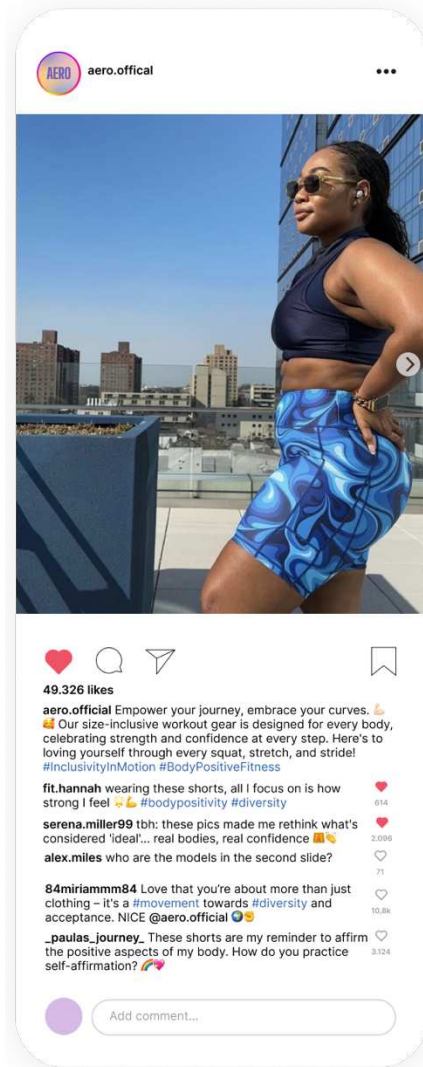
Post 3: **aero.official** Empower your journey, embrace your curves. 🌟 Our size-inclusive workout gear is designed for every body, celebrating strength and confidence at every step. Here's to loving yourself through every squat, stretch, and stride! #InclusivityInMotion #BodyPositiveFitness

Comments:

- fit.hannah** wearing these shorts, all I focus on is how strong I feel 🌟👏 #bodypositivity #diversity 614
- serena.miller99** tbh: these pics made me rethink what's considered 'ideal'... real bodies, real confidence 🌟👏 2,096
- alex.miles** who are the models in the second slide? 71
- 84miriamm84** Love that you're about more than just clothing - it's a #movement towards #diversity and acceptance. NICE @aero.official 🌟👏 10,8k
- _paulas_journey_** These shorts are my reminder to affirm the positive aspects of my body. How do you practice self-affirmation? 🌟👏 3,124

Figure 5

Conditions 4 and 8 in English Representing Body-positive Comments and Active Participation



3.3.2 Measures

Body Image. Body appreciation is a central factor of body image and is therefore used as the measure in this research (Linardon et al., 2023; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a). Avalos et al. (2005) developed the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) to assess BA using 13 items. Subsequent studies confirmed the stability of the BAS across college men and women in the US (Tylka, 2013) and supported its unidimensional structure (Avalos et al., 2005). Additional research suggested a potential multidimensional nature of the BAS when examined across different countries and languages, proposing two factors: general body esteem and body preoccupation (Swami & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2008; Swami & Jaafar, 2012). This led to the development of the revised BAS-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a).

The BAS-2 is a 10-item measure developed by rewording certain items of the original BAS to eliminate sex-specific versions and body dissatisfaction-based language, as well as incorporating new items based on positive body image research (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a). This scale has shown consistency and reliability¹ across sexes and nationalities, supporting its use with diverse research samples (Kling et al., 2019; Swami et al., 2023). Given the worldwide use of the scale, many validated translations are available including a German one by Behrend and Warschburger (2022). In both languages, the scale was adapted to target perceived body appreciation in the moment. An example question is “I am comfortable in my body right now.” Respondents were instructed to indicate whether the question is true about them never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always on a 5-point Likert scale.

Marketing response. Marketing responses were measured using items adapted from Alalwan (2018) and Ho Nguyen et al. (2022) who studied customer purchase intention through social media advertising and the factors influencing it. Items capturing participants’ purchase intention and attitudes were included, for example “I am likely to buy products of aero (brand) that are promoted on Instagram.” Measures of inclusivity were added, for example “The aero brand promotes inclusivity for all sizes and genders.” The final scale consists of 14 items: four are measuring purchase intention, and five are measuring the attitudes towards the advertisement, and five measure perceived brand inclusivity. The items were translated to German. In both languages, respondents were asked to report their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

¹ For women and men, respectively, Cronbach’s coefficient alphas are .94 and .93 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a).

Social Media Literacy. Social media literacy (SML) is measured using the perceived SML scale² by Tandoc et al. (2021). The scale is grounded in the social theory of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) and encompasses 14 items spanning over four dimensions: technical competency, social relationships, information awareness, and privacy and algorithm awareness. One example question is “I know how to remove unwanted content on my social media account.” This categorization underscores the complexity of the construct as the authors emphasize that SML cannot be seen as an individual area of competency (Tandoc et al., 2021). Item eight of the original scale “I am aware of my organization’s social media policy” was removed because it is not related to the present study. All items were translated to German by a native speaker. In both languages, respondents are instructed to indicate their agreement with the question on a 5-point Likert scale.

Demographics. The questionnaire also included questions about respondents’ demographics, including their age, gender identity, and educational level. Information about users’ SNS use was collected to give an insight into the respondents and relate their responses to their daily behavior. SNS use was measured with seven items. Users had to select which SNS they use, how much time they spend on them daily, and to what extent they have engaged actively or passively within the past week. An example question is “Made/shared a post or story about something positive that was personally about me.” These items were taken from Romero Saletti et al. (2023) and Tuck and Thompson (2024).

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Data Collection

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences of the University of Twente before the collection began. Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling by distributing URL links and QR codes on social networking sites and the test subject pool of the university. All adults (18 or older) were invited to participate. The only criterion that needed to be met was an understanding of either the English or German language. The sampling methods can be categorized as nonprobability sampling.

3.4.2 Research Design

A 2 (comments: neutral vs body-positive) by 2 (participation: active vs passive) by 2 (SML: low vs high) between-subject online experiment was performed. To collect the data, a survey on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) was created and made accessible on all computers and mobile devices. The survey started with an opening statement explaining the

² The scale is reliable. Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .66 for the fourth dimension to .89 for the first dimension.

aim of the study and asking for consent. On that screen, users could set their preferred language (English or German). After consent was given, subjects were asked to fill in three general demographic questions and then randomly assigned to one condition. Participants were instructed to inspect the postings carefully. Those assigned to the active conditions had to compose their own comment. They were prompted with the following instruction: “Please formulate a comment that you would post underneath the Instagram post. Consider what you would naturally say if you were engaging with this content on social media. Your comments can reflect your thoughts, feelings, or any reactions you have to the post.” This question was made compulsory. After viewing and (if applicable) commenting on the posting, participants answered the remaining questions measuring the dependent variables body image (10 questions) and marketing response (14 questions), the moderator variable SML (13 questions), and SNS use (6 questions). To finish the survey, there was also an open-ended question for additional remarks. Appendix C shows the complete questionnaire.

3.5 Quantitative Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS. In the first step, the data set was cleaned by recoding missing values, deleting irrelevant variables (e.g., IP addresses, starting times), and deleting unanalyzable responses. All responses that were less than 90 percent complete were deleted. Further, SML was transformed using a median split to create two respondent groups: those low in SML and those high in SML. In the next step, the sample was inspected. To this end, descriptive statistics were calculated, and a randomization check using crosstabs and a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for age was performed. After this, factor and reliability analyses were performed. The goal was to confirm previously created constructs and evaluate the reliability of the scales used to measure the corresponding items. Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales. All dependent variables were measured on five-point Likert scales and were assigned values ranging from one to five.

3.5.1 Factor Analysis

Marketing response was not measured on a fixed scale. For this reason, a principal component analysis was conducted to explore the factor loadings of the items. Bartlett’s test of sphericity, which tests the overall significance of all the correlations within the correlation matrix, was significant, $\chi^2(91, N = 292) = 1999.19, p < .001$, indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that the variables are related enough to proceed with the factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.87 indicates that the sampling adequacy is high, and the dataset is suitable for factor analysis. Three factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted, explaining 65.28 percent variance. The varimax rotation shows high factor

loadings. The created components represent three themes of the marketing response: brand inclusivity ($\alpha = .78$), attitude towards purchasing from the brand ($\alpha = .91$), and attitude towards SNS marketing ($\alpha = .80$). Three new variables were created which were expected to give meaningful insights into consumer responses.

3.5.2 Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure quality research. All scales showed sufficient internal consistency. Since body image was measured using the BAS-2, it showed high reliability ($\alpha = .94$). The marketing response scale with 14 items was high ($\alpha = .86$), indicating that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct. SML was measured using an existing scale. Cronbach's alpha in the current sample was 0.79.

3.5.2 Main Quantitative Analysis

A three-way ANOVA was performed for each dependent variable. In addition, one ANOVA for each unique component of marketing response was performed to retrieve more meaningful information. Regression analyses were performed to extract detailed insights on the direct effects of the SML. All analyses were then repeated including just the English and just the German respondents, respectively. The significance of the effects was assessed using the F-values. To visualize relevant findings, graphs were created.

3.6 Qualitative Analysis

The collected comments from the active assignment and the "additional remarks" section of the questionnaire were analyzed with Atlas.ti (<https://atlasti.com/>). The analysis's intention was to find meaningful similarities between comments across the conditions and identify common themes. All comments were imported into the software and a codebook was developed (Table D1). The codebook was based on the factors of the study. All comments were coded according to the codebook.

4. Results

Data was analyzed using a 2 (comments: neutral vs body-positive) by 2 (participation: active vs passive) by 2 (SML: low vs high) between-subjects design. Table 5 summarizes the mean scores of the dependent variables per condition. A subsequent qualitative analysis was performed to give context and further insight into the experimental data.

4.1 Body Image

A three-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of body-positive comments, active participation, and social media literacy (SML) on body image. The results

of the ANOVA are summarized in table E1. The main effect of comments did not reach significance, $F(1, 285) = 0.42, p = .52$, indicating that there is no overall effect of the presence comments on body image. Similarly, the main effect of participation was also not significant, $F(1, 285) = 1.74, p = .19$. The interaction between comments and participation is not significant, $F(1, 285) = 0.01, p = .93$. The interaction between participation and SML is significant, $F(1, 285) = 5.90, p = .02$. There is no statistical difference in body image in the passive condition ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.71$ vs $M = 3.71, SD = 0.81$). However, in the active condition participants low in SML report lower body image than those high in SML ($M = 3.48, SD = 0.86$ vs $M = 3.80, SD = 0.72$) (Figure 6). The three-way interaction effect of comments, participation, and SML did not reach significance, $F(1, 285) = 0.55, p = .46$.

Figure 6

Interaction Effect of Participation and Social Media Literacy on Body Image

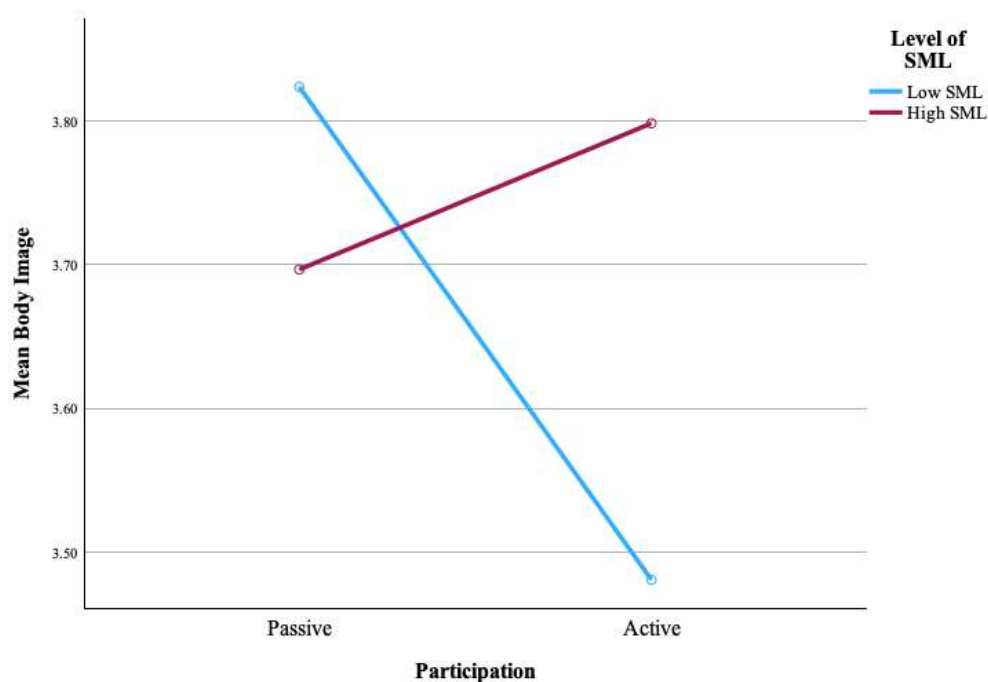


Table 5*Mean Scores of the Dependent Variables per Condition*

Characteristics	Neutral Comments								Body Positive Comments							
	Passive Participation				Active Participation				Passive Participation				Active Participation			
	Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML		Low SML		High SML	
# Condition ^a	1		5		2		6		3		7		4		8	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Body image	3.85	0.72	3.62	0.86	3.43	0.89	3.78	0.74	3.79	0.70	3.78	0.78	3.53	0.84	3.82	0.71
Marketing response	2.61	0.49	2.78	0.59	2.73	0.62	2.78	0.52	2.64	0.60	2.83	0.68	2.70	0.75	2.98	0.56
Brand inclusivity	3.73	0.59	3.68	0.72	3.68	0.65	3.79	0.61	3.67	0.52	3.88	0.77	3.46	0.88	4.01	0.60
Attitude towards purchasing	1.86	0.71	2.04	0.90	2.06	0.86	1.92	0.80	2.01	0.76	2.16	0.99	2.19	0.93	2.33	0.86
Attitude towards SNS marketing	2.16	0.79	2.57	0.78	2.39	0.82	2.57	0.96	2.16	1.02	2.37	0.90	2.38	0.97	2.50	0.94

Note. N = 293. Participants were on average 27.3 years old (*SD* = 6.7).

a. The order of the conditions is based on the presented design. Two consecutive conditions are visually identical.

SNS = Social networking sites.

4.2 Marketing Response

To test the effect of comments, participation, and SML on marketing response a three-way ANOVA was conducted (Table E1). The results show no main effects of comments, $F(1, 285) = 0.81, p = .37$, or participation, $F(1, 285) = 1.31, p = .25$. However, the direct effect of SML on marketing response reached significance, $F(1, 285) = 5.78, p = .02$, indicating that respondents low in SML report lower marketing responses than those high in SML ($M = 2.67, SD = 0.60$ vs $M = 2.84, SD = 0.59$). No interaction effects reached significance (all p-values $> .10$). The factor analysis revealed three main components of marketing response: brand inclusivity, attitude towards purchasing from the brand, and attitude towards social networking sites (SNS) marketing. Three ANOVAs were performed to extract more detailed results.

4.2.1 Brand Inclusivity

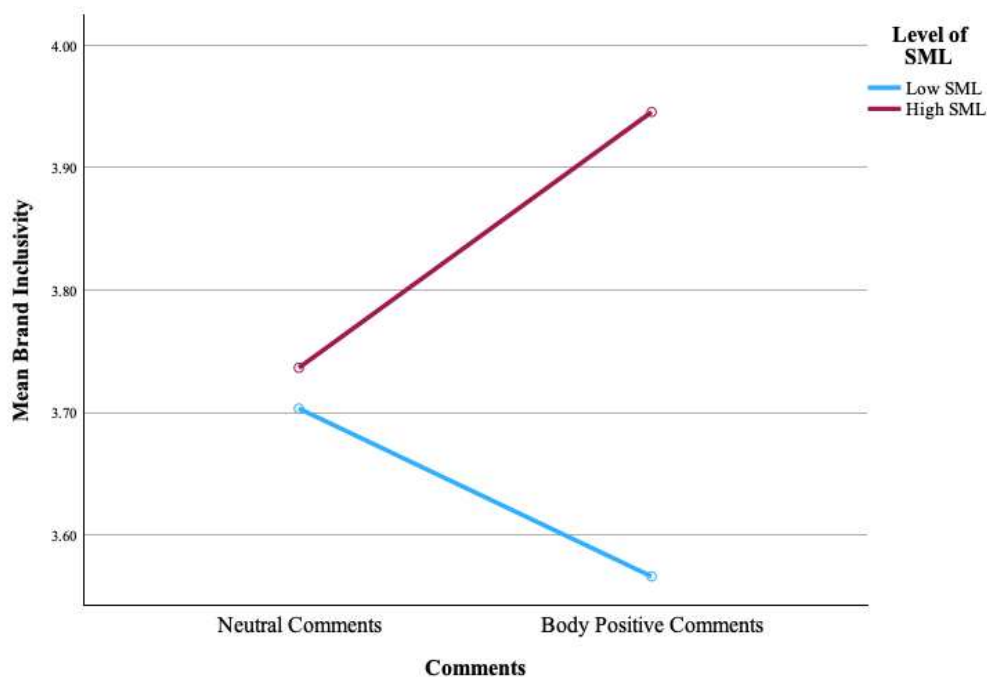
Neither comments nor participation had significant direct effects on brand inclusivity (Table E1). However, there was a significant main effect of SML, $F(1, 285) = 6.86, p = .01$, indicating that respondents low in SML reported lower perceived inclusivity than those high in SML ($M = 3.65, SD = 0.66$ vs $M = 3.85, SD = 0.68$). The interaction between comments and participation was not significant, $F(1, 285) = 0.19, p = .67$. The interaction between comments and SML reached significance, $F(1, 285) = 4.83, p = .03$, suggesting that SML moderates the effect of comments on perceived brand inclusivity. As Figure 7 shows, there is no statistical difference among respondents in the neutral condition ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.62$ vs $M = 3.74, SD = 0.66$). However, the interaction effect becomes apparent in the body-positive condition; respondents low in SML reported significantly lower perceived inclusivity than those high in SML ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.70$ vs $M = 3.94, SD = 0.69$). The three-way interaction was not significant, $F(1, 285) = 0.35, p = .55$.

4.2.2 Attitudes Towards Purchasing

The analysis revealed a significant main effect of comments on attitudes towards purchasing, $F(1, 285) = 4.14, p < .05$, indicating that the respondents who viewed neutral comments reported lower attitudes towards purchasing than those who viewed body-positive comments ($M = 1.96, SD = 0.80$ vs $M = 2.17, SD = 0.89$). No other significant main or interaction effects were found (Table E1).

Figure 7

Interaction Effect of Comments and Social Media Literacy on Perceived Brand Inclusivity



4.2.3 Attitudes Towards Marketing on Social Networking Sites

The three-way ANOVA revealed no significant main effects of comments or participation, respectively (Table E1). However, a significant main effect of SML on attitudes towards SNS marketing was found, $F(1, 285) = 4.75, p = .03$, indicating that those low in SML reported lower attitudes towards SNS marketing than those high in SML ($M = 2.26, SD = 0.89$ vs $M = 2.50, SD = 0.90$). No other significant main or interaction effects were found.

4.3 Language

Since the survey was administered in English and German, the impact of the language had to be considered. As table 6 shows, there were some differences in the mean scores of the dependent variables between the two languages. Participants who completed the survey in English instead of German scored higher in both body image ($M = 3.85, SD = 0.82$ vs $M = 3.60, SD = 0.73$) and marketing response ($M = 2.86, SD = 0.62$ vs $M = 2.66, SD = 0.57$). This significant result suggests further analyses. To this end, the dataset was split into two separate datasets based on administered language. The analysis showed that most previously discussed relationships were only present in one of the two groups. However, the most considerable finding was a marginally significant relationship between participation and body image in the English sample, $F(1, 128) = 3.30, p = .07$. Participants in the passive conditions scored higher in body image than participants in the active conditions ($M = 3.97, SD = 0.81$ vs $M = 3.72,$

Table 6*Mean Scores of the Dependent Variables by Language*

	Total		English		German	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Body Image	3.71	.78	3.85	0.82	3.60	0.73
Marketing Response	2.75	.60	2.86	0.62	2.66	0.57
Perceived Brand Inklusivity	3.75	.68	3.92	0.68	3.60	0.63
Attitude Towards Purchasing	2.06	.85	2.13	0.93	2.00	0.78
Attitude Towards SNS Marketing	2.38	.90	2.46	0.95	2.31	0.85

$SD = 0.81$). This effect was not present in the German or the full sample. The complete analysis results can be found in Appendix F.

4.4 Results of Hypotheses

The analysis showed that not all hypotheses could be confirmed (Table 7). Firstly, body-positive comments did not significantly increase body image compared to neutral comments. This hypothesis (H_{1a}) was rejected. Body-positive comments did not increase marketing responses directly. Further analysis of which factor might be influenced revealed that body-positive comments significantly increased attitudes towards purchasing compared to neutral comments. Therefore, H_{1b} was partially confirmed. Participation had no main effect on body image or marketing response in the full sample. Unexpectedly, there was a significant negative relationship between participation and body image in the English sample. For these reasons, H_{2a} and H_{2b} were rejected. Similarly, the interaction between comments and participation was insignificant which leads to a rejection of H_3 . H_4 and H_5 are about the moderation effect of SML. SML moderated the relationship of comments and brand inclusivity in a way that those low in SML perceived the brand as less inclusive and those high in SML perceived it as more inclusive when body-positive comments were present. There was no interaction effect of comments and SML on body image. Since there is no effect on marketing response in its totality, H_4 is only partially confirmed. SML positively affected the relationship between participation and body image. There was no moderation effect on marketing response. Therefore, H_5 is partially confirmed. There were no three-way interactions found. For this reason, H_6 was rejected. Unexpectedly, there is evidence suggesting great direct impacts of SML on all dependent variables.

Table 7
Overview of Hypotheses Results

#	Hypotheses	Result
H _{1a}	Body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments will increase body image evaluation.	Rejected
H _{1b}	Body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments will increase marketing responses.	Partially Confirmed
H _{2a}	Active, as opposed to passive, participation will increase body image evaluation.	Rejected
H _{2b}	Active, as opposed to passive, participation will increase marketing responses.	Rejected
H ₃	The predicted effects of body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger for individuals who actively, as opposed to passively, participate.	Rejected
H ₄	The predicted effects of body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.	Partially Confirmed
H ₅	The predicted effects of active participation on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.	Partially Confirmed
H ₆	The predicted effects of active, as opposed to passive, participation and body-positive, as opposed to neutral, comments on users are stronger in individuals who are high, as opposed to low, in SML.	Rejected

4.5 Qualitative Results

The comments were analyzed to provide deeper insights into the quantitative data. The analysis revealed trends and focus areas across the different conditions. Generally, participants used the comment section to evaluate the advertisement and product, express opinions on body positivity and social media usage, or offer compliments to the model and brand. Notably, six participants did not leave a comment despite being instructed to do so. One explained, “I don’t feel like commenting at all. It looks like ads, I don’t react on ads” (Participant EN_135).

Comments in the body-positive conditions (conditions 4 and 8) were mainly positive ad and product evaluations or positive statements about body positivity, for example: “What an empowering ad! Thank you!” (Participant EN_137) or “Love the diversity ❤️ Keep spreading body acceptance ✨” (Participant DE_155). Also, nine participants raised meaningful concerns, for example:

Why is it important to show my body or health in shorts or other sportswear? Do I need these kinds of shorts to show off my curves? And who says these shorts will give me the self-confidence I need? If it is offered to everyone like this to what extent is it still special and tailored for each individual? (Participant EN_72)

Some participants also voiced negative attitudes towards the ad or the body positive message. The following comment serves as an example: “Does not seem to represent a sports brand in the posts, because the ‘Models’ are not athletes or ‘do not look sporty’” (Participant DE_35)³. Another participant also critiqued the authenticity of the body-positive message: “Calling out body positivity, but then advertising with people who fit society’s ideals of a ‘perfect body’... If inclusion, then please do it properly!” (Participant DE_279)⁴.

In the neutral conditions (conditions 2 and 6), comments about the design of the product were most frequent, for example: “Love the fresh patterns!” (Participant EN_65) and “Such great sports pants - the color is perfect for summer 🔥” (Participant DE_134)⁵. Participants also mentioned that the shorts did not fit their personal styles, “Very original, not for me unfortunately” (Participant EN_258). These types of comments were more prevalent in the neutral conditions than in the body-positive conditions (Table G1). Many respondents also expressed positive brand and ad evaluations with references to the inclusive design to the campaigns, for example: “Wow! Finally no staged pictures of sports brands with only thin models :)” (Participant DE_48)⁶ or “I like the fact that their models look like normal people” (Participant DE_201)⁷. Interestingly, many participants in all conditions opted for emojis instead of verbal comments. The either represented the colorway of the pants or illustrated the positive appeal, for example: “👙💙💪” (Participant DE_203) or “🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥” (Participant DE_121).

In addition to the active assignments, 17 participants decided to leave an additional remark at the end of the questionnaire. In those comments, they explained their social media usage or raised concerns about regulations, “Social media need more governmental regulation in relation to hate speech” (Participant DE_124)⁸. One participant also expressed distrust in SNS advertisement, “Many of my responses to buying products advertised on Instagram are based on the fact that I don’t trust the Instagram platform when it comes to advertising. I often suspect a scam there (quality is not right, product doesn’t even arrive, etc.)” (Participant

³ Original: “Hat nicht den Eindruck als Sport-Marke repräsentiert zu werden in den Posts, da die ‘Models’ keine Sportler sind bzw. ‚nicht sportlich aussehen’

⁴ Original: “Body positivity rufen, aber dann mit Leuten werben, die zu den gesellschaftlichen Idealen eines ‚perfekten Körpers’ passen... Wenn Inklusion, dann bitte richtig!”

⁵ Original: “Was für eine tolle Sporthose - die Farbe ist perfekt für den Sommer 🔥”

⁶ Original: “Wow! Endlich mal keine gestellten Bilder von Sportbrands mit nur dünnen Models :)”

⁷ Original: “Ich finds gut, dass ihre Models wie normale Menschen aussehen“

⁸ Original: “Soziale Medien brauchen mehr staatliche Regulierung in Bezug auf Hate-Speech“

DE_130)⁹. Another participant mentioned that they do not care about body positivity or inclusiveness (Participant EN_16).

5. Discussion

The study explored the extent to which body-positive comments and active participation in social networking sites (SNS) influence users' body image and marketing responses, with a focus on the moderating role of social media literacy (SML) in these relationships. The results demonstrate the importance of fostering supportive online environments and developing critical SML skills among users, contributing to a deeper understanding of social influence in digital contexts.

5.1 Interpretations

The presented results demonstrated that body-positive comments positively influenced users. In line with expectations, respondents exhibited more positive attitudes towards purchasing from the brand when they viewed the body-positive advertisement compared to the neutral advertisement. The body-positive posts were more informative than the neutral ones and could therefore have served as cues for purchasing attitudes (Zhao et al., 2020). Additionally, these body-positive comments are beneficial as they visualize the presence of a community which emits trust, credibility, and support (Dabbous et al., 2020). Contrary to the related assumption that positive marketing responses are stimulated by users' ability to express themselves and share information in their networks (Chen et al., 2022), no direct relationship between active participation and marketing response was found. Also, active participation did not enhance the previously discussed direct effect of body-positive comments.

Equally unexpected, active participation had a negative impact on body image, with participants in the passive conditions scoring higher on body image measures than those in the active conditions. On the one hand, this negative impact is in line with previous studies, which found that Instagram users, when compared to non-users, exhibited higher body-dissatisfaction, internalization of thin ideals, and self-objectification (Couture Bue & Harrison, 2020). In addition, research suggests that perceiving body appreciation requires cognitive processes to protect oneself (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). This process might have been hindered because respondents were likely more attentive than they would be in a typical SNS environment. On the other hand, it can also be explained by the motivation driving the

⁹ Original: "Viele meiner Antworten die dem Kauf von Produkten die auf Instagram beworben werden beruhen darauf, dass ich der Plattform Instagram bei Werbung kein Vertrauen schenke. Ich vermute dort oft einen Scam (Qualität stimmt nicht, Produkt kommt gar nicht erst an, etc.)"

comments. Motivations to interact with posts include self-expression, maintaining social connections, and influencing others (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). During the study, these motivations were likely not present.

Interestingly, this negative effect of active participation on body image was only present among English-speaking respondents. It was not found in the total sample or among German-speakers. This discrepancy can be best explained by cultural differences, proficiency in the chosen language, and the familiarity of SNS advertisement in that language. Most respondents who completed the survey in English were not native speakers. A language barrier might have been present which prevented participants from accepting the advertisement and answering the questionnaire. Similarly, native speakers could have experienced a flow state which would allow them to answer the questions more instinctively.

SML had substantial effects in this research. Although no direct relationships were hypothesized, SML successfully explained marketing responses, perceived brand inclusivity, and attitudes towards SNS marketing. SML describes skills necessary to navigate SNS thoughtfully and responsibly (Rodgers et al., 2024). Users high in SML were likely able to understand the underlying message of the advertisements better than those low in SML. The pictures showed diverse models, and the comments were positive in all conditions. Therefore, the results suggest that the intervention (image alone) worked on participants high in SML, indicating a need for more SML campaigns. Similarly, SML moderated the relationship between body-positive comments and perceived brand inclusivity. Low SML respondents perceived the brand as less inclusive than high SML respondents when they saw or interacted with body-positive comments. This relationship shows that users high in SML are not overwhelmed by the advertisement and can understand the advertisement better, take the postings apart, and utilize only the relevant information.

SML also moderated the relationship between active participation and body image. During active SNS use, respondents high in SML reported significantly higher body image than those low in SML. No difference was seen in the passive condition. This indicates that SML helps in processing and comprehending the advertisement message and users' own perception (comments in the active condition) better. By consuming content purposefully, employing protective filtering, and critically interpreting the messaging, users high in SML can mentally distance themselves from the postings and therefore reduce the potential harmful effects (Rodgers et al., 2024).

The analysis of the comments revealed that a direct call to comment results in positive product and advertisement evaluations. In the presence of other body-positive comments,

participants would then also compose and comment similar messages. When those comments are absent (i.e., neutral conditions), comments about body positivity are less frequent. This finding aligns with the concept of bandwagon cues, where individuals tend to conform to the dominant sentiment expressed by others (Sundar, 2008; Waddell & Sundar, 2017). Positive comments act as social proof, encouraging similar positive responses from others. Additionally, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) literature highlights how positive feedback loops can enhance the perceived credibility and attractiveness of a product, leading to more favorable evaluations (Dabbous et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2020). In contrast, the absence of such comments fails to create the same positive reinforcement, resulting in fewer body-positive remarks.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The present study provides significant theoretical contributions by supporting and expanding existing theories in the field of online marketing communication. The results demonstrate how cues within online communities can significantly impact individual attitudes and perceptions. Firstly, the findings reinforce the bandwagon effect theory, emphasizing the powerful role of social proof in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Sundar, 2008; Waddell & Sundar, 2017). Body-positive comments led to increased attitudes towards purchasing and encouraged positive responses from other participants in the comment section. Secondly, the study offers additional support for the social comparison theory, which suggests that individuals evaluate themselves relative to others (Festinger, 1954). Thirdly, the present research extends the understanding of eWOM by illustrating how direct calls to comment and the presence of positive comments can enhance product and advertisement evaluations (Dabbous et al., 2020). Lastly, the study also contributes new insights into the role of SML in SNS marketing. Higher levels of SML enabled individuals to critically evaluate and appreciate diverse body representations, thus reducing the negative impact of passive content consumption and enhancing the positive effects of body-positive content (Rodgers et al., 2024). This finding underscores the importance of developing SML as a critical skill for navigating social media environments effectively.

Given the topicality of body positivity and growing impacts of SNS use, more research is recommended. Future studies could take a similar approach while broadening the sample. For example, including participants from different cultural backgrounds would provide insights into how body-positive messages and SML function across various cultural contexts. Also, since the present study only captures participants' responses at a single point in time, longitudinal studies would be beneficial in understanding the long-term impact of body-

positive comments and active participation on users. This approach can reveal how the effects evolve over time and whether they lead to lasting changes. In addition, the research design could be changed in future studies where the experiment would be conducted in more realistic settings to better reflect real-world SNS interactions. Observing users' behavior in their natural online environments can provide more accurate insights into how they engage with body-positive content and how it affects them. Similarly, measures like click-through rates and browsing data could give more insight into the user profiles and actual behaviors. Also, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, can provide deeper insights into the nuanced ways in which users interpret and respond to body-positive content. This approach can uncover underlying motivations and emotional responses that quantitative measures might miss.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for marketers, social media managers, and educators aiming to leverage SNS strategically. Firstly, this study highlights the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive interactions, which can enhance users' overall experience on SNS and promote a healthier body image. Brands and influencers should focus on creating and nurturing communities that emphasize body positivity and inclusivity. This can be achieved through regular engagement, responding to comments, and promoting user-generated content that aligns with these values (Zhao et al., 2020).

Secondly, with the introduction of novel platforms with unique features, it is imperative to develop educational programs that teach users from a young age how to navigate those platforms thoughtfully and responsibly. The prominent role of SML in this study underscores this need. Higher levels of SML enable individuals to critically evaluate and appreciate diverse bodies, mitigating the negative impacts of passive content consumption and enhancing the positive effects of body-positive content (Rodgers et al., 2024). These programs should be designed to enhance users' critical thinking skills, enabling them to better understand and navigate the complex social dynamics (Paxton et al., 2022).

Thirdly, the insights from this study can inform the design of social media interventions aimed at improving body image and promoting positive self-perception among users. Interventions should incorporate elements that encourage active participation and positive engagement, such as direct calls to comment and the promotion of body-positive content. Similarly, brands and content creators should consider the impact of comments on their audiences. By fostering positive comment sections and encouraging supportive

interactions, they can enhance the perceived value and credibility of their content (Hutter et al., 2013). This approach contributes to a more positive online culture, benefiting both consumers and brands.

5.4 Limitations

The sample predominantly consists of young, educated individuals who are frequent users of SNS, which is not uncommon in master theses due to the sampling method. Students typically request that their peers complete the surveys, which is why the sampling method is not random and the sample may not represent the general population. Although the sample might limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups, educational backgrounds, or individuals with different levels of social media usage, the data is still useful for estimating effects on heavy SNS users.

Additionally, the study was conducted in an artificial online environment, which might not accurately reflect real-world SNS interactions. Participants' behavior and responses could differ in natural settings where multiple external factors come into play. Moreover, the study did not account for influential factors present in real-world scenarios. Also, the selected comments only represent a part of the proposed interventions by Halliwell and Diedrichs (2019). A larger study with more interventions could lead to different results.

Furthermore, the study's experimental design captures participants' responses at a single point in time. This approach does not account for the potential long-term effects. Longitudinal studies would be necessary to understand how these impacts evolve over time. In addition, the use of self-reported data can introduce response biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants might answer in a way, they believe is more socially acceptable rather than their true feelings or behaviors.

5.5 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the extent to which body-positive comments and active participation on social networking sites (SNS) impact users' body image and marketing response, and what the role of social media literacy (SML) is in those relationships. To this end, a between-subject experiment was conducted measuring respondents' body image and marketing responses. A pretest ensured that the selected comments were realistic. The methodology allowed for clear comparisons between different conditions, although the non-representative sample and focus on Instagram (over other platforms) limit generalizability. To contextualize the data, user comments were analyzed. Generally, it can be concluded that the presence of body-positive comments fosters a supportive online environment, encouraging similar positive responses from users. The analyses showed positive effects of both body-

positive comments and passive participation on the respondents. The study also highlighted the crucial role of SML in SNS dynamics. Users with higher SML levels were better equipped to critically engage with content, enhancing their self and advertisement perception. This suggests that SML interventions can be effective in promoting healthier SNS content and mitigating the negative impacts of passive online behavior. The analysis of respondents' comments underscores the power of social proof in shaping consumer responses.

The findings of this study affirm the significance of body-positive content on SNS, emphasizing the role of positive social interactions in those environments. Further, the study highlights the critical function of SML in empowering users to better navigate SNS. This supports calls for integrating SML training in educational curricula to build more resilient digital users. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies should consider the long-term impacts of body-positive interactions on users, providing a deeper understanding of sustained engagement with such content.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of body-positive comments and high SML in fostering positive body image and marketing responses on SNS. By highlighting these dynamics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital environments can be structured to support consumer well-being. The findings advocate for the integration of SML education and the promotion of inclusive content as strategies to enhance user experiences on SNS, ultimately benefiting both individuals and brands in the digital landscape.

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Appendix A

Pretest Results

Table A1

Full List of Comments and Ratings

Category	Comment	Value
Identifying and discussing positive aspects		
	These shorts highlight strength and resilience. What's your power pose in empowering clothes? 🦋👊	3.3
	Wearing these shorts, all I focus on is how strong I feel. What about you? 🌟💪	1.8
	No room for negativity here. These shorts make me feel good, and that's what matters. 😊🌈	3.2
	Let's shift the conversation from flaws to strengths. These shorts make it easy. 💖😊	2.8
	Not just clothing – these shorts are a celebration of what makes us uniquely beautiful. Your thoughts? 💖🌸	3.8
Defining and challenging the thin ideal		
	These shorts feel like a breath of fresh air. Loving the inclusivity. 💪🌻	4.2
	Real talk: these pics made me rethink what's considered 'ideal'. Real bodies, real confidence. 🍑👏	1.6
	Just stumbled upon this brand. Finally, something that doesn't make me feel like I need to fit a mold. 💖🌟	2.4
	Shorts that make me feel seen. Cheers to breaking norms in a subtle way! 🌟👖	3.8
	Thought I was just buying shorts, but turns out I'm supporting a whole movement. Digging the diversity here. 🌈🔄	3.0
Avoiding fat talk		
	Loving the fact that this brand isn't just about clothes – it's a whole vibe that celebrates real bodies. No room for fat talk here! 🌈💖	3.2
	Found a brand that's all about positive vibes and zero fat talk. These shorts are a reminder to celebrate, not criticize. Thanks, [Brand]! 💪🍑	2.6
	Can we take a moment to appreciate a brand that promotes self-love without any fat talk nonsense? These shorts are a game-changer! 🌟👖	2.6
	Obsessed with [Brand] – no fat talk, just cool clothes. These shorts radiate positivity. 🌻💙	3.2
	No fat talk, just good vibes. [Brand] nails it with these shorts. Simple, comfy, and body-positive. 🌸👖	3.4
Writing letters and engaging in role plays		
	These shorts are exactly what I'd want for my daughter – embracing comfort and confidence in her own skin. Well done, [Brand]! 💖🍑	2.4
	My friend's been going through a tough time, and I stumbled upon these shorts. Seems like a step in the right direction, where can I order them? 💖👖	2.8
	As a coach, seeing my players embrace self-love is priceless. These shorts could be a game-changer for their journey. Thanks, [Brand]! 🌟💪	2.8

Coaching is about more than plays – it’s instilling confidence. These shorts from [Brand] echo that sentiment. 🦵🌟	3.8
Thinking these shorts could be a cool addition to my kiddo’s wardrobe. Simple, comfy, and sending good vibes. 🌈💕	3.2
Considering the costs of pursuing the thin idea	
Found shorts that let me breathe, physically and mentally. 🦵💕	3.0
Rejecting the physical strain of extreme workouts in favor of movement that feels good. These shorts signify a holistic approach to well-being. 💕🦵	3.8
These shorts are my rebellion against the mental exhaustion of constantly trying to fit an unrealistic mold. Choosing self-acceptance instead. 🦵🌈	2.2
It’s about ease, not the mental squeeze. Shorts for a simpler mindset. 💕🦵	3.4
Stepping away from the mental tug of war with my body. Enter: comfy shorts. 🌈🦵	2.6
Discussing and engaging in social activism	
Love that this brand is more than just clothing – it’s a movement towards diversity and acceptance. Thoughts? 🌍🦵	2.0
Let’s continue the conversation about real beauty and break free from societal pressures. Share your views. 💬🌟	3.2
Not just shorts, but a stand against appearance pressures. How do you contribute to a more inclusive conversation about beauty? 🤔🌈	4.4
A subtle nod to activism – these images challenge us to rethink beauty norms. What changes would you like to see? 🌟💕	2.4
Wearing these shorts with pride, knowing it’s a step towards breaking stereotypes. Your thoughts? 🦵🌈	3.0
Engaging in behavioral challenges	
Challenge accepted: rocking these shorts and embracing my unique fitness journey. Who else is on board? 🦵🏆	2.4
Not just a fashion statement – it’s a challenge to embrace confidence in every stride. Your fitness challenges? 🦵🦵	3.2
No more conforming to norms – my challenge is to celebrate individuality with every workout. What’s your fitness challenge? 🌟🏆	3.2
Making a statement with these shorts: fitness isn’t about conforming. What’s your personal challenge? 🦵🌈	3.0
These shorts make a statement. My challenge? To redefine beauty standards with every step. Thoughts? 🌍💬	3.2
A self-affirmation exercise	
Starting my day with affirmations in comfy gear. What’s your morning ritual for self-love? 💕	2.8
These shorts are my reminder to affirm the positive aspects of my body. How do you practice self-affirmation? 🌈💕	2.0
Affirming my strength every time I wear these shorts. What words of positivity do you tell yourself daily? 🦵🌟	2.6
Not just shorts, but a part of my self-love routine. Share your favorite self-affirmation! 🌸💬	4.8
Affirming my worth and embracing my journey – these shorts play a role in my daily positivity. How do you practice self-love? 💕🌟	2.8

Appendix B

German Stimuli

Figure B1

Conditions 1 and 5 in German Representing Neutral Comments and Passive Participation

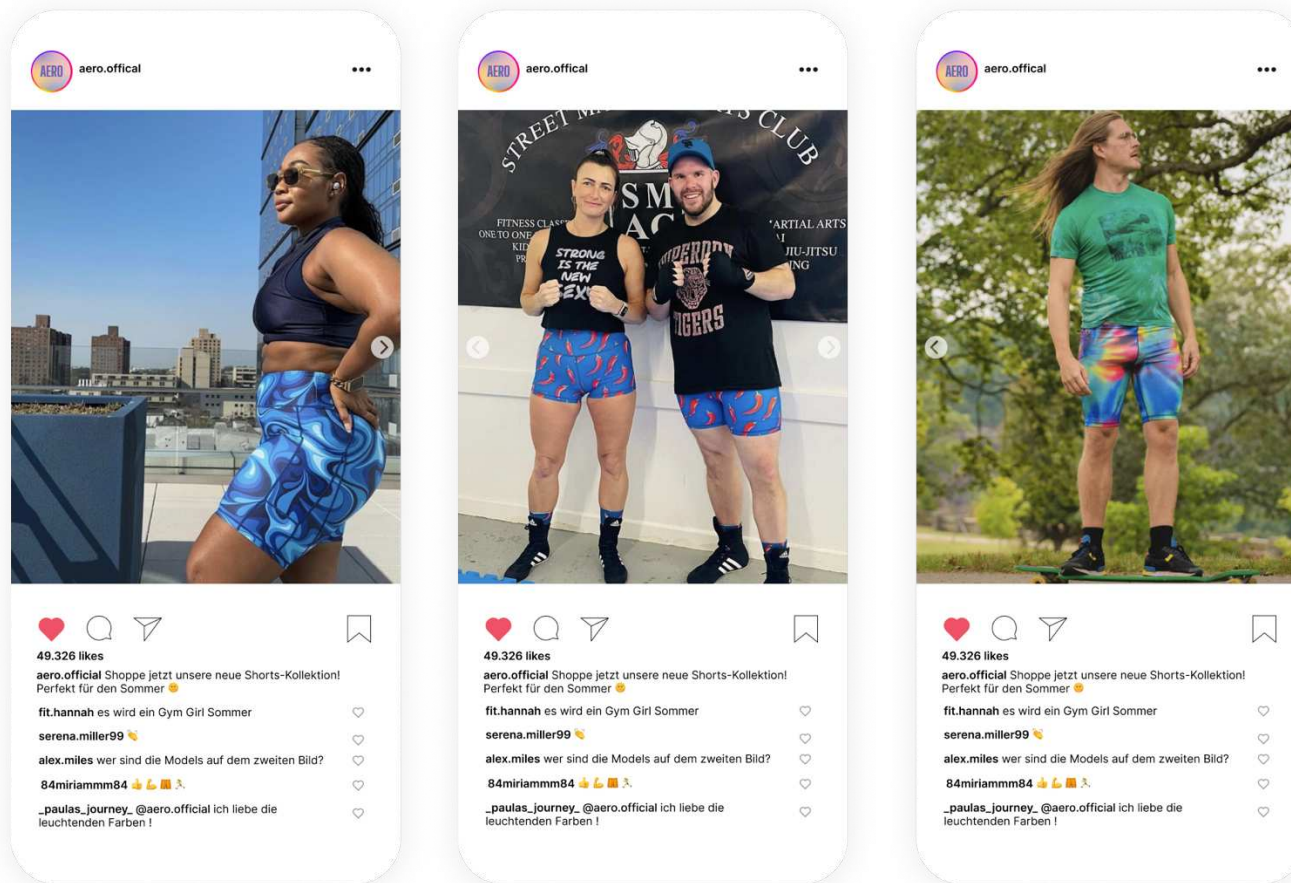


Figure B2

Conditions 2 and 6 in German Representing Neutral Comments and Active Participation

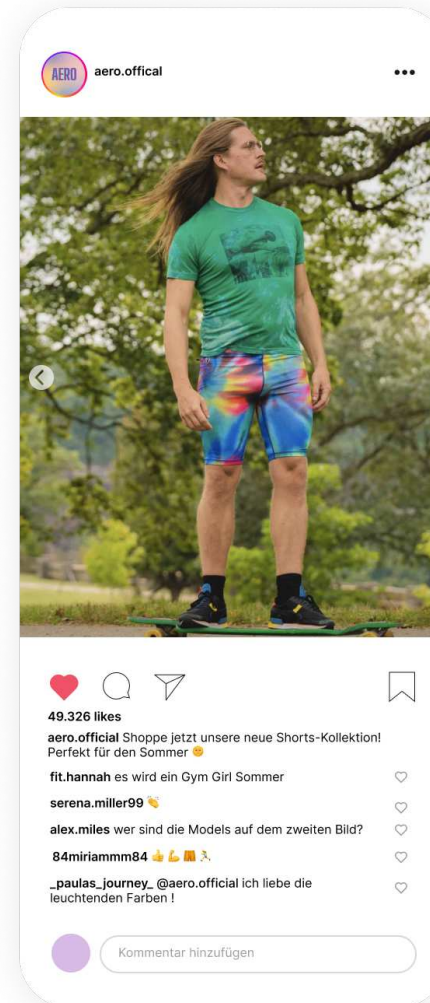
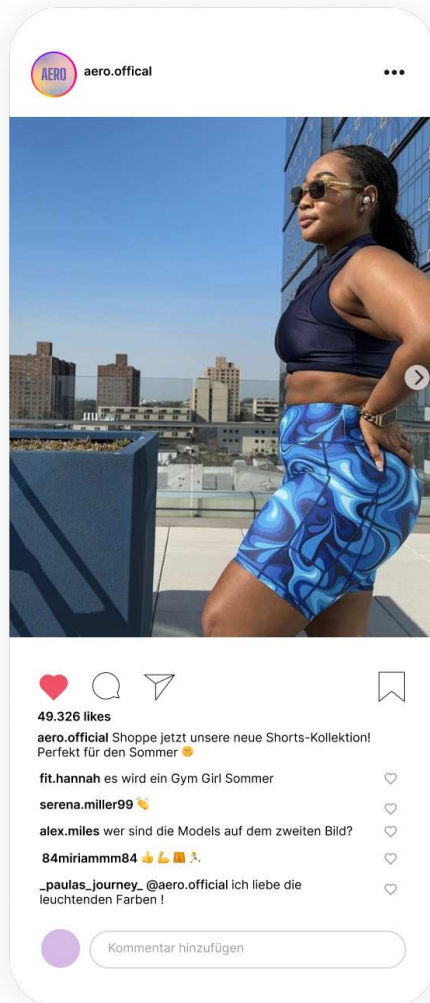


Figure B3

Conditions 3 and 7 in German Representing Body-positive Comments and Passive Participation



Figure B4

Conditions 4 and 8 in German Representing Body-positive Comments and Active Participation



Appendix C

Full Questionnaire

Table C1

Full English Questionnaire

#	Theme	Question	Response
1	Age	What is your age?	Number entry
2	Gender	What is your gender identity	Male, Female, Non-binary / Third gender, Prefer not to say, Other
3	Education	What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?	Elementary school, High school, Vocational education, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, PhD or other doctorate
4	Marketing response	I will buy products of aero (brand) that are advertised on Instagram. (1)	Likert 1-5
5	Marketing response	I desire to buy products of aero (brand) that are promoted on advertisements on Instagram. (2)	Likert 1-5
6	Marketing response	I am likely to buy products of aero (brand) that are promoted on Instagram. (3)	Likert 1-5
7	Marketing response	I plan to purchase products of aero (brand) that are promoted on Instagram. (4)	Likert 1-5
8	Marketing response	I like to receive product information of aero (brand) on my Instagram. (5)	Likert 1-5
9	Marketing response	I like to view product information on my Instagram. (6)	Likert 1-5
10	Marketing response	I collect product related information from my peers on Instagram. (7)	Likert 1-5
11	Marketing response	I prefer (like) promotional marketing on Instagram. (8)	Likert 1-5
12	Marketing response	I am interested to communicate any message related to product information with my Instagram network members. (9)	Likert 1-5
13	Inclusivity	The aero brand is inclusive. (1)	Likert 1-5
14	Inclusivity	The aero brand includes all gender identities. (2)	Likert 1-5
15	Inclusivity	Ads of the aero brand make all body types look good. (3)	Likert 1-5
16	Inclusivity	The aero brand shows various body types in posts. (4)	Likert 1-5
17	Inclusivity	The aero brand promotes inclusivity for all sizes and genders. (5)	Likert 1-5
18	Body appreciation	At this moment, I respect my body. (1)	Likert 1-5
19	Body appreciation	I feel good about my body right now. (2)	Likert 1-5
20	Body appreciation	At this moment, I feel that my body has at least some good qualities. (3)	Likert 1-5
21	Body appreciation	I feel love for my body right now. (4)	Likert 1-5
22	Body appreciation	I am comfortable in my body right now. (5)	Likert 1-5

23	Body appreciation	Currently, I take a positive attitude towards my body. (6)	Likert 1-5
24	Body appreciation	Right now, I am attentive to my body's needs. (7)	Likert 1-5
25	Body appreciation	Currently, I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body. (8)	Likert 1-5
26	Body appreciation	Right now, my behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body; for example, I hold my head high and smile. (9)	Likert 1-5
27	Body appreciation	At this moment, I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors). (10)	Likert 1-5
28	SML	I know how to create an account on social media. (1)	Likert 1-5
29	SML	I know how to delete my account on social media. (2)	Likert 1-5
30	SML	I know how to deactivate my account on social media. (3)	Likert 1-5
31	SML	I know how to post content, such as photos, on my social media account. (4)	Likert 1-5
32	SML	I know how to remove unwanted content on my social media account. (5)	Likert 1-5
33	SML	I know the copyright laws governing social media platforms. (6)	Likert 1-5
34	SML	I know how to appropriately handle conflicts in social media. (7)	Likert 1-5
35	SML	I know how to verify whether what is shared on social media is correct. (8)	Likert 1-5
36	SML	I know how to use different sources information to verify what I see on social media. (9)	Likert 1-5
37	SML	I can tell whether an information on social media is true or false. (10)	Likert 1-5
38	SML	Social media sites such as Instagram control what I see on social media. (11)	Likert 1-5
39	SML	Information that I post on social media is permanent. (12)	Likert 1-5
40	SML	The advertisements I see on social media are specifically targeted to my preferences. (13)	Likert 1-5
41	Platforms	Please select all social networking sites that you use regularly (at least once a week)	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, BeReal, LinkedIn, WeChat, Pinterest, X (Twitter), Reddit, Dating Apps, Other
42	SMU	Made/shared a post or story about something positive that was personally about me.	Defined scale 1-9
43	SMU	Scrolled aimlessly through my feed(s).	Defined scale 1-9
44	SMU	Commented supportively or liked/"reacted" in support on other's post(s).	Defined scale 1-9
45	SMU	Commented unsupportively or disliked/"reacted" unsupportively on other's post(s)	Defined scale 1-9
46	SMU	How much time (minutes) do you spend on social media each day?	Minutes
47	Additional Remarks	Do you have any additional remarks?	Text entry

Table C2

Full German Questionnaire

#	Theme	Question	Response
1	Age	Wie alt sind Sie?	Number entry
2	Gender	Was ist Ihre Geschlechtsidentität?	Männlich, Weiblich, Nicht-binär / drittes Geschlecht, Keine Antwort, Andere
3	Education	Welchen höchsten Abschluss oder Bildungsstand haben Sie erreicht?	Grundschule, Weiterführende Schule, Ausbildung, Bachelorabschluss, Masterabschluss, PhD (Oder anderer Doktorabschluss)
4	Marketing response	Ich werde Produkte von aero (Marke) kaufen, die auf Instagram beworben werden. (1)	Likert 1-5
5	Marketing response	Ich habe den Wunsch, Produkte von aero (Marke) zu kaufen, die in Anzeigen auf Instagram beworben werden. (2)	Likert 1-5
6	Marketing response	Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass ich Produkte von aero (Marke) kaufe, die auf Instagram beworben werden. (3)	Likert 1-5
7	Marketing response	Ich plane, Produkte von aero (Marke) zu kaufen, die auf Instagram beworben werden. (4)	Likert 1-5
8	Marketing response	Ich mag es, Produktinformationen von aero (Marke) auf meinem Instagram zu erhalten. (5)	Likert 1-5
9	Marketing response	Ich schaue mir gerne Produktinformationen auf meinem Instagram an. (6)	Likert 1-5
10	Marketing response	Ich sammle produktbezogene Informationen von meinen Freunden auf Instagram. (7)	Likert 1-5
11	Marketing response	Ich bevorzuge (mag) Werbung auf Instagram. (8)	Likert 1-5
12	Marketing response	Ich bin daran interessiert, Nachrichten über Produktinformationen mit Mitgliedern meines Instagram-Netzwerks auszutauschen. (9)	Likert 1-5
13	Inclusivity	Die Marke Aero ist inklusiv. (1)	Likert 1-5
14	Inclusivity	Die Marke Aero schließt alle Geschlechtsidentitäten ein. (2)	Likert 1-5
15	Inclusivity	Die Werbung der Marke Aero lässt alle Körpertypen gut aussehen. (3)	Likert 1-5
16	Inclusivity	Die Marke Aero zeigt verschiedene Körpertypen in ihren Beiträgen. (4)	Likert 1-5
17	Inclusivity	Die Marke Aero fördert Inklusivität für alle Größen und Geschlechter. (5)	Likert 1-5
18	Body appreciation	Im aktuellen Moment respektiere ich meinen Körper. (1)	Likert 1-5
19	Body appreciation	Ich fühle mich gerade gut mit meinem Körper. (2)	Likert 1-5
20	Body appreciation	In diesem Moment finde ich, dass mein Körper zumindest einige Vorzüge hat. (3)	Likert 1-5
21	Body appreciation	Ich empfinde gerade Liebe für meinen Körper. (4)	Likert 1-5

22	Body appreciation	Ich fühle mich gerade wohl in meinen Körper. (5)	Likert 1-5
23	Body appreciation	Aktuell habe ich eine positive Einstellung zu meinem Körper. (6)	Likert 1-5
24	Body appreciation	Im Augenblick achte ich auf die Bedürfnisse meines Körpers. (7)	Likert 1-5
25	Body appreciation	Aktuell schätze ich die verschiedenen und einzigartigen Merkmale meines Körpers. (8)	Likert 1-5
26	Body appreciation	Im Augenblick zeigt mein Verhalten meine positive Einstellung zu meinem Körper; zum Beispiel halte ich den Kopf hoch und lächle. (9)	Likert 1-5
27	Body appreciation	In diesem Moment fühle ich mich schön, auch wenn ich anders bin als die Medienbilder von attraktiven Menschen (z.B. Models, Schauspieler/Schauspielerinnen). (10)	Likert 1-5
28	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich ein Konto in sozialen Medien erstelle. (1)	Likert 1-5
29	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich mein Konto in sozialen Medien lösche. (2)	Likert 1-5
30	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich mein Konto in sozialen Medien deaktiviere. (3)	Likert 1-5
31	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich Inhalte wie Fotos auf meinem Social-Media-Konto poste. (4)	Likert 1-5
32	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich unerwünschte Inhalte von meinem Social-Media-Konto entferne. (5)	Likert 1-5
33	SML	Ich kenne die Urheberrechtsgesetze, die soziale Medienplattformen regeln. (6)	Likert 1-5
34	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich Konflikte in sozialen Medien angemessen behandle. (7)	Likert 1-5
35	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich überprüfe, ob das, was in sozialen Medien geteilt wird, korrekt ist. (8)	Likert 1-5
36	SML	Ich weiß, wie ich verschiedene Informationsquellen verwende, um zu überprüfen, was ich in sozialen Medien sehe. (9)	Likert 1-5
37	SML	Ich kann sagen, ob eine Information in sozialen Medien wahr oder falsch ist. (10)	Likert 1-5
38	SML	Soziale Medien wie Instagram kontrollieren, was ich in sozialen Medien sehe. (11)	Likert 1-5
39	SML	Informationen, die ich in sozialen Medien poste, sind dauerhaft. (12)	Likert 1-5
40	SML	Die Anzeigen, die ich in sozialen Medien sehe, sind speziell auf meine Vorlieben zugeschnitten. (13)	Likert 1-5
41	Platforms	Bitte wählen Sie alle sozialen Netzwerke aus, die Sie regelmäßig nutzen.	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, BeReal, LinkedIn, WeChat, Pinterest, X (Twitter), Reddit, Dating Apps, Sonstiges
42	SMU	Einen Beitrag oder eine Story über etwas Positives, das mich persönlich betrifft, gemacht/geteilt.	Defined scale 1-9
43	SMU	Ziellos durch meine Feeds gescrollt.	Defined scale 1-9
44	SMU	Unterstützend kommentiert oder "geliked"/positiv reagiert auf Beiträge anderer.	Defined scale 1-9

45	SMU	Nicht unterstützend kommentiert oder "disliked"/negativ reagiert auf Beiträge anderer.	Defined scale 1-9
46	SMU	Wie viel Zeit verbringen Sie täglich in sozialen Medien? Angabe in Minuten	Minutes
47	Additional Remarks	Haben Sie noch Anmerkungen?	Text entry

Appendix D

Codebook

Table D1

Codebook

Main Code	Sub Code	Identification
Product evaluation	Positive	Product_Positive
Product evaluation	Neutral	Product_Neutral
Product evaluation	Negative	Product_Negative
Product evaluation	Personal style	Personal style
Information	Brand	Info_Brand
Information	Product	Info_Product
Brand evaluation	Positive	Brand_Positive
Brand evaluation	Neutral	Brand_Neutral
Brand evaluation	Negative	Brand_Negative
Attitude towards Body Positivity	Positive	BoPo_Positive
Attitude towards Body Positivity	Neutral	BoPo_Neutral
Attitude towards Body Positivity	Negative	BoPo_Negative
Advertisement evaluation	Positive	Ad_Positive
Advertisement evaluation	Neutral	Ad_Neutral
Advertisement evaluation	Negative	Ad_Negative
Unidentifiable	No comment	No comment
Unidentifiable	Lack of Understanding	Lack of Understanding
Unidentifiable	Unidentifiable	Unidentifiable
Unidentifiable	Emojis	Emojis
Themes	Community	Community
Themes	Trust	Trust
Themes	Support	Support
Themes	Distrust	Distrust
Themes	Social media use	Social media use
Themes	Inclusivity	Inclusivity
Themes	Concern	Concern
Themes	Confidence	Confidence
Themes	Online shopping	Online shopping
Themes	Design	Design
Model	Positive	Model_Positive
Model	Neutral	Model_Neutral
Model	Negative	Model_Negative
Purchase interest	Purchase interest	Purchase_interest

Appendix E
ANOVA Results

Table E1*Results of the ANOVAs on the Dependent Variables*

IV	DV	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Corrected Model	Body Image	5.912 ^a	7	.845	1.403	.204
	MKT Response	3.691 ^b	7	.527	1.467	.179
	Inclusivity	6.221 ^c	7	.889	1.996	.056**
	Purchasing	6.253 ^d	7	.893	1.238	.282
	SNS MKT	7.127 ^e	7	1.018	1.258	.271
Intercept	Body Image	3934.504	1	3934.504	6537.285	<.001*
	MKT Response	2184.839	1	2184.839	6080.543	<.001*
	Inclusivity	4015.710	1	4015.710	9019.578	<.001*
	Purchasing	1232.155	1	1232.155	1707.353	<.001*
	SNS MKT	1639.329	1	1639.329	2025.542	<.001*
Comments	Body Image	.254	1	.254	.422	.517
	MKT Response	.290	1	.290	.807	.370
	Inclusivity	.092	1	.092	.208	.649
	Purchasing	2.985	1	2.985	4.136	.043*
	SNS MKT	.401	1	.401	.495	.482
Participation	Body Image	1.045	1	1.045	1.737	.189
	MKT Response	.469	1	.469	1.307	.254
	Inclusivity	.002	1	.002	.004	.953
	Purchasing	.814	1	.814	1.128	.289
	SNS MKT	1.524	1	1.524	1.883	.171
SML	Body Image	.653	1	.653	1.084	.299
	MKT Response	2.078	1	2.078	5.783	.017*
	Inclusivity	3.056	1	3.056	6.864	.009*
	Purchasing	.468	1	.468	.648	.422
	SNS MKT	3.847	1	3.847	4.754	.030*
Comments * Participation	Body Image	.005	1	.005	.008	.931
	MKT Response	.035	1	.035	.097	.756
	Inclusivity	.083	1	.083	.187	.666
	Purchasing	.328	1	.328	.454	.501
	SNS MKT	.073	1	.073	.091	.764

Comments * SML	Body Image	.125	1	.125	.207	.649
	MKT Response	.288	1	.288	.802	.371
	Inclusivity	2.151	1	2.151	4.830	.029*
	Purchasing	.261	1	.261	.361	.548
	SNS MKT	.298	1	.298	.368	.545
Participation * SML	Body Image	3.550	1	3.550	5.899	.016*
	MKT Response	.005	1	.005	.013	.908
	Inclusivity	1.082	1	1.082	2.431	.120
	Purchasing	.501	1	.501	.694	.405
	SNS MKT	.450	1	.450	.556	.457
Comments * Participation * SML	Body Image	.332	1	.332	.551	.459
	MKT Response	.227	1	.227	.633	.427
	Inclusivity	.157	1	.157	.353	.553
	Purchasing	.406	1	.406	.563	.454
	SNS MKT	.077	1	.077	.095	.758
Error	Body Image	171.529	285	.602		
	MKT Response	102.405	285	.359		
	Inclusivity	126.888	285	.445		
	Purchasing	205.678	285	.722		
	SNS MKT	230.659	285	.809		
Total	Body Image	4219.256	293			
	MKT Response	2328.456	293			
	Inclusivity	4248.922	293			
	Purchasing	1457.242	293			
	SNS MKT	1893.063	293			
Corrected Total	Body Image	177.441	292			
	MKT Response	106.096	292			
	Inclusivity	133.109	292			
	Purchasing	211.931	292			
	SNS MKT	237.785	292			

* $p < .05$ is considered significant.

** $p \geq .05$ & $p < .1$ is considered marginally significant.

a. $R^2 = .033$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .010$)

b. $R^2 = .035$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .011$)

c. $R^2 = .047$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .023$)

d. $R^2 = .030$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .006$)

e. $R^2 = .030$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .006$)

IV = Independent variable; DV = Dependent variable; SML = Social media literacy; MKT Response = Marketing Response; Purchasing = Attitudes towards purchasing; SNS MKT = Attitude towards SNS Marketing; EN = English; DE = German; SNS = Social networking sites.

Appendix F

Bilingual Results

1. Differences in Body Image

Table F1 shows the results of the three-way ANOVA. In the English sample, a marginally significant main effect of participation on body image was found, $F(1, 128) = 3.30, p = .07$, indicating that participants in the passive conditions scored higher in body image than participants in the active conditions ($M = 3.97, SD = 0.81$ vs $M = 3.72, SD = 0.81$). The individual main effects of comments and participation were not significant in the German sample. The interaction effect of participation and social media literacy (SML) was significant in the German sample, $F(1, 149) = 4.05, p = .01$. In congruence with the combined sample (see 4.1), participants low in SML report higher body image than those high in SML ($M = 3.82, SD = 0.58$ vs $M = 3.45, SD = 0.74$), while active participants low in SML report lower body image ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.86$ vs $M = 3.78, SD = 0.68$). No other significant interaction effects were found in either sample.

2. Differences in Marketing Responses

The three-way ANOVAs by language on marketing response revealed noteworthy differences, similarly to the results in relation to body image (Table F2). No statistically significant relationships were found in the English sample. The German sample shows no significant hypothesized main effects. However, SML had a direct effect on marketing response in the German group, $F(1, 149) = 10.03, p = .002$, suggesting that respondent who are low in SML reported lower marketing responses than those high in SML ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.52$ vs $M = 2.81, SD = 0.58$).

2.1 Differences in Brand Inclusivity

The German sample shows a significant direct effect of SML on inclusivity, $F(1, 149) = 10.59, p < .001$. Respondents lower in SML report low perceived inclusivity than those high in SML ($M = 3.90, SD = 0.66$ vs $M = 3.94, SD = 0.71$). The English sample shows an interaction effect of comments and SML on inclusivity, $F(1, 128) = 5.07, p = .03$, suggesting that respondents low in SML who viewed neutral comments reported higher perceived inclusivity than those who are high in SML viewing the same comments ($M = 3.97, SD = 0.58$ vs $M = 3.72, SD = 0.79$). However, when they are exposed to body-positive comments, respondents low in SML reported lower perceived inclusivity than those who are high in SML ($M = 3.81, SD = 0.74$ vs $M = 4.10, SD = 0.60$). Other effects are insignificant in either sample. See table F3 for all bilingual results.

2.2 Differences in Attitudes Towards Purchasing

Analysis of the English sample reveals a significant main effect of comments, $F(1, 128) = 5.63, p = .02$. Respondents who viewed neutral comment reported lower attitudes towards purchasing than those who viewed body-positive comments ($M = 1.93, SD = 0.87$ vs $M = 2.31, SD = 0.95$). The German sample shows no significant effects.

2.3 Differences in Attitudes Towards Marketing on Social Networking Sites

The English sample shows no significant main effects of either comments, $F(1, 128) = 0.00, p = .97$, or participation, $F(1, 128) = 0.23, p = .64$. Also, no interaction effects were found. The analysis of the German sample revealed only a significant main effect of SML on the attitude towards marketing on social networking sites (SNS), $F(1, 149) = 5.88, p = .02$. Respondents who were low in SML scored lower than those higher in SML ($M = 2.14, SD = 0.78$ vs $M = 2.49, SD = 0.90$).

Table F1*Bilingual Results of the ANOVA on Body Image*

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Corrected	EN	3.172 ^a	7	.453	.667	.699
Model	GE	5.375 ^b	7	.768	1.482	.178
Intercept	EN	1927.691	1	1927.691	2839.210	<.001*
	GE	1965.200	1	1965.200	3792.453	<.001*
Comments	EN	.064	1	.064	.094	.760
	GE	.087	1	.087	.168	.683
Participation	EN	2.237	1	2.237	3.295	.072**
	GE	.000	1	.000	.000	.984
SML	EN	.306	1	.306	.450	.504
	GE	.138	1	.138	.267	.606
Comments *	EN	.004	1	.004	.006	.936
Participation	GE	.031	1	.031	.061	.806
Comments *	EN	.324	1	.324	.477	.491
SML	GE	.027	1	.027	.052	.820
Participation	EN	.351	1	.351	.517	.474
* SML	GE	4.054	1	4.054	7.823	.006*
Comments *	EN	.054	1	.054	.080	.778
Participation	GE	.754	1	.754	1.454	.230
* SML						
Error	EN	86.906	128	.679		
	GE	77.210	149	.518		
Total	EN	2107.307	136			
	GE	2111.949	157			
Corrected	EN	90.078	135			
Total	GE	82.585	156			

* $p < .05$ is considered significant.** $p \geq .05$ & $p < .1$ is considered marginally significant.a. $R^2 = .035$ (Adjusted $R^2 = -.018$)b. $R^2 = .065$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .021$)

EN = English; GE = German; SML = Social media literacy.

Table F2*Bilingual Results of the ANOVA on Marketing Response*

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Corrected Model	EN	1.734 ^a	7	.248	.616	.742
	GE	4.165 ^b	7	.595	1.941	.067**
Intercept	EN	1070.691	1	1070.691	2664.141	<.001*
	GE	1092.736	1	1092.736	3563.479	<.001*
Comments	EN	.987	1	.987	2.457	.120
	GE	.062	1	.062	.204	.652
Participation	EN	.172	1	.172	.428	.514
	GE	.321	1	.321	1.048	.308
SML	EN	.001	1	.001	.002	.967
	GE	3.076	1	3.076	10.030	.002*
Comments * Participation	EN	.025	1	.025	.061	.805
	GE	.018	1	.018	.059	.809
Comments * SML	EN	.416	1	.416	1.036	.311
	GE	.003	1	.003	.009	.923
Participation * SML	EN	.035	1	.035	.086	.769
	GE	.010	1	.010	.034	.855
Comments * Participation * SML	EN	.022	1	.022	.054	.816
	GE	.688	1	.688	2.245	.136
Error	EN	51.442	128	.402		
	GE	45.691	149	.307		
Total	EN	1168.661	136			
	GE	1159.795	157			
Corrected Total	EN	53.176	135			
	GE	49.856	156			

* $p < .05$ is considered significant.

** $p \geq .05$ & $p < .1$ is considered marginally significant.

a. $R^2 = .033$ (Adjusted $R^2 = -.020$)

b. $R^2 = .084$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .040$)

EN = English; GE = German; SML = Social media literacy.

Table F3*Bilingual Results of the ANOVAs on Components of Marketing Response*

IV	DV		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Corrected Model	Inclusivity	EN	3.678 ^a	7	.525	1.141	.342
		DE	5.156 ^b	7	.737	1.905	.073**
	Purchasing	EN	6.617 ^c	7	.945	1.106	.363
		DE	4.496 ^d	7	.642	1.061	.392
	SNS MKT	EN	2.067 ^e	7	.295	.314	.947
		DE	7.940 ^f	7	1.134	1.599	.140
Intercept	Inclusivity	EN	1996.752	1	1996.752	4333.746	<.001*
		DE	1982.581	1	1982.581	5128.064	<.001*
	Purchasing	EN	589.756	1	589.756	689.943	<.001*
		DE	626.926	1	626.926	1035.766	<.001*
	SNS MKT	EN	800.761	1	800.761	851.366	<.001*
		DE	824.407	1	824.407	1161.825	<.001*
Comments	Inclusivity	EN	.398	1	.398	.864	.354
		DE	.134	1	.134	.347	.556
	Purchasing	EN	4.812	1	4.812	5.629	.019*
		DE	.096	1	.096	.159	.691
	SNS MKT	EN	.001	1	.001	.001	.971
		DE	.751	1	.751	1.058	.305
Participation	Inclusivity	EN	.291	1	.291	.632	.428
		DE	.273	1	.273	.705	.402
	Purchasing	EN	.053	1	.053	.061	.805
		DE	1.142	1	1.142	1.888	.172
	SNS MKT	EN	.212	1	.212	.226	.636
		DE	1.458	1	1.458	2.055	.154
SML	Inclusivity	EN	.010	1	.010	.022	.882
		DE	4.095	1	4.095	10.593	.001*
	Purchasing	EN	.251	1	.251	.294	.589
		DE	1.448	1	1.448	2.393	.124
	SNS MKT	EN	.335	1	.335	.356	.552
		DE	4.169	1	4.169	5.875	.017*
Comments * Participation	Inclusivity	EN	.175	1	.175	.380	.539
		DE	.009	1	.009	.024	.876
	Purchasing	EN	.007	1	.007	.008	.930
		DE	.680	1	.680	1.124	.291
	SNS MKT	EN	.855	1	.855	.909	.342
		DE	.193	1	.193	.272	.603
Comments * SML	Inclusivity	EN	2.335	1	2.335	5.068	.026*
		DE	.175	1	.175	.452	.502
	Purchasing	EN	.873	1	.873	1.021	.314
		DE	.042	1	.042	.070	.792

	SNS MKT	EN	.855	1	.855	.909	.342
		DE	.012	1	.012	.016	.898
Participation * SML	Inclusivity	EN	.434	1	.434	.941	.334
		DE	.601	1	.601	1.554	.214
	Purchasing	EN	.626	1	.626	.733	.394
		DE	.023	1	.023	.039	.844
	SNS MKT	EN	.265	1	.265	.282	.596
		DE	.177	1	.177	.249	.618
Comments * Participation * SML	Inclusivity	EN	.055	1	.055	.119	.731
		DE	.529	1	.529	1.367	.244
	Purchasing	EN	.000	1	.000	.000	.991
		DE	1.062	1	1.062	1.754	.187
	SNS MKT	EN	.065	1	.065	.070	.792
		DE	.377	1	.377	.531	.467
Error	Inclusivity	EN	58.975	128	.461		
		DE	57.605	149	.387		
	Purchasing	EN	109.413	128	.855		
		DE	90.186	149	.605		
	SNS MKT	EN	120.392	128	.941		
		DE	105.727	149	.710		
Total	Inclusivity	EN	2154.680	136			
		DE	2094.243	157			
	Purchasing	EN	733.560	136			
		DE	723.683	157			
	SNS MKT	EN	943.951	136			
		DE	949.111	157			
Corrected Total	Inclusivity	EN	62.654	135			
		DE	62.761	156			
	Purchasing	EN	116.030	135			
		DE	94.682	156			
	SNS MKT	EN	122.458	135			
		DE	113.667	156			

* $p < .05$ is considered significant.

** $p \geq .05$ & $p < .1$ is considered marginally significant.

a. $R^2 = .059$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .007$)

b. $R^2 = .082$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .039$)

c. $R^2 = .057$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .005$)

d. $R^2 = .047$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .003$)

e. $R^2 = .017$ (Adjusted $R^2 = -.037$)

f. $R^2 = .070$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .026$)

IV = Independent variable; DV = Dependent variable; SML = Social media literacy; Purchasing = Attitudes towards purchasing; SNS MKT = Attitude towards SNS Marketing; EN = English; DE = German; SNS = Social networking sites.

Appendix G

Additional Qualitative Results

Table G1

Frequency of Codes Across the Different Comments

Body-positive conditions		Neutral conditions		Additional comments	
Code	<i>n</i>	Code	<i>n</i>	Code	<i>n</i>
Design	16	Design	24	Social media use	8
Positive ad evaluation	16	Positive product evaluation	22	Concern	7
Positive attitude towards body positivity	16	Positive ad evaluation	11		
Positive product evaluation	11	Personal style	9		
Positive attitude towards model	9	Emojis (Positive)	8		
Concern	6	No comment	5		
Emojis (Positive)	5	Positive attitude towards body positivity	4		
Inclusivity	5	Need for more product information	3		
Neutral ad evaluation	3	Positive attitude towards model	2		
Negative ad evaluation	3	Neutral ad evaluation	2		
Negative attitude towards body positivity	3	Positive brand evaluation	2		
Community	3	Unidentifiable	2		
Confidence	3	Interest in purchasing	2		
Personal style	2				
Need for more product information	2				
Positive brand evaluation	2				
Unidentifiable	2				
Total	115	Total	105	Total	17

Note. All codes assigned less than twice are excluded from this table.